

BISHOP STUART UNIVERSITY



**THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE AGENCY IN SELECTED NOVELS BY MARY
KAROORO OKURUT**

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DECLARATION

I, **AHEBWA JOAN**, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has never been presented to any institution of higher learning for an academic award.

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This research dissertation has been submitted to the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Innovations, Bishop Stuart University with our approval as university supervisors.



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children; Jonathan, Jireh and Jemimah.

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on 'The portrayal of Female Agency in the selected novels by Mary Karoro Okurut.' Its major purpose was to explore the forms of Female Agency in; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016) all written by Mary Karoro Okurut. The study used language and style to discuss the objectives which were well discussed in relation with agency. The objectives were; to explore the forms of Female Agency in selected novels by Mary Karoro Okurut and to examine how forms of Female Agency are depicted in the three novels. The research is a descriptive study of the three selected Ugandan novels. The researcher used a qualitative approach to collect, analyze, interpret and present data. Main information was got by closely reading the primary texts; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016). Other secondary texts were read to get more information about the topic. Data was analyzed qualitatively using the textual analysis technique. The researcher grouped data into headings and sub-headings basing on the objectives of the study. The researcher used one literary theory; Liberal theory. Liberal feminism helped the researcher to examine how forms of Female Agency are depicted in the selected novels by Mary Karoro Okurut. The researcher found out that female agency has various forms but decided to put emphasis on two; subversion and negotiation. The researcher discovered that females in the three selected novels of Mary Karoro Okurut experience; sexual violence, female genital mutilation, patriarchal norms domestic violence, economic disparities and gender inequality. These females develop subversive tendencies and exhibit resilience to overcome sexual violence, female circumcision, patriarchal norms, domestic violence, economic disparities and gender inequality. The researcher found out that females develop agency as the result of the crises they encounter. The researcher found out that the author majorly used; vivid descriptions, flashbacks, dialogue, point of view, and characterization to perfectly bring out the forms of Female Agency. The researcher concludes that Female Agency is a key theme in various Ugandan novels and it has various forms, of which each form has a way it helps women to attain their autonomy. The researcher recommends that more studies be carried out on Female Agency in the three novels under study.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This research investigates Female Agency in Mary Karoro's selected novels. Female Agency has become a global phenomenon in a way that many African novels depict it. In Uganda, many authors have handled the theme of Female Agency. Naila Kabeer (1999) describes Female Agency as the capacity to define one's goals and act upon them. Kabeer frames agency as part of a three-way model of empowerment, resources agency and achievements.

Female Agency matters because it stands central to feminist theory by reframing women not as passive recipients of oppression but as active agents making decisions, resisting norms and impacting society both individually and collectively.

The main objective of this study is to represent Female Agency in selected Ugandan novels. This research investigated how the forms of Female Agency are presented in the selected novels. This concept encompasses various forms and has been explored by numerous scholars. The selected novels were; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016) all by Mary Karoro Okurut. The forms of Female Agency that the researcher used do not stem from a single originator. They emerged through multiple feminist scholars each bringing distinct emphases and they include; Obioma Nnaemeka, Deniz Kandiyoti, Judith Butler and Diana Meyers. Obioma Nnaemeka, Deniz Kandiyoti, Judith Butler and Diana Meyers came out with forms of Female Agency as negotiation and subversion. These scholars invented diverse ideas all geared towards giving subversion and negotiation more prominence.

In this study, I am interested in how the above forms of Female Agency are depicted in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016).

1.1 Biography of the author

Mary Karoro Okurut was born on 8th December, 1954 in Bushenyi, Uganda. She enrolled at Bweranyangi Primary School and Bweranyangi Girls' Senior Secondary School for her basic and Ordinary Level education (secondary). In 1972, she enrolled for Advanced level at Trinity College Nabbingo. She went to Makerere University in 1994 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Literature (BA. Lit) in 1977. She acquired her Master of Arts in Literature (MA. Lit) degree from Makerere University in 1981. While at Makerere again in 1982, she acquired her Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed.). She was married to Hon. Stanislaus Okurut until his death on 5th April 2014 and together they produced eight children, five boys and three girls.

She is also a Ugandan politician, educator and writer. She taught at Makerere University in the Department of Literature from 1981 to 1993. She took up employment as the press secretary to the Vice-President of Uganda from 1994 until 1996. Between 1996 and 1999, she worked as Commissioner of the Education Service Commission in the Ugandan Ministry of Education. From 1999 until 2004, she served as the press secretary of the President of Uganda (H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni). In 2004, she entered elective politics of Uganda. Between 2012 and 2015, she served as the Minister of Gender and Social Issues in the Cabinet of Uganda. She was elected Member of Parliament for Bushenyi District Women's Constituency from 2004 to 2020.

Putting aside her political carrier, Karoro is best known for her contributions to Ugandan literature both as a writer and as the founder of the Uganda Women Writers Association (FEMRITE), an organization that was formed in 1996. Karoro's literary publications include: *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Curse of the Sacred Cow* (1994), *The Adventurous Sisters* (1996), *Child of a Delegate* (1997), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *Potiphar's Grand Daughter* (2013) and *The Switch* (2016). She also edited *A Woman's Voice* (1998), a collection of short stories by Uganda women writers, *Milking a Lioness and Other Stories* (1999). It should be noted that most of her works are geared towards Female Agency.

1.2 Background of the study

Female Agency is the ability of women to act independently, make choices and take purposeful actions that shape their own lives and societies. According to Amartya Sen (1985) Female

Agency is what people are free to do and achieve in pursuit of goals they value. Whereas to feminist philosophers (Sen, Lokot et al., Malhotra and Schuler), Female Agency means the capacity to make strategic life choices under historically limited circumstances. These scholars argue that Female Agency involves both internal qualities like critical thinking and external expressions like freedom to act and instrumental agency.

Female Agency means a woman's efforts and attempts to be assertive in advocating for her rights as well as the capacity to determine her life in exercising power over personal choices and acquired resources. Catherine Lee & Anne Logan (2017) define Female Agency as the woman's ability to make choice of what she wants to do both at household and society level. Catherine & Anne (2017) argue that Female Agency focuses on the way(s) how women challenge, overthrow, resist or gain access to different societal structures that had hitherto othered them through patriarchal settings and sometimes, ended up disadvantaging and penalizing them. This comes about because women believe in themselves and are aware of their freedoms as well as ability to determine their life by personal choice and control of the available resources.

In Ugandan literature, Female Agency often manifests in how women resist traditional gender roles, navigate oppressive systems and assert their identities. Carole Boyce Davies through her work on Black women's writing and African feminist emphasizes creativity, language and storytelling as forms of empowerment. In it she explores how African women articulate agency in both public and private spheres.

Female Agency is a modern-day trend that involves women rejecting gender roles or societal expectations that constrain individual identity. It contains more than rejection of gender roles, it also includes a woman choosing to pursue higher education despite family pressure to marry early and participating in politics. Female Agency has core elements it rides on like autonomy, empowerment, voice, resistance and self-determination.

Tsitsi Dangarembga (as both an author and a subject of scholarly analysis) in novels like *Nervous Conditions*, illustrates the internal and external struggles of African girls and women seeking agency through education, self-awareness and resistance to traditional norms. Female characters in literature actively shape their destiny rather than being passive figures.

Stephanie Newell studies “Women’s writing in West Africa” and stresses how early African female authors used fiction as a form of subtle resistance and negotiation of agency within deeply patriarchal societies. Female characters in west African novels defy the oppressive systems and societal laws to achieve their dreams. Within the context of African literature, this concept takes on unique dimensions shaped by colonial histories, patriarchy traditions, social economic realities and resistance movements.

Signe Arnfred (2004) argues that Female Agency in African contexts must be understood not only through west feminist lenses but also within local cultural and historical frameworks, where women’s power often takes indirect, relational or communal forms. Female Agency often involves patriarchal structures with emphasis on how women navigate and sometimes resist systems that attempt to limit their freedom. In literature, analyzing Female Agency helps to uncover how women assert control within specific cultural, historical or narrative contexts.

Nnaemeka Obioma (1997) introduces the idea of “Nego-Feminism” negotiation centered feminism rooted in African values. Female Agency is not necessarily confrontational but strategic, often working within family and community structures to achieve autonomy and influence. Amina Mama highlights the importance of recognizing women’s political consciousness and their role in challenging not only patriarchy but also neo-colonial and class-based systems of oppression.

Florence Stratton (1994) critiques African writers for often denying female characters full subjectivity, while praising female African writers for rewriting the female experience through an emphasis on women’s agency and resistance.

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985) coined the term “African Womanism” which views Female Agency as rooted in cultural and familial responsibility emphasizing harmony between the genders while affirming women’s self-worth and decision-making power. Women’s agency ought to be felt and indeed, exhibited in all spheres and sectors including; education, employment, access to health, childcare and safety. These help women negotiate changes from household level upwards.

Changes in legislation, domestic violence legislation; changes in policy and services like provision of early childhood services freeing women’s time for other productive activities and

provision of basic services can all influence Female Agency at household level where it ought to start from and spread to other levels of the nation. Susan Ferguson (2022) suggests that when more men and women are educated, they will most likely influence the existent gender norms positively. Women's participation in decision -making at household level is very crucial in fostering Female Agency and empowerment.

In African literature, there are a number of texts that depict Female Agency as a modern-day matter of concern. Women no longer want to be decided for because they claim to have personal tastes and preferences. These literary texts include; *Joys of Motherhood* (1994) by Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl* (1995) by Buchi Emecheta, *So Long a Letter* (1989) by Maria ma Ba, *Black women Writing and Identity* (1994) by Carol Boyce Davies, *The African Diaspora* (2001) by Isidore Okpe, *We should all be Feminists* (2010) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie among others. In these texts, the theme of Female Agency is depicted as being both internal and cross border. These texts reflect women to be in a struggling situation as they fight hard for equal rights in all aspects of life.

In the texts under study, there are various forms of Female Agency. Girls and women are represented. However, some hardships and inequalities still exist despite legal protections and advancements. Significant barriers to equality persist in various areas including; education, employment, marriage and politics. It is on this basis that the researcher sets to investigate how females deal with the varying ways in which women exercise agency in activism work in an effort to change their world.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Many African texts handle the theme of Female Agency. In African literature, Female Agency has become a modern-day matter of concern. These literary texts include; *Joys of Motherhood* (1994) by Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl* (1995) by Buchi Emecheta, *So Long a Letter* (1989) by Maria ma Ba, *Black women Writing and Identity* (1994) by Carol Boyce Davies, *The African Diaspora* (2001) by Isidore Okpe, *We should all be Feminists* (2010) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie among others. In these texts, the theme of Female Agency is depicted as being both internal and cross border. These texts

reflect women to be in a struggling situation as they fight hard for equal rights in all aspects of life.

The selected novels have had a number of studies being carried out on them. Among them are those that were carried out by Namirembe Theresa Francis conducts a research on “The Woman Question in contemporary literature”. In it, he examines the contribution of women writers to the literature of Uganda. He focuses on the novel *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) by Mary Okurut. Francis argues that the very novel contributes immensely. It proves women’s efforts to advocate for social change through its themes and stylistic device.

Folasade Hunsu (2014) contends that Hilder Twongyeirwe Rutagonya focuses on the enthusiasm of Ugandan female writers’ contribution to Uganda’s literature but does not specifically focus his study on the forms of Female Agency in the text. Beatrice Akite studies “The representations of women in Ugandan War Narratives” concentrating on *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) Karooro. His study foregrounds the pivotal role of female characters in fighting atrocities thereof and fostering peace. The idea of Female Agency is not well spelt out as it should be. The scholar does not look at the portrayals of subversion. In “Women and Subjugation: An Evaluation of Feminist Rhetoric” (2021), Mwetulundila Rauna argues that the novel *The Official Wife* (1993) uses persuasive, invitational rhetoric to critique social socio-political subjugation of women, emphasizing strategies like negotiation, education, and solidarity. Rauna does not look at both negotiation and subversion in the three selected novels by Mary Karooro Okurut which I study. In “The Clandestine Madness in The Official Wife” (2022), university Hasanuddin examines the psychological toll of clandestine polygamy on female characters, primarily Liz as a tension between Christian monogamous practices but does not bring out particularly the depictions of subversion and negotiation in the text under study. In a study titled “Marriage in Black and White” (2006), Kathleen Thorpe compares Liz (*The Official Wife*) to Ramatoulaye (*So Long a Letter*) noting that Liz is financially independent, resourceful and able to withstand abandonment without relinquishing her status but does not look at ways how Female Agency helps the two female characters especially Liz to sail through patriarchy struggles. Grace Akambangira in “Representations of female genital mutilation in Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s *The River Between*, Henry Ole Kulet’s *Blossoms of the Savannah* and Mary Karooro Okurut’s *The Switch* (2016) examines narrative portrayals, emotional and collective impacts of FGM on women but does not look at

forms of Female Agency that women use to overcome patriarchal norms. Henry Lubega in “The Switch: Rising Above Traumas of FGM” (2016) offers a literary review emphasizing the protagonist Tezira Chelimo’s journey after enduring FGM but does not look at subversion and negotiation all together as forms of Female Agency particularly in the three selected novels which I am examining in this study.

All these studies do not take a look at how female characters use subversive tendencies and negotiation skills to achieve greater autonomy and empowerment in the selected texts. This heightens the fact that there are a number of gaps in this scholarship. It indicates the need for further research to interrogate subversion and negotiation in the selected novels of Mary Karooro Okurut. Based on this, I studied the forms of Female Agency portrayed in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016).

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine how Female Agency is portrayed in Mary Karooro Okurut’s novels; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016). It should be noted that there are various forms through which Female Agency is depicted. This study however only concentrates on how female characters use subversion and negotiation to improve themselves paying particular attention to the narrative techniques used in doing so.

1.4.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are;

- i) To explore the forms of Female Agency in the selected novels by Mary Karooro Okurut.
- ii) To examine how the above forms of Female Agency are depicted in the three novels by Mary Karooro Okurut.

1.4.2 Research questions

- i) What forms of female agency are evident in Mary Karooro Okurut’s novels?
- ii) How are these forms of agency depicted i.e., what narrative techniques does the writer deploy to show female agency?

1.5 Justification of the study

Previous studies on; *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016) have concentrated on issues like women and subjugation, equality, war, polygamy, financial independence, trauma and female genital mutilation but none of such studies interests itself with subversion and negotiation altogether in the very selected works of Okurut. Mwetulundila Rauna talks about negotiation but within a broader context of feminist rhetoric in African literature, comparing it to works by Adichie, Dow, and Lema. Whereas B. Akite tries to move further by looking at negotiation in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), he stops at negotiation but does not go on to look at subversion in the very texts which I study.

In the previous studies, scholars used a number of theories including; Yoruba Oloto proverb (Hunsu), Feminist literary framework (Akite), Feminist Rhetorical theory (Mwetulundila), Feminist psycho-social criticism (Mwetulundila), Comparative cultural-literary framework (Kathleen), Cultural feminist literary theory (Akambangira) and African feminist theory (Lubega) but none of them uses Liberal feminism to bring out how characterization, vivid description, flashbacks and point of view are used to bring out how Female Agency is depicted in the novels of my concern. The three novels had never been brought together for a study on the theme of Female Agency. This study therefore sought to fill the gap of lack of scholarly work on Female Agency in Ugandan novels. It provides new criticism through its depictions. This study will again form a basis on which other studies on Female Agency can be done on these and other texts.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is important in the study of literature in Uganda and even globally. It is significant as it examines the portrayals of Female Agency in selected Ugandan novels. It unearths the way the novelist under study brings out subversion and negotiation in her various texts.

It will significantly contribute to the understanding of Female Agency, its complexities and its importance in promoting women's empowerment and social change.

Other researchers will benefit from this study. They will have the basis for their own research as they study any topic related to Female Agency or any study on the said author. They will use this study to make their own studies and even get arguments in regard to the findings of this study. The scholars on undergraduate or graduate level will find this study an important document for their own studies.

Other scholars will get a basis for further creative writing around the subject of Female Agency. Reviewing how Female Agency is viewed by the studied novelist will help other writers to seek out for the gap that exists about Female Agency that may be in their areas of interest.

Policy makers will benefit from this research for instance National Curriculum development Center will understand how the texts are relevant to the current issues by handling a sensitive theme of the contemporary times Female Agency. The ministry of gender, labor and social development will find this study significant as it brings out how female characters in the novels navigate through adversity and patriarchy norms which may be a mirror of how other women struggle in male dominated societies.

1.7 Scope of the study

Female Agency is a core theme in the contemporary literary texts. Almost every text directly or indirectly tackles the ways through which females develop agency. Various texts have handled this theme differently. In order to portray Female Agency, I am using three primary texts; *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016) all by Mary Karooro Okurut. Other sources shall be used including journals, articles, magazines, studies and many other sources of information.

I selected these novels bearing in mind that they are all Ugandan and with a number of female characters. The author is born in Uganda and the major action in these novels also takes place in Uganda. These particular novels are selected because they are Ugandan.

The Invisible Weevil by Karooro Okurut is selected because it is set in Uganda. I explore the nation's history from the 1960s to the early 1990s. The geographical scope is primarily focused

on Uganda, with references to the country's culture and political landscape. The novel touches on Uganda's pre- and post-colonial past era (1960s-1990s). The story looks into Uganda's unstable history including; the rise and fall of various regimes, coups and the impact of these events of the nation and its people. the novel incorporates real historical events, such as the attack on the Buganda kingdoms and fictionalizes them through characters like president Opolo and Duduma, then to Milton Obote and Idi Amin's rule.

The switch was my interest too because it was specifically set in Kapchorwa, the Eastern part of Uganda. *The switch* highlights the cultural practices and traditions of the local community that affect female lifestyle which is my area of study. The story is of modern day, with references to government roles and modern societal issues. The novel was set in the early 21st century and published 2016.

The Official Wife by Mary Karooro Okurut was set in Uganda in the 20th century. It specifically explores the cultural and social dynamics of the country. *The Official wife* was published in 1993. The novel examines cultural commentary, Female Agency, marriage and polygamy.

I selected these three novels authored by Mary Karooro Okurut because they are highly regarded for academic study. The three novels were my choice because of their rich exploration of Ugandan society, politics and gender dynamics. Her works provide insightful commentary on cultural practices and the evolving roles of women, making them valuable resources for literature and social studies.

I chose Karooro's texts because she emphasizes the point of giving female characters great prominence in her texts. She creates strong-headed characters who challenge the status quo in the society. She subtly heightens the fact that women's voice is very pertinent and the wider discourse of decision making in society.

These particular novels are selected because:

I selected *The Official Wife* because it delves into the complexities of modern-day polygamy in Uganda. The story portrays how Liz applies negotiation skills to overcome the emotional turmoil caused by her husband's decision to take a second wife. This novel brings out different forms of Female Agency.

The Switch addresses the practice of FGM through the character of a young girl undergoing circumcision becomes another core against the practice. The novel examines the cultural justifications for FGM and its impact on women's lives, providing a platform for expressing human rights and cultural change.

I selected *The Invisible Weevil* because it offers a historical and sociopolitical account of Uganda's post-independence political landscape using the metaphor of a weevil to represent corruption and societal decay. Through the protagonist, Nkwazi, the novel explores the nation's self-struggles and the role of women in shaping a new Uganda. The novel helped me to show how women develop agency in Ugandan context.

Okurut's works are not only socially relevant but also exhibit strong literary qualities including compelling narrators and character development. Her background as literature lecturer and founder of the Uganda Women Writers' Association (FEMRITE) underscores her commitment to storytelling that educates and empowers.

I selected Mary Karoro Okurut's novels because of their in-depth analysis of societal issues, cultural practices and the empowerment of women, all woven into engaging and thought-provoking narratives.

1.8 Theoretical framework of the study

The researcher used Liberal Feminism to collect and analyze data in the selected novels by Karoro. Liberal feminism also known as Mainstream feminism or Reformist feminism is a feminist theory that seeks gender equality through political and legal reform working within liberal democratic institutions rather than overhauling society from the roots. It emphasizes that inequalities are socially constructed, not natural and can be addressed through rational argument and legal means. Key tenets of Liberal feminism are; equality and individual rights, rationality and autonomy, education and person empowerment, legal and political reform.

Liberal feminism is rooted in enlightenment ideals of individual rights and equality. It progressed overtime and was influenced by many thinkers. Some key figures associated with the

development of liberal feminism are; Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Betty Friedan.

According to Mary Wollstonecraft in her book, “A Vindication of the rights of Woman” (1792), she emphasizes social and moral equality of the sexes. She promoted women’s access to education and participation in public life. Elizabeth Cady Stanton stresses the idea of equal rights for women such as suffrage, property rights, and educational opportunities “The Declaration of Sentiments” (1848). In the book “The Feminine Mystique” (1963), Betty Friedan criticized the societal beliefs that females should find satisfaction only in home life and parenthood. In her work, she highlights the widespread dissatisfaction among women in family life.

During 1980s–1990s, liberal feminism faced critiques for its perceived focus on the experiences of middle-class white women according to Dr. Dhanaji (2024). Critics argued that it overlooked intersecting forms of oppression related to race, class, and sexuality. This led to the emergence of intersectional feminism, which emphasized the interconnectedness of various social identities and the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups.

According to Dr. Dhanaji (2024) from 2000s to Present, liberal feminism continues to advocate equal rights while incorporating intersectional approaches. It addresses issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and economic disparities on a global scale. The movement recognizes the importance of diverse experiences and strives for inclusivity in its advocacy efforts.

Liberal feminism has continually adapted to address the evolving challenges faced by women. From its early focus on legal rights to its current emphasis on intersectionality and global inclusivity, the movement remains a vital force in the pursuit of gender equality.

Hooks (2000) contends that feminism is a kind of movement bent of ending sexism, oppression and exploitation of women. While critiquing these political and social relations, this theory also concerns the idea of advancing the interests and rights of women. The theory concerns such themes as sexual objectification, discrimination and stereotyping among others. In literary criticism, Elaine Showalter (1977) contends that this feminist theory developed in three phases/stages which include the "feminist critique", a phase in which a feminist reader analyses the ideas that inform the literary phenomena. The second phase is called gynocriticism which

involves the woman producing meaning of a text herself. Last, the third phase which is gender theory deals with the way different ideas and literature affect the gender discourse.

Liberal feminism advocates for incremental progress toward gender equality through legal changes, civic participation and individual empowerment without dismantling existing social and political institutions. To feminists, every woman should control their sexuality. That is why Catharine MacKinnon a feminist contends that women do not have control over their own bodies because they remain subjugated by their male counterparts. Feminists claim that the violence meted out on women (by men) is usually ingrained in beliefs and the principles of male sexual right and such schemes give women limited choices to do away with sexual advances. Women activists thus contend that most cultures have beliefs that mainly refute women the right to determine how to showcase their sexuality, because men in male-controlled societies feel they are the ones eligible and authorized to determine sex on their own relations. In some old-fashioned cultures and religions, marriage is considered to be an institution where by default, a wife has to be available for every time a man wants, almost without boundaries. In such settings, a man forcing a woman into sex is not only considered normal but also permissible. For open minded and free cultures, this abusive behavior is the sexualization of all females in the entire culture. The desire for women to control their sexuality helped to represent how various female characters negotiate the various schemes and temptation of both their male counter parts and culture.

However, Feminists have worked within and against Feminist movements so as to enhance and advance women's rights through encouraging them to compete for different offices. They have also struggled against rights and against the technologies of gender. Feminism has given name to women's franchise rights as well as freedom to work. For instance, Catherine Mackinnon (1989) argues that women also have a right to vote, work, earn equal pay, own property and receive education. She adds that they should have equal access to education and employment. Such movements helped to discuss how subversion as a form of Female Agency is depicted in Karooro's three novels.

According to Camille Cottais (2020), Liberal feminism demands political equality, women's right to vote and ability to stand for election and access to the labor market. Camille adds that liberal feminism also demands equal rights when it comes to marriage, education and equal pay

at work. The United Nations General Assembly (1979) in its treaty *The Convention on the Elimination Against Women (CEDAW)* contends that equality for women can be achieved through legal means and social reforms within current social systems, rather than an overhaul of the systems themselves. Since Female Agency is part and parcel of and/or related to these themes, this Liberal theory becomes the most appropriate of all. Therefore, this school of thought guided on how to analyze and describe ways in which literature portrays the theme of Female Agency by exploring the subversive tendencies, resistance and negotiation skills embedded within the selected works. With it, the researcher studied the style the writer uses to portray Female Agency in selected literary works. It also aided in the discussion by bringing out how female characters in the novels try to change that reality thereby portraying Female Agency.

The researcher employed Liberal feminist theory because it focuses on the promoting of individualism, democracy, equal opportunities and equal rights. It helped the researcher to collect and analyze data since its aim is to understand gender inequalities, gender politics, power relations and sexuality where this study fits. This theory, being on women's rights and interests as already highlighted, becomes the most appropriate for this study. One should note that it is after the revelation and understanding of the challenges females are facing that one can try hard to change that reality. Therefore, prior to fighting for the promotion of Female Agency, one must be aware of the gender-based violence, limited access to resources, stereotyping and bias, discrimination and inequality, oppressive social, political and economic challenges they are facing, of which liberal feminism helps to do. These ideas from different scholars helped to discuss how Female Agency is depicted in Karooro's three selected novels.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is on the review of related literature on the objectives of the study as well as the research questions the study sets out to answer. Also, all this will be done with constant reference to the operating theory.

2.1 Studies on Mary Karooro Okurut

In African literature, there are a number of texts that depict Female Agency as a modern-day matter of concern. Women no longer want to be decided for because they claim to have personal tastes and preferences. These literary texts include; *Joys of Motherhood* (1994) by Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl* (1995) by Buchi Emecheta, *So Long a Letter* (1989) by Maria ma Ba, *Black women Writing and Identity* (1994) by Carol Boyce Davies, *The African Diaspora* (2001) by Isidore Okpe, *We should all be Feminists* (2010) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie among others. In these texts, the theme of Female Agency is depicted as being both internal and cross border. These texts reflect women to be in a struggling situation as they fight hard for equal rights in all aspects of life.

In the texts under study, there are various forms of Female Agency. Girls and women are represented. It is on this basis that the researcher sets to investigate how females deal with the varying ways in which women have exercised agency through involvement in activism work in an effort to change the world. It is on this basis that the researcher sets to investigate how females use their negotiation power, resilience, and moral leadership skills to overcome struggles they face in male dominated societies in the novels under study. Novels under study include; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016).

There are various studies that have been done on the selected novels. Namirembe Theresa Francis conducts research on “The Woman Question in contemporary literature”. In it, he examines the contribution of women writers to the literature of Uganda. He focuses on the novel *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) by Mary Okurut. Francis argues that the very novel contributes

immensely. It proves women's efforts to advocate for social change through its themes and stylistic device.

Folasade Hunsu (2014) contends that Hilder Twongyeirwe Rutagonya focuses on the enthusiasm of Ugandan female writers to contribute to Uganda's literature. She contends that "women's literature can no longer be ignored or simply be taken as appendages to men's experiences" (2014 p283). Their voices and articulation on pertinent issues are well portrayed and clarify the view that through their characters, women writers act as mouth pieces for women on the current societal issues. She contends that giving a woman her freedom especially by a man is the right thing to do as men have had their time to reign. (2014 p283).

Beatrice Akite (2019) studies "The representations of women in Ugandan War Narratives" concentrating on *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) Karooro. This study foregrounds the pivotal role of female characters in fighting atrocities thereof and fostering peace. The consequences of war on the female characters and their homes have ripple effects on women. The study challenges former status quos where men would be portrayed in literature to be at the center of war as contrasted by their female counterparts. The study suggests that much as war tends to worsen the plight of women and portray them as passive contributors to peace building, the female characters reveal a different reality.

In "Women and Subjugation: An Evaluation of Feminist Rhetoric" (2021), Mwetulundila Rauna argues positions *The Official Wife* (1993) within a broader context of feminist rhetoric in African literature, comparing it to works by Adichie, Dow, and Lema. He argues that the novel uses persuasive, invitational rhetoric to critique social socio-political subjugation of women, emphasizing strategies like negotiation, education, and solidarity. It highlights how female characters consciously build power through dialogue and intellectual engagement.

In "The Clandestine Madness in *The Official Wife*" (2022), University Hasanuddin examines the psychological toll of clandestine polygamy on female characters, primarily Liz as a tension between Christian monogamous practices. The writer argues that Liz's resulting "madness" symbolizes the failure to reconcile official marital expectations with hidden systematic contradicts illuminating the deeper costs of patriarchy norms.

In a study titled “Marriage in Black and White” (undated Critique), Kathleen Thorpe compares Liz (*The Official Wife*) to Ramatoulaye (*So Long a Letter*) noting that Liz is financially independent, resourceful and able to withstand abandonment without relinquishing her status. He argues that this independence and endurance reflect powerful form of agency while marriage ends in separation and reconciling. Liz retains her autonomy and chooses to care for her husband on her own terms.

Grace Akambangira in “Representations of female genital mutilation in Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s *The River Between*, Henry Ole Kulet’s *Blossoms of the Savannah* and Mary Karooro Okurut’s *The Switch* (2016), examines narrative portrayals of FGM across three novels. She highlights how Okurut depicts different “shades” of FGM and the community’s justifications. She also analyses the emotional and collective impacts of FGM on women but does not look at forms of Female Agency that women use to overcome patriarchy norms.

Henry Lubega in “*The Switch: Rising Above Traumas of FGM*” (2016) offers a literary review emphasizing the protagonist; Tezira Chelimo’s journey after enduring FGM. The study portrays the psychological and emotional aftermath of FGM. Henry argues that Tezira’s intellectual resilience becomes central as she vows to become a minister and end the practice for future generations.

Abasi Kiyimba in his study concentrates on the way women writers, in one voice, castigate the old-fashioned practices that are discriminatory in nature. Women interrogate the male-female relationships in society so that they can establish the balance of both genders therein. In this article, he considers *The Invisible Weevil* as his study area. The research article highlights key takeaways on the way the writers (women) handle male-female relations with regard to power, males’ brutal force on their female counterparts, women’s failure to react thereof as well as the rise of a woman that is not subservient to the already existing conventions of the community/society and the male’s negative reaction to this. The role art plays in liberating women from this onslaught is highlighted as well. However much it talks about women empowerment, it does not majorly focus on Female Agency as Karooro reflects in her texts concerning the power relations between men and women which partly depicts women agency which I am studying in this work.

Mary Naula (1998) examines the portrayal of virginity in Mary Okurut's *Invisible Weevil*. She deals with the role virginity plays in traditional marriage especially in Africa. Her study raises pertinent and controversial interpretation of the data obtained from the text. The study finds out that in the context of Africa, virginity is given such primacy as a core value. This is because it stabilizes and harmonizes the sanctity of marriage. Amongst the themes discussed, Female Agency is not mentioned. According to her study Africans believe the faithfulness of a girl before marriage guarantees the same faithfulness in marriage later. To her, premarital sex is pervasive. The fact that Female Agency is not tackled in this study, proves that there is a gap that needs to be filled the reason I choose my research topic to be on Female Agency and specifically on Mary Karooro's selected novels.

In another study by Esther Kawesa (2021), she investigates the representation of female genital mutilation in Karooro's *The Switch*. Kawesa concentrates on the on the theme of female genital mutilation looking at the causes and effects that go with it. She doesn't concentrate on how women try to resist the unfair laws and traditions in the communities.

These studies talk about Female Agency in general but do not pay particular attention to how female characters in the selected novels under study use subversive tendencies and negotiation skills to challenge the oppressive systems and societal norms to achieve greater autonomy, self-efficacy and empowerment.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section deals with the description of the methods that were applied in carrying out the research. It is organized under the following sub-sections: study design, research approach, procedure for data collection, sources of data, data collection methods, instruments and tools, data processing, data analysis and data interpretation and discussion.

3.1 Study design

This is a plan indicating how data was collected and analyzed. A descriptive design was adopted as the overall design. The descriptive research design was used in this study because it allowed the researcher to describe the forms of Female Agency in the selected Ugandan novels.

3.2 Research approach

The research comprised qualitative research approach. This research approach was used to spell out the forms of Female Agency and how they are presented. It again helped me to vividly describe the data collected from the selected novels.

3.3 Procedure for data collection

The researcher looked for the selected literary texts. Upon obtaining the primary texts, the researcher made a close reading of both primary and secondary texts and other relevant reading materials such as journals, articles, research reports among others. This was done while taking notes of key information relevant to my research topic.

3.4 Sources of data

The selected primary texts were the main source of data for this study. The selected texts are *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016). Other sources of data included secondary texts, relevant research reports and journals both in print and electronic modes.

3.5 Data collection methods, instruments and tools

The researcher closely read both the primary texts Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Switch* (2016)) and secondary texts such as articles, magazines, journals and research reports with the guidance of the research objectives and research questions so as to ascertain what takes place in the selected texts regarding issues to do with Female Agency.

Qualitative content analysis was used. Since my research was specifically conducted on novels, it was library based. Notes were written in the researcher's notebook which corresponded to the study objectives. The study involved the examination of texts guided by a textual checklist as a major research instrument. The checklist comprised aspects that helped the researcher to internalize the key variable which is Female Agency. In this case, information was coded and generated concepts from which the forms of Female Agency were derived. The data was collected under headings in line with the research objectives.

The study included examination of documents guided by textual checklist which consisted of aspects that the researcher used to analyze the main variable of the study which was portrayal of Female Agency. The researcher used aspects like portrayal of subversion in *The Invisible Weevil*, depiction of subversion in *The Switch*, the representation of negotiation in *The Official Wife* and aspects of the primary texts which include; vivid description, dialogue, point of view, characterization and flashbacks.

Paraphrasing was done. The researcher restated the collected material as a way of attaining detailed notes on specific passages which did not need the exact wording. Some information that

was quoted was transcribed accurately using quotation marks. It was done with the help of note cards that the researcher created.

3.6 Data processing

The data which was collected using checklist was coded, studied and developed into notes after editing. The researcher edited the obtained data to ensure accuracy and uniformity as well as to minimize errors by using a textual checklist and the research objectives.

3.7 Data analysis

The data was analyzed qualitatively using textual analysis technique. The obtained data was interpreted and categorized using a checklist which included the portrayals of forms of Female Agency. The researcher analyzed how the categorized data was used to frame the depictions of Female Agency in the novels under study. The study used liberal feminism. The key tenets of liberal feminism were used to guide the researcher through a critical reading and analysis of the selected texts. The collected data was valid and dependable in relation to the research topic by stressing the tenets of the theory upon which this research is centered.

3.8 Data interpretation and discussion

The researcher grouped the processed data into headings and subheadings basing on the objectives of the study. By using textual checklist, the researcher processed the data and edited it in accordance with the set objectives of the study. The researcher coded and grouped the obtained material to get a general overview of the given data which included the aspects of the checklist in relation to the set objectives of the study. The obtained information was interpreted, discussed and the researcher penciled conclusions in relation to the set objectives to determine whether the objectives were met or not.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the portrayal of female agency by critically looking at how subversion and negotiation are reflected in the novels under study. My key discussion is based on three novels by Mary Karooro Okurut; *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016).

Female agency is a term often associated with the value of freedom. Female Agency is a modern-day trend that involves women rejecting gender roles or societal expectations that constrain individual identity. Catherine Lee & Anne Logan (2017) define Female Agency as the woman's ability to make choice of what she wants to do both at household and society level. These scholars argue that Female Agency focuses on the way(s) how women challenge, overthrow, resist or gain access to different societal structures that had hitherto othered them through patriarchal settings and sometimes, ended up disadvantaging and penalizing them. Ways how females challenge the old society norms are equally the forms of Female Agency that women use to navigate oppressive systems and assert their identities.

Denis Kandiyoti (1988) has categorized forms of Female Agency into three sets; Resistance and subversion, bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation. These forms of Female Agency enable women to assert their autonomy, challenge patriarchal norms and create positive change in their lives and communities. In the topic under study, I concentrated on only two forms of Female Agency; Subversion and Negotiation and how women use them to interact with patriarchal systems.

Subversion as a form of Female Agency involves challenging and undermining patriarchal norms, power structures and expectations through indirect creative means. Subversion contains reclaiming language and symbols. This form of Female Agency has reappropriating derogatory terms or symbols that empower women to challenge gender roles using artistic expressions to critique and subvert patriarchal norms. Subversion engages in small acts of defiance or non-

compliance in daily life. It is a powerful tool for female agency, allowing women to challenge patriarchal systems while minimizing risk.

Negotiation as a form of Female Agency involves women using strategic communication and compromise to achieve their goals, navigate power dynamics and influence their circumstances. With negotiation, women are able to express their needs, desires and boundaries clearly and confidently by the aid of negotiating skills. Negotiation allows women to influence decision making processes, achieve personal goals, develop strategic relationships and alliances. This form of agency is particularly relevant in contexts where women face structural barriers or power imbalances, requiring creative and strategic approaches to achieve their objectives.

In this chapter, major narrative techniques are explored and how they are used to representations of female agency in the novels under study. According to Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), John Stuart Mill (1869) and Betty Friedan (1963), Liberal feminism in literature helps to highlight women's autonomy, rights and opportunities. These scholars say that Liberal feminism delves into women's experiences, struggles and triumphs encouraging readers to think critically about gender equality and women's rights. This theory questions traditional gender roles and stereotypes portraying strong, independent women who make choices and assert their agency. I therefore base on Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), John Stuart Mill (1869) and Betty Friedan (1963) who assert that Liberal feminism in literature contributes to a more nuanced understanding of women's lives and experiences, promoting empathy, awareness and social progress, to discuss subversion and negotiation, the forms of female agency in the three novels under study.

In my study, I handle the portrayal of Female Agency in the novels under study. Female Agency has various forms according to Deniz Kandiyoti, however, I only focus on two; subversion and negotiation and how these two are depicted in *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016). Subversion is discussed in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016). Whereas, negotiation is discussed in *The Official Wife* (1993). I used liberal feminism to guide my discussion. My entire discussion is built on the three Ugandan novels; *The Official Wife* (1993), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016).

4.1 Plot Synopsis of *The Invisible Weevil*

The Invisible Weevil is a novel written by a Ugandan Feminist, Mary Karooro Okurut as her third publication. The book was first published in 1998 (FEMRITE Publications Limited Kampala). The novel is a fictionalized record of Uganda's past tragic national experience, that traverses through sequential regimes. It covers the story of Africa's post-colonial political actors personified by the concealed presidents; Opolo, Polle, Duduma and Kazi, interlacing together activities of political and gender concerns and employing humor too, the central image of the novel being the Weevil. The novel deals with themes of identity, power and societal dynamics. It gives narratives of various characters including; Kaaka, Genesis, Nkwanzu, Maama among others to shed light on Uganda's postcolonial experience. Through their stories, Okurut tackles issues such as corruption, gender inequality and human relationships. The "Invisible Weevil" symbolizes the destructive forces that threaten the social fabric. Destructive forces in the novel include; HIV/AIDs, corruption and patriarchal oppression. The novel talks about Uganda's struggle to create a sense of national identity amidst political turmoil and social change. The book talks about female characters like Kaaka and Nkwanzu who play crucial roles in shaping the nation's history and fighting against patriarchal norms. *The Invisible Weevil* highlights the weevil of corruption and power dynamics and critiques the abuse of power corruption, while also highlighting the impact of the weevil on individuals and society.

4.1.1 The Depictions of Subversion in *The Invisible Weevil*

I handle subversion in the context of Female Agency. Subversion is a powerful tool women use to assert their agency, challenge patriarchal norms and create new possibilities for themselves and others. There are various women in *The Invisible Weevil* and these female characters use subversive tendencies to challenge existing power imbalances. I now discuss subversion that Karooro portrays in *The Invisible Weevil*.

Through a dialogue between Kaaka and Nkwanzu as written by Okurut (1998) subversion is portrayed. Kaaka chooses to advance in her personal chosen field of educating others. The right to get a job and begin teaching portrays female agency and this depicts subversive tendencies in

which we see the undermining of the society laws. It is represented in Karooro's novel in a dialogue between Kaaka and Nkwanzu. Kaaka narrates to Nkwanzu about the birth of Genesis. While narrating the story, Kaaka tells us how she studies and becomes a teacher. Kaaka narrates;

When my breasts were beginning to become like small berries, I joined a church school and we were taught a, e, i, o u. Later, I also became a teacher and taught other boys and girls a, e, i, o, u and also how to count. We used to count using sticks and stones. (Okurut 1998:12)

Dialogue helps to explore ideas and convey underlying motivations in Kaaka. We learn of Kaaka's access to education, willingness to learn and her ability to later teach pupils in school what she has learnt through her dialogue with Nkwanzu. This is exactly what Mary Wollstonecraft (2004) a feminist theorist advocates for in her book. She asserts that the theory helps to understand female agency. Female agency in this case being access to equal education and the opportunity for Kaaka to teach. Kaaka chooses to advance in the teaching field in order to emancipate herself thereby breaking away from the routine (gardening, cooking and producing children). After being taught, she also becomes a teacher and educates other boys and girls. In doing so, she is expressing freedom, self-fulfillment and self-development as well. According to John Stuart Mill (1869), he asserts that women have a right to receive equal education, equal employment and suffrage. Basing on this, and looking at Kaaka's ability to access education and teach others, we learn that she exercises her right to education and a right to work. Equal education and opportunities for women enables them to participate fully in society.

Through characterization, Nkwanzu brings to us another depiction of subversion in *The Invisible Weevil* as witnessed in the dialogue between Kaaka and Nkwanzu. We learn of Nkwanzu's outstanding character because she chooses to eat what she wants. In the novel, we see Nkwanzu eating the tongue that is meant to be eaten by either her father or her brothers per their traditional norms. The author writes;

"One of you has picked your father's tongue! Bring it quickly!" "Taata's tongue? Maama, what tongue are you talking about?" Nkwanzu asked between mouthfuls. "It's you Nkwanzu. You're eating your father's tongue. Here bring it quickly." She said as she

snatched the stick of meat from her..... "Nkwanzi stop. Bring back your father's tongue!" (Okurut 1998:37)

According to their tradition, it's only men and boys supposed to eat the tongue because they are considered to be strong and heads of the family whereas women are regarded as shoulders and of weaker sex. However, Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) a feminist critic emphasizes social and moral equality of the sexes in all spheres of life. Liberal feminism helps us to understand why Nkwanzi insists on eating the tongue which is prepared for her father. Nkwanzi sees nothing wrong with eating a certain piece of meat that is presumed to be for his father. The author writes;

Nkwanzi was too hungry to let it go. She took off. Maama hoisted her kikoyi and ran after her. Nkwanzi stop. Bring back your father's tongue!" She could not catch her, with her kikoyi and all. Nkwanzi ran on but realized that the whole household was running to catch her. Tingo was in the forefront but it must have been because he wanted to eat the tongue himself, not because he wanted to rescue it for Taata. The servants too were panting after her and Rukamba, the dog had also joined the chase.....(Okurut 1998:38)

Nkwanzi, young as she is, is aware of her right to eat all foods depending on her choice. She refuses to let go of the stick of the tongue of meat causing her mother Maama and the rest of the family present run after her. Maama and other family members violate Nkwanzi's right by running after her in an effort to take away the piece of meat she is feasting on already. Nkwanzi is decided and shows that she can fight for her rights despite their traditional norms which say that, the tongue should only be eaten by the owner of the house. That it is only eaten by boys and men; women and girls should never eat it because they are not heads of the house. This is in line with Catherine Mackinnon (1989) who asserts that violence meted out on women is usually ingrained in beliefs and principles of male rights. Basing on this and looking at how Nkwanzi is chased by the entire household including their dog Rukamba, the violence put on her is just because of the beliefs and principles of their tradition which prevent women from eating the tongue. Liberal theory helps us to understand the beliefs and principles of male rights, the beliefs in this case being that the tongue is can only be eaten by males because they are regarded as heads of families.

Through vivid description, Nkwanzu's toughness is depicted in a way she fights a group of boys who plan an ambush for her and Goora as they walk towards home after fetching a hundred litres of water each as a punishment from their teachers. The narrator shows how the boys violate Goora and Nkwanzu's right of way but also delves into Goora's mind who asks Nkwanzu to take off very well knowing that they(boys) would beat them up. The narrator again probes into Goora's mind to show that she is not scared of boys in a way that she fights back to get rid of the thugs. The author has it;

But the group that had descended on Goora suddenly got it rough. Goora had her big needle for basket making. She got it out of her bag and started stabbing her attackers. They took off in shocked disbelief. (Okurut 1998:34)

This is in line with Pointiere Malthilde (2021) who argues that female agency often arises as a response to trauma or crisis, allowing women to disrupt social norms and assert their autonomy. Looking at how Goora stabs her attackers using a big needle, is evidence that women develop agency in the face of trouble. The attack of the boys enables us to explore Goora's protective character. Through vivid description, we also learn of Goora's courage and skill in fighting. Goora shows us that she is aware of her right of freedom of movement and that's why she fights with the boys who block the way. She portrays her real self and refuses to be overlooked even though she is of a weaker sex as folks say by defending her own self through the use of the needle hence challenging the male sex. This proves that women have the right to security and defense and if not protected, they can as well stand in for themselves.

Vivid description is used to reflect subversion through Rwenzigye and Rex who set in to help defend Nkwanzu from her attackers on her way from school in the evening. Rwenzigye and Rex are seen as supporters of Nkwanzu in a way that they beat up her attackers. Rwenzigye and Rex help Nkwanzu to achieve freedom. Nkwanzu also succeeds at manipulating the boys in a way that she disguises as weak giving her attackers the opportunity to begin harassing her, and later giving a chance to Rwenzigye and Rex to catch up with the boys (her attackers) and beat them up seriously. The author has it that while Nkwanzu lay on the ground crying, a voice hails from heaven saying;

"You thugs, stupid idiots! How dare you keep on waylaying and beating up innocent young girls who have not harmed you? Brutes! You aren't even men. Real men don't beat women. Mzee, come and give me a hand." Called out the angelic voice. The Mzee person did not need a second calling. He came and together with the Angel, whipped Nkwanzu's attackers almost senseless..... "Get up, little girl. These thugs will never hurt you again." (Okurut 1998:34)

Nkwanzu's ability to cry does not show that she is weak. She uses it as a trick after seeing a large number of males that she and her friend would not possibly manage. Through vivid description we learn that Rwenzigye and Rex's provision of help to Nkwanzu is to help her achieve liberty. By asking that; *"How dare you keep on waylaying and beating up innocent young girls who have not harmed you?"*, the author intends to expose to us that beating women is improper. Liberal theory helps us to understand that Rwenzigye and Rex's help to Nkwanzu serves a purpose since the two friends in a way restore Nkwanzu's freedom of movement. Vivid descriptions enhance visualization of Nkwanzu's rescue while also making the scene and characters (Nkwanzu, Rwenzigye, Rex and the attackers) more memorable.

The act of lifting up the dress in expression of anger and frustration depicts self-expression and so subversive tendencies. This is done by one of the Asian women during Duduma's regime when all Asians are chased away from the country Uganda. According to Pointiere Malthilde (2021), she contends that female agency often arises as a response to trauma or crisis. Looking at how the Asian woman lifts up her dress exposing her bare bottom is evidence that women develop female agency in the face of trouble. The author vividly describes the woman *"The woman lifted her dress, exposing her bare brown bottom. She then bent down and showed her bottom to nobody in particular."* (Okurut 1998:94)

Rens SE (2021) describes such kind of women according to "Midriff theory" as unrepentant and unregretful regarding their sexual power and ability to spontaneously use their bodies the way they want purposely to improve their lifestyles. To the Africans, the action is considered as an abomination according to their tradition. However, women use it as a way of striking back in case they are not satisfied with what is being done. It is a sign language to reflect dissatisfaction or need for a change in the way things are being done. The woman who lifts her dress up and bends without fear or regret does so after being disappointed and is chased away by Duduma's

committee. Descriptive language enables us to establish the negative mood of the Asian woman and makes the scene of her undressing more memorable to our minds. By showing her bare brown bottom, she is showing her right to express her inner sad feelings of disappointment which used not to be the case before during Opolo's regime. The woman's action of showing her bare bottom is not by mistake, it is something intended with her personal intentions. It again signifies that she believes in herself and aware of her right of expression. This is a sign of being courageous and fearless because she does this on behalf of all Asians that lose their businesses and properties. People that see her doing it like Atim, get scared thinking it's a sign of doom. It should be understood that such an action of bending and showing your bare bottom can only be done by a person who is brave, courageous and with self-esteem. That's why, of all the Asians present in Uganda at that time, only that one woman is noticed showing her bare bottom at the entrance of the airplane. Vivid descriptions help us readers to visualize the scene and characters making the experience more immersive and engaging.

In the novel, many girls refuse to go to school. They claim that they want to do business and become Mafutas. Also, in the novel under study Okurut (1998), women start doing business which has never been the case before. What the girls do is in line with what Ayn Rand (1991) advocates for. Rand advocates for individual rights and liberties and argues that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. Rand's ideology on individual rights helps us to understand that the pupils (girls) quit school basing on their own interests. Free entry to contracts and markets by women enables equal economic participation. It also helps to combat violence meted out on women and curb down gender inequalities in the society. This is in line with Linda Scott (2021) who argues that women's economic empowerment is crucial for achieving gender equality and markets can be a powerful tool for promoting women's rights. The author has it that;

..... People have resorted to drinking from small hidden places. These places are run by women who hide drinks under their beds. And in the dim light, people go and drink from there and talk in whispers. Women have taken to peddling assorted merchandise in offices in order to make ends meet. (Okurut 1998:117)

According to Camille Cottais (2020) Liberal feminism demands women's access to the labor market. Liberal feminism helps us to understand why the girls choose to enter the labor market whereby they begin selling drinks. Vivid description makes the scene of girls dropping out of

school and joining the labor market where they sell assorted merchandize under the bed more memorable. Through vivid description we learn that the girls are selling drinks because they are lacking material needs. It should be noted that women never used to make business during Opolo's regime but now during Duduma's regime, they are doing it out of necessity. They have started and most probably, will never look back since they have taken this gospel wholesale hence portraying female agency.

Furthermore, subversive tendencies are reflected through political participation of some female characters as seen in the novel. This is exactly what Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) a liberal thinker asserts by showing that the theory helps to explain female agency. Female agency in this case being women's participation in public life. Descriptive language of used to describe Maama makes her more memorable in the entire novel. First, being a lady participating in politics but does not stop at that, she is also in charge of recruiting new members that want to join the underground movement. Vivid descriptions further help to unveil Maama. We come to learn that Maama is just a nickname, and we are able to tell that she is a primary school teacher in one of the schools in the city. The author has it;

"Maama, we've brought new members..... She had a strong, square chin and her eyes were sharp, missing nothing, always focused, alert. Later, they learnt that she was a teacher in one of the primary schools in the city but in the evenings, she disguised herself and sold crude spirits. (Okurut 1998:126)

Maama believes that she can always acquire the information about the government and that's why she proves to be so intelligent that in the evenings she changes herself from being a teacher and begins selling crude spirits. Descriptive language helps us to learn of Maama's intelligence skills. It is the same skills she uses to get information regarding the ruling government. The author has it recorded thus;

Most of her customers were soldiers who usually shot their mouths off after drowning glass after glass of the fiery liquid. She would then get information from them and this would assist in strategizing for the underground movement to topple the regime. (Okurut 1998:126)

Through vivid description, we learn that Maama does her things in a different manner. She has the skill of manipulating soldiers to get the required information. This shows that even though women are looked at as a weaker sex, they can also take on big missions for searching and getting very important information which can help in planning to overthrow Duduma's deadly regime. For instance, Maama who is a primary school teacher in the city camouflages into a bar attendant and sells crude spirits to soldiers which helps her to get the information about the ruling regime. And she in the end succeeds as we see president Duduma being overthrown by President Professor Polle. This portrays female agency because we see a lady Maama leading a gang group of professionals and students who are both men and women and yet before, women never used to be leaders. To wind it all, at the end of the day her underground movement overthrows the deadly regime of Duduma implying that she played her duties and controlled her team perfectly.

The right to perform rituals by Maama reflects subversion a form of female agency. Maama who is known as the leader of the struggle gang and a primary school teacher leads the initiation of the new members; that is; Nkwanzu and Atim into the group. According to John Locke (1670), often referred to as the “father of liberalism”, he promoted individual rights in his work. In this case, individual rights is Maama’s freedom to initiate the two members into the underground movement. Maama performs rituals in a way of recruitment of Nkwanzu and Atim. This is exactly one of the key tenets of liberal feminism; individual rights. Liberal feminism advocates freedom to practice any religion or no religion. Maama’s performance of rituals is described as;

"Comrades," soothed Maama, " We are not wizards. But we believe in doing things of our fore father's. Those things which were not bad. Whenever there was a war, and the clan warriors were called upon to set off, blood would flow. The blood of a live thing: be it bird or animal. Blood must flow and soak into the earth from which we come, from which we eat and return when the breath ceases in our body. It is this earth which will give us the strength to struggle. Earth is nature: God is nature. And we must look to him for guidance. We feed on ourselves, food grows on our bodies and this soil is our father and mother and our God and so our struggle must be tied with the earth, our parent, our God. Do you understand?" (Okurut 1998:128)

The vivid explanation depicts that Maama holds a position of authority and guidance according to the role she is playing; the role of initiating newcomers into the underground group as well as lead them. This is in line with what Mathilde (2021) discusses in his study. Mathilde emphasizes the importance of autonomy and self-determination. Furthermore, Maama offers free knowledge and also offers guidance and knowledge in support of their mission to overthrow Duduma's regime which is so corrupt exhibiting characters of a good leader. The author writes; *"She then went to an inner room and came back with a thin, long stick. She broke off two pieces and gave one to Atim and the other to Nkwanzu."* (Okurut 1998:129)

Vivid description enables us to understand that the unique sticks given to Atim and Nkwanzu are meant to help in identification purposes. Descriptive language helps us to identify on how to use the sticks. We learn that in case they come across difficult situations for instance at the roadblock, they can pull the sticks out of their bags and brush their teeth with them. If the member of their group is around, he or she can pull out theirs and can help them out of whatever difficult situation they are in. This kind of knowledge and guidance proves Maama's level of intelligence and her ability to lead her opposition team to overthrow the deadly regime. This is in line with what Mathilde (2021) finds out in her study. She notes that female agency often arises as a response to crisis, allowing women to disrupt social norms and assert their autonomy.

In preparation of the underground movement's mission to overthrow Duduma's government, Maama has this to say as well as offer;

"There's powder here. It's lethal. It's the crushed liver of a hyena which, if you take it, causes instant death. I'm giving you a quarter of teaspoonful of this powder. Always travel with it. And listen carefully: if you're ever caught by government soldiers and they torture you, you will release all the information about the organization..... Therefore, that's why I'm giving you this lethal powder not only to save other members of the underground movement but also to save you from very painful death. Should you ever be caught and stare death in the eye, pop this small piece of paper into your mouth, bite it and you'll immediately join your maker, painlessly." (Okurut 1998:129)

Maama carefully describes how to use the powder she gives her underground members. She offers this piece of advice and the medicine to avoid the leaking of their information and also

protect members of the underground movement from torture and mistreatment from the ruling government and their soldiers. By doing this, Maama expresses the value of responsibility, values of a good leader and self-belief. The kind of advice and knowledge she offers her team depicts female agency in a way she displays her ability to control her team and power to fight for human rights reason being that people were suffering during Duduma and Polle's regimes. Such vivid description improves memory retention as the brain is more likely to remember sensory details than abstract details.

The ability of women to participate at the political scene portrays subversion as a form of female agency. Atim and Nkwanzu are seen within the struggling gangs which are determined to overthrow Duduma's government. This is in line with what Mathilde (2021) finds out. He emphasizes the importance of autonomy and self-determination. Vivid descriptions create immersive atmosphere especially on how much determination Atim and Nkwanzu use to write anti-government literature. The author has it that; *"They stayed in the tiny room, each one of them receiving their assignments for the following day..... Atim and Nkwanzu went back to campus to start writing anti-government literature"* (Okurut 1998:130). Atim and Nkwanzu are seen writing anti-government literature which never used to be the case before. All this is revealed through vivid descriptions.

Through use of characterization, subversion is reflected through Nkwanzu who expresses her freedom of speech by saying "No to sex" when one morning Genesis visits her for a cup of coffee. Genesis helps to build Nkwanzu's character as bold and outspoken. Some of the females feel shy to say no to a man when he asks for sex but Nkwanzu challenges Genesis by saying "No" and asking him to wait. The author writes;

By six thirty, in the morning, Genesis was back from his task. He bathed thoroughly, put on fresh clothes and came to Nkwanzu's room..... As soon as they reached his room, they found Mzee who hastily left. Genesis looked into Nkwanzu's eyes and asked. "The conditions have changed, have they not? We can now go for the apple?" "No Genesis, the apple still remains for our wedding night." (Okurut 1998:130)

Through vivid description, we learn of Nkwanzu's character as outspoken. Nkwanzu stands her ground and shows resistance as she had told him earlier on. Nkwanzu clearly shows a difference

from other girls who would give in to boys. She refuses to have sex with Genesis before their wedding night and by doing so, resistance and subversion is reflected because she expresses her right to say NO to sex. Through Nkwanzu's character, we are able to view her ability to make a decision on her own since she refuses to be decided for, she is able to decide not to have sex with Genesis because the body belongs to her and therefore a man has no right to decide for her.

Women's ability to participate in the struggle to overthrow Duduma's government portrays resistance and subversion a form of female agency. More women get involved in the struggle headed by Maama while in the fields. Vivid descriptions help to depict the refusal of the ruling government. Like Mathilde (2021) argues that Female agency often develops as a response to crisis, various women get involved in the struggle because they are fed up with the deadly regime of Duduma. For instance, women apart from being food providers for the struggle, they also act as informers. They listen very carefully, and at the sight of government troops, they get out their mortars quickly put in ground nuts or millet and start pounding away. As they pound away, the sound gets picked by their fighters and they know the whereabouts of the enemy. The women's roles in the bush represents female agency because they are able to participate in the struggle unlike earlier on when they were expected to stay in their homes and take care of children and old men and old women during wars or such political struggles.

subversion is again seen on Page 154 of the novel, through Nkwanzu's character as frank and opinionated. This is seen in her actions and words. Nkwanzu depicts subversive tendencies when she refuses to sleep with Genesis before their wedding night. Her character reveals that she really wants to fulfill her promise of remaining a virgin until she is officially married. However much Genesis convinces Nkwanzu to have sex together as they celebrate the overthrow of Duduma's deadly regime, Nkwanzu stands on her feet and says No. the author has it stated that;

They celebrated until the wee hours of the morning. "Come with me, Nkwanzu," urged Genesis. They went straight to his bed. As they fused into each other in a searching kiss, their hearts pounding as one, Nkwanzu knew they would have to be wife and husband very soon. "Nkwanzu, is it not yet uhuru?" he asked his voice slurred with emotion. " No , Genesis. Not yet. But we can start making wedding plans. "All right, Mrs Rwenzingye-to-me. When should be the big day?" "Soon, Genesis. Soon." (Okurut 1998:154)

More so, by saying; "*No Genesis. Not yet.....*" Nkwanzu expresses her right and ability to make decisions regarding her body. She portrays subversive tendencies when she refuses to sleep with Genesis yet in the earlier years, men would decide for girls and women on when to have sex with them. But this time round, Nkwanzu shows authority over herself. However, much Genesis warns Nkwanzu about the things of virginity and its custom that incase she died while still a virgin, that they would push a banana stick into her private part and burry her with it embedded in there. That the banana would signify a man's tool. Never in shock, Nkwanzu resists Genesis's idea, stands her ground and in fact, she does not react even though what Genesis says sounds very terrible. Nkwanzu remains in her happy world. Nkwanzu's refusal to be manipulated signifies female agency because though convinced by Genesis of how she would be buried in case she died a virgin; she stands her ground and makes a decision on her own. She expresses freedom of speech and ability to motivate herself because she remains happy even after being discouraged by Genesis her one lover and husband to be. Characterization helps to develop believable and relatable characters as Nkwanzu because she refuses to give in before her wedding night.

Nkwanzu is seen empowering colleagues who were oppressed in the jail. She manages to manipulate Minister Rex. When minister Rex promises to release Genesis on the condition that she spends a night with him, Nkwanzu does not refuse. She rather accepts and expresses her brilliance in a way that in the first place, she does not refuse to accept to sleep with the minister but at the end of it all, she indeed manages to trick him and does not sleep with him. And yet Genesis and his fellow government opponents get released. According to Catherine Mackinnon (1989), violence meted out on women (by men) is usually ingrained in beliefs and principles of male sexual right and such schemes give women limited choices to do away with sexual advances. Basing on this and looking at how Rex is determined to violate Nkwanzu's rights, it is true that such beliefs of male sexual right limit women's choices to do away with sexual advances by men. However, Nkwanzu determined not to act as a ransom, she physically fights for her sexual rights and the author has it stated;

Like a cat making a leap for the milk, he got ready for the thrust and as he headed towards her very being, she raised her knee and jammed it between his legs. She squeezed, squeezed against the organ of his seed. Shocked surprise mingled with pain sprung into his eyes. (Okurut 1998:185,188)

Vivid description allows us to learn how Nkwanzu reclaims power by insisting on taking control of her body and choices. A female defeats the male which never used to be the case before. It is open and true that Nkwanzu manipulates Rex because she perfectly convinces him to release Genesis from jail and yet does not offer him sex like they had agreed hence defies societal expectations around femininity and behavior. Nkwanzu uses her brain, tricks and manages to fail Rex's mission of sleeping with her for the release of Genesis and Maama. Nkwanzu proves to be knowledgeable and brilliant because someone shy and dull cannot handle such a situation of fighting a man holding such a big position in the ministry. Therefore, despite Minister Rex's position, it doesn't stop Nkwanzu from fighting for her rights of saying NO to sex.

Subversion is portrayed when Nkwanzu is raped on her marriage day by Rex her old-time friend through Genesis and Mzee. This is in line with what Catherine Mackinnon (1989) finds out in her study. She states that women do not have control over their own bodies because they remain subjugated to their male counterparts. Basing on Catherine's findings, and looking at how Rex forcefully sleeps with Nkwanzu and Ssenga's determined to conceal the scenario, it is true that violence meted out on women (by men) is usually ingrained in beliefs and principles of male sexual right. Such schemes give women limited choices to do away with sexual advances.

Descriptive language helps us to understand Maama's intention of resisting silence in a way she goes against Ssenga's idea of concealing the evil action (rape) that Rex does to Nkwanzu. Maama gives Nkwanzu more knowledge and convinces her by showing her how rape is bad and the worst crime against humanity. Through vivid description, Maama tells Nkwanzu of how rape has become a weevil eating up females. This action is a subversive tendency because Maama is going against the society ways of living; males' sexual rights. Originally in African setting, when a girl is raped, such a thing should be concealed by one who has done it and one it has been done to. No one should let it out unlike in this case whereby Maama encourages Nkwanzu to report the matter to the police in order to fight this evil. Nkwanzu refuses at the first hearing of reporting the matter to police because she would go through a second psychological rape. However, Maama challenges her at the same time giving courage in form of question. Maama asks; "*Nkwanzu, if you, a lawyer keep quiet, then how shall we fight this evil which is on the increase?*" (Okurut 1998:182). Through rhetorical question, Nkwanzu reclaims power to report the crime to police. Nkwanzu says this after a serious soul search; "*I will go to the police.*" By accepting to report the

rape case to police, Nkwanzu expresses freedom of speech which never used to be the case before as Ssenga is saying. Initially, Ssenga's suggestion after learning about Nkwanzu's rape, is to keep quiet and bury the truth. In the early days, such issues of rape were meant to never be disclosed to anybody because they looked at it as the unspeakable act, unlike currently and that's why Maama is insisting and convincing Nkwanzu to report the evil of rape to police such that such cases can reduce or even come to an end thereby liberating the female gender as well save girls in the future from facing the same challenge. Therefore, resistance and subversion are depicted when Nkwanzu decides to open up and report the case to police because she expresses freedom of speech and ability to make choices on her own. Descriptive language makes the raping scene, Rex, Ssenga and Maama more memorable.

Subverting expectations is portrayed in a way that Nkwanzu learns that her only husband begins sleeping with other women. To avoid contracting the virus and getting sick, Nkwanzu stands her ground upon using the condom when approached by her husband. Nkwanzu defies societal norms and slaps it in his face; *"So, when he approached her one night, she faced him and told him bluntly that he would have to use a condom"* (Okurut 1998:223). By asking Genesis to put on a condom, she questions her patriarchal norms. This can only be said by a person who is outspoken. Nkwanzu speaks out to her husband without fear in order to keep healthy thus reflecting self-expression and autonomy. Genesis helps to build Nkwanzu's character as confident and independent thinker.

Nkwanzu denies Genesis sex and insists on him using a condom on her during sex time because she learns of his trash woman and she is not sure of his mistress's status. This is why Nkwanzu swears that Genesis would never have her in flesh. Also, Ihorere helps to build Nkwanzu's character as graceful in a way that she (Nkwanzu) later agrees to sleep with Genesis in order to maintain the family love for their child (Ihorere). Nkwanzu suggests the use of a condom during love making (sex) and the author has it that;

In his drunken stupors, he would come home and demand for sex. She would feel repulsed but because she wanted to maintain the family for Ihorere's sake, she would try to put a condom on him. (Okurut 1998:223)

Nkwanzu's refusal of having her in flesh portrays subversive tendencies and self-expression because before, a woman was not to talk if the man needed sex from her but now a woman like Nkwanzu can decide when to have sex and when not to. Hence disobeying their traditional rules.

Through flashbacks, we come to know from Nkwanzu and her mother's dialogue that Goora's mother owns a bar and that she brews alcohol (Tonto) which she sells in order to take care of the whole family's necessities. The author has it;

Nkwanzu just recalled that Maama never approved of Goora's mother brewing alcohol. She used to argue with Maama. "But Maama, why do you think it's shameful for her to brew? She doesn't even drink it. She only sells it in order to maintain the whole family. So, where's the sin?" (Okurut 1998:48)

The fact that Goora's mother is able to acquire a business of her own and maintain it proves her to be pushing against systematic and institutional barriers that originally limit women's rights and opportunities. She starts up a local pub in which she brews local beer for sale such that she can earn some money to help in the maintenance of her family as well as sending her children to school. This is in line with what Linda Scott (2021) notes in his study. She argues that women are free to enter contracts and markets. Flashbacks reveal Goora's mother's motivations and past experiences.

Through vivid description, subversion is depicted when Nkwanzu's Ssenga amplifies her agency. Ssenga gives her a piece of advice in case she gets into her first menstrual period. Ssenga sits Nkwanzu down for more than an hour and vividly describes what menstrual period is about and all it entails. Ssenga advises the daughter; *"Daughter you're now a woman, you've seen the moons. From now onwards, be careful not to allow any man to sleep with you,"* (Okurut 1998:57) By saying such words to Nkwanzu, Ssenga describes the way how Nkwanzu should carry herself in a way that gives her the ability and confidence to always say "NO" to the boys that ask for sex hence portraying female agency. While Ssenga tells Nkwanzu about becoming a woman, Nkwanzu also confides in her the humiliating experience she has gone through at the doctor's. (It should be remembered that while Nkwanzu is taken to the hospital for a checkup after telling her mother that she had seen blood come from her Anus, the Doctor during the checkup, roughly separates her legs and pushes his gloved fingers inside her Kooko), Something that tortures her

psychologically. After listening to Nkwanzu's narration, Ssenga tips her on how to avoid or behave when she gets entangled in such circumstances. Ssenga speaks;

"..... Listen carefully. Men and boys are crafty. They can trick a young girl like you. Worse still, they can try to rape you. Sometimes even you can like a boy so much that you will want to sleep with him. But don't. Because when you become pregnant, he will leave you immediately you tell him. If a man ever tries to rape you, pretend that you're giving in. Even sing a little song. Praise Him and then when he is about to penetrate you, raise your knee and hit his manhood and testicles. Squeeze them hard and he'll cry for his mother....." (Okurut 1998:51)

Vivid description helps us to learn of Ssenga's intentions of raising Nkwanzu's esteem and courage to fight for her rights as a girl child. Ssenga advises Nkwanzu to always carry with her empindu, the sharp pointed instrument used in making baskets as her second option to destruct boys and men from forcing themselves upon her. Before, Nkwanzu is seen as naive and shy because while she is young and gets raped by Matayo their herd's man. However, after listening to Ssenga's advice, Nkwanzu becomes shrewd and confident ready to face off the male gender that would disturb her especially seeking for sexual services or wanting to rape her, (Okurut 1998:58). *"Stab, stab, stab, Nkwanzu repeated after her aunt, stabbing the empty air too."* Stabbing the air clearly indicates that Nkwanzu has clearly picked the advice and that she is ready to stab the rapists with Empindu as advised by her Ssenga. Through Ssenga's word of advice to Nkwanzu, female agency is depicted in a way that she is empowering the young girl firstly by giving her sex education and secondly, by tipping her on how to fight for her right of saying NO to sex. Ssenga's advice gives Nkwanzu the capacity and ability to make her own decisions. She learns that she is the master of her own fate. That it's her to decide between accepting to sleep with a man or not, bearing in mind the repercussions of sex. Vivid descriptions enhance visualization of Nkwanzu, young as she is, bearing the authority to control her body thus portraying women agency.

Through use of songs, we learn of the portrayal of subversive tendencies. The song in Okurut (1998:141) is started and sang by a female student named Atim who is known to be Nkwanzu's friend hence displaying her leadership skills. The song she sings is an old spiritual song. She is later joined in by the rest of the students. The entire group of students sing because the

commander's order of removing the sex order. This is seen as a sign of resistance and representation of female agency in a way that the female sex refuse and will no longer be used as sex objects. They regain the right to control their bodies. Due to resentment and excitement, Atim and her fellow students hold up firmly their hands as a sign of triumph. And together they sing a song;

Oo freedom, Oo freedom

Oo freedom, over me

And before I be a slave

Oo be burried in the grave

And go home to my Lord

And be free. (Okurut 1998:141)

They are completely in total disgust and tired of slavery. Atim and her fellows sing this song as a sign of distress. They are tired of slavery. Furthermore, when the commander asks to change the song, immediately Atim's energetic voice rings out with vigor and the rest join in singing with a sense of hope;

We shall overcome, we shall overcome

We shall overcome, some day

Oo deep in my heart, I do believe

We shall overcome some day. (Okurut 1998:141)

This clearly depicts female agency in that as a lady, Atim manages to sing in public and everyone else follows in including the male gender. Also, the songs that students sing are about liberation of the country especially the females that were being used as sex objects. Songs make scenes memorable and foreshadow the overthrowing of Duduma's government. Giving a chance to Nkwanzi and Atim to access and more so join the underground group that plan to topple the insane regime of Duduma portrays female agency. First of all, the two make a decision of their

own to join hands with eligible political actors to put down the fake regime. Secondly, they are aware of their right to join any political movement of their choice. They believe in themselves that together with the underground group they can overcome the insane regime of Duduma. This is in line with what Camille (2020) finds out in her study. She reasons that those women deserve political equality. Basing on this and sighting Atim and Nkwanzu's contribution towards the overthrowing of Dduma's regime, women deserve the right to participate in politics. It should be noted that before females were not seen on political and leadership scene. In this case, evidence is in Okurut (1998:142) where Genesis taps Nkwanzu's back and gets her arm and they start running. Soon, Atim and Mzee catch up with them and together they go to meet and join some of the people who are struggling to topple the insane regime.

Through indirect speech, we learn of the women's ability to search for and access high profile jobs. In the novel, women start accessing good jobs like men which was never the case those days. Before, women would only be allowed to occupy positions like hotel managers and waitresses but now there's a competition. They also can get better jobs like men. For instance, on Page 205, we learn that Nkwanzu becomes a lawyer and is earning a living as a youth female. Also, on Page 143, through reported speech, we learn that Maama who is the head of the underground gang, is a primary school teacher who disguises herself in the evenings and start selling crude spirits. She does this in order to get both money and the right-hand information from the ruling government most especially from soldiers who are her main customers. Therefore, Maama is both a primary school teacher in the city and a businesswoman owning a bar. Also, Atim gets a job after completing her university education, "*The four friends graduated from Makerere University. Atim went to teach in one of the secondary schools in the city.....*" (Okurut 1998:149) Women defy the societal expectations by showing their ability to access good and formal jobs. Before, women and girls were expected to do domestic work like fetching water, preparing food and gardening. However, now things have changed and they can also access good jobs like men and earn money for a living. Indirect speech helps us to reveal the power dynamics of female characters in *The Invisible Weevil*.

Through vivid description, Nkwanzu expresses herself to her husband to be. She gives a list of all her dos and don'ts such that Genesis does not make life hard for her. She does this such that he

can understand her better and together they can have a joyful and peaceful marriage. Nkwanzu speaks out;

As my husband, there'll be your don'ts. Number one: don't urinate on the toilet seat. Men urinate while standing and splash the whole toilet seat with their lousy urine. They don't even bother to clean it. How are women supposed to use the toilet then? Squat on your urine?"..... Number two: When you come back home after duty and take off your shoes and socks, don't throw them anywhere and then ask me later about their whereabouts. I will not have married you to pick up your socks, shoes and slippers. Number three: When both of us come from work tired in the evening, don't put up your feet and ask me to make you a cup of tea" (Okurut 1998:158).

Nkwanzu is outspoken and not ashamed to speak out things that do not work-out for her. By speaking out her Do's and Don'ts to Genesis; her husband to be, she displays exposure and self-esteem. She refuses to keep quiet and then be manipulated by a man. It's the reason she averts from Genesis's face when he wants to kiss her very early in the morning before they have both brushed their dental formulae. She in fact reasons him out saying that its unhygienic and nauseating. She insists that people should only kiss after both have brushed their teeth. Initially, women are expected to say "Yes" to every man's wish. But Nkwanzu turns out to be different. Through her, subversion is portrayed when she stands on her two feet and reads out her rules to Genesis. This signifies self-belief, empowerment and ability to make personal decisions.

Nkwanzu adds and tells Genesis that;

"..... Number four: when you fail to get sleep in the middle of the night, don't wake me up for sex. Most husbands use their wives as sleeping tablets-Valium."..... And number five: never leave your underwear for me to wash. If I left mine in the basin, would you wash it? If you aren't going to wash mine, don't expect me to wash yours. Many men say it's degrading for them to wash a woman's underwear. How come you don't find it degrading to dodge in the part which that very underwear covers?"(Okurut 1998:159)

All these are signs that the females are coming in arms to fight for their rights. She argues that sharing of responsibilities is the right thing to do. She does this by showing that if married one

love each other, then they have to share in all aspects. This is in line with what feminists argues about. Feminists believe that all people are equal and should be treated in the same way. This depicts female agency.

Through vivid description, the author describes how Nkwanzu liberates Maama and Genesis from the prison where they were being detained and tortured.

She cast a last look at the form groaning with pain, unable to utter a word..... "Enjoy your-self, honorable," she flung at him as she hurriedly opened the door and took off, the soldiers saluting her..... She half-walked, half-ran through the thick darkness until she reached Maama's place. She knocked three times, and Genesis opened the door Quick, Nkwanzu, we don't have much time. Put on this habit of a nun and let's get out of here quickly. As soon as I got out of that hell and read your note, I organized everything, (Okurut 1998:189)

The vivid description given above enables us to learn of the fighting spirit and leadership skills Nkwanzu contains. She manages to become Maama and Genesis's savior. Before it used to be only men that would play such key roles of liberating prisoners but now also females can do it well in the shortest period hence portraying women agency.

The author uses vivid descriptions to clearly describe how some women join army and become part of the struggle to overthrow Polle's government such that their fellow females and the country at large can become independent and enjoy freedom. The author clearly describes the arrival of the convoy well decorated with the female gender;

The people looked with awe at the women soldiers, smartly clad in their uniforms with AK-47 slung on their shoulders. The women combatants were something like a tourist attraction: the eighth wonder of the world, for never in the history of the country had women been combatants. After a few minutes, they heard the noise of many jeeps and in the lead was Maama driving one. She parked it and jumped out quickly, briskly. The other open jeeps arrived and Maama was already the side of one saluting Kazi who was clad in military fatigues." (Okurut 1998:191)

Women become a part of the liberating team which never used to be the case. Before, women only used to supply food and take care of the sick, old men, old women and children as well during times of struggle like wars unlike in this era where women also join army and dress in combat specifically to fight for their rights and freedom. This depicts female agency because women soldiers have joined and successfully fought for their freedom. Vivid descriptions help us to learn of the roles of women in the struggle to overthrow Duduma's government.

More to that, the author describes how Maama, a primary school teacher in the city and a leader of the underground movement expresses her confidence and courage on the day of victory when the president -Kazi is going to swear in. Maama is seen driving one of the leading jeeps and also stands beside Kazi their new president. Before, it's only men who were meant or supposed to drive big cars but now, also females can drive vehicles. For instance, Maama becomes a good example. Furthermore, women were never allowed to stand in some positions in public like standing next to a high-profile person like the president. It would be so demeaning to the state. However, now Maama is seen standing next to President Kazi with confidence and she sees it as something normal. She depicts enough self-esteem, self-efficacy and freedom of expression thus portraying subversion.

Third person point of view is applied to bring out Nkwanzu 's leadership skills. During president Kazi's regime, women are appointed to big offices. What Kazi's regime does, is exactly what John Stuart Mill (1869) addresses in his work. Mill argued for women's rights and equality in the areas of education and employment just like Nkwanzu acquires education and is again appointed as the Deputy minister of Foreign Affairs. The author has it; *"It was during those troubled days that Nkwanzu was made Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,"*(Okurut 1998:219). The females acquire big positions and the government itself empowers them in that they put in place a policy of affirmative action which results into women being appointed to high offices, among other measures. It should be noted that before, such high positions were only secured and occupied by males but now during Kazi's regime, also females have been considered the reason honorable Nkwanzu is made Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nkwanzu's friends, relatives and Genesis her husband, all receive her appointment with jubilation something that gives her more courage to serve her country. Third person narration gives us readers a 360-degree view of Nkwanzu's leadership skills as a good leader.

In conclusion therefore, subversion is a form of female agency which females in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) use to challenge, defy and undermine societal norms, expectations and power structures that restrict their autonomy, choices and empowerment. The author employs flashbacks, vivid descriptions, songs, indirect speech and third person point of view to highlight women's resilience and determination in the face of obstacles and oppression. According to my research, women in the novel use various forms of subversion including artistic expression, activism, protest, political engagement, personal choices, community support, self-expression and education to challenge oppressive systems, laws, social norms and reclaim their power.

4.2 Plot Synopsis of The Official Wife

The Official Wife is a novel authored by Mary Karoro Okurut. It is a segmentation of the contemporary polygamous marriage in a Christian setting. *The Official Wife* (1993) is a story of a woman known as Liz who trapped in a loveless marriage with her husband Ishaka who takes a second wife Malaika. Liz is devastated by the feeling that she has been assessed and found wanting by her husband who takes on a second wife. Despite being in a modern-day polygamous relationship, she struggles to come to terms with her situation and decides to win back her husband's love. The novel deals with a number of themes including; polygamy and marriage, female agency, cultural critique among others. The book explores the complexities of polygamous relationships in modern day Africa, highlighting the challenges women face in these situations. The book talks about Liz's journey which showcases her efforts to regain control over her life and marriage, demonstrating her resilience and determination. The author uses satire and humor to critique societal norms and expectations surrounding marriage, relationships and women's roles in Ugandan culture. The novel has three key characters including; Liz, the protagonist and a strong-willed woman who navigates a difficult marriage; Ishaka, is Liz's husband who takes a second wife, Malaika and struggles with his own desires and expectations. And Fina, is Liz's supportive friend and is seen throughout the novel encouraging her to believe in herself and take control of her life. The author tells the story in a laconic style and with sharp humor, making observations and criticisms about women's experiences of traditional and modern-day marriage and polygamy in Africa as well as her culture as an uncritical reception of

western ways. That is why B. Musinguzi (2003) asserts that “*Okurut's book tackles a subject that everyone avoids.*”

4.2.1 The Portrayals of negotiation for individual rights in *The Official Wife* (1993)

In the novel, Karooro broadly talks about female agency through various forms including; bargaining, negotiation, resistance, subversion, manipulation and deception. However, I will focus on negotiation and how it is portrayed in Okurut (1993).

Characterization is used to depict the nature in which the woman Vice president handles the ordeal in her marriage. It is written that her husband's idea of having a good time was beating her senseless and then gloating his accomplishments. Ishaka helps to build Liz's character as resilient and strong-willed. Liz faces this challenge head-on with courage and determination yet does not break off from her duty as woman vice president. Ishaka ridicules Liz by reasoning, how much better fun can get when one is walloping the VP. He questions himself if other married men can ever have this kind of privilege. He pauses a question; “...*a nobody to beat a full whole vice president of the nation?*” Rhetoric question is used to emphasize superiority and how it is important for a common citizen to beat a vice president. He sets a record of being the first man in Africa to beat a vice president. He does this with courage knowing that his wife cannot at all costs disclose the ordeal happening to her. He affirms to himself that; “*After all, ebyomunju tebitotolwa*” (Okurut 1993:10) implying that what happens in the home should never be heard from outside. This is the philosophy to which Ishaka believes and as Catherine Mackinnon (1989) asserts that women do not have control over their own bodies because they remain subjugated to their male counterparts. And in this regard, the philosophy is the belief that even though his wife (Liz) is beat senseless, she cannot at all costs disclose the ordeal.

The proverb adds depth to the narrative and conveys cultural wisdom. It helps us to understand that women are supposed to keep secrets of a home. Liz through the author uses some other proverbs at a later stage which proves this patriarchal system wrong especially of this “*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*”. It is usually wives who become victims to this proverb because if something happened to a man in doors, they're not expected to let it out to friends and strangers

but the reverse is true. Women's secrets that happen indoors are usually exposed. For instance, Ishaka exposes his wife while with friends one evening, telling how sweet she is. The vice president narrates;

Ishaka has no problem telling his friends what I look like down south and how pleasant or how deep my well is compared to his other exploits when he gathers with the boys for an evening sip around the malwa pot..... (Okurut 1993:12)

In a patriarchal system, it should be noted that a man commits no offence for telling his woman nakedness and how she performs in bed. But if the woman does the same, she is considered blasphemous and that's why they say "*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*". However, the woman vice president takes courage and calls it quits after realizing that her marriage is not going places; thereby exposes everything. The writer has it that; "*Wife had certainly never appreciated this particular sense of privacy and belted out the truth to the entire nation*" (Okurut 1993:10)

By speaking out to the entire world, Liz questions authority and challenges unjust systems that under-look married women. Liz shows the entire world that she is aware of her rights and automatically this marks a big step for women in oppressive marriages, "*those women who regard themselves as progressive cheer her honestly with courage*" (*The Official Wife*,10) since she is emancipating the female sex and has been able to break the York of patriarchal system of "*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*" and more other forms. Other married women learn of their right of freedom of speech. The author has it; "*..... If a whole VP could talk, the doors were now wide open for lesser women to speak out or even walk out,*" (Okurut 1993:10)

Liz expresses her physical and emotional challenge openly and honestly without hesitation. Her confidence and willingness to speak out, inspire others to do the same. This awareness of her rights help married women in torturing marriages to speak up and be helped or walk out to have peace hence challenging the societal norms and stereotypes on the female sex. What the woman VP does enables even lesser women who are commoners in the society to speak out their grievances. It is written that; this empowers women of all categories to speak up whenever need arises and prevents them from dying in silence and adhering to the ill domestic violence like the woman vice president had been going through or even worse. in a way that she negotiates for help by opening up to the public. Ishaka again helps to build Liz's character as outspoken and confident.

Many women in the women's movement organizations are victims of domestic violence themselves. They qualify to add a chapter each to the finest book on the matter. But they are silent and are not confident enough to speak up their ordeals. Yet they advise their rural counterparts to walk out of abusive marriages while they themselves cling to theirs. Characterization helps to reveal the character of women in the women's movement organizations as insecure and timid. They lack courage and faith in their abilities. This is the opposite of Liz. Liz's courage and confidence allows her chance to negotiate for help.

However, Liz is blamed for this by the majority of men and more conservative women who jeer and argue saying that "*amaka gamanywa embeba*". Implying that it's only the rats which know whatever is happening in the home and nobody else. These patriarchal system believers know and believe that a man dominates both public and private spheres. Implying that a woman has no say whatsoever especially in the low- and middle-income countries. This is in line with Catherine Mackinnon's findings. In her work, Catherine Mackinnon (1989) contends that women remain subjugated to their male counterparts. That is why Ishaka tells his friends how the wife Liz looks like down-south and how deep her well compared to his other exploits, yet Liz is not expected to utter anything about her husband.

Self-advocacy is a form of negotiation that is reflected through the VP (Liz) who goes on to declare how the husband ill-treats her twice a week. It is written that; "*The woman vice president declared the man had slapped her twice.*" The woman VP seeks justice through speech. She expresses how the husband slapped her thereby asserting her needs, wants and boundaries. Male chauvinists claim that a man is not supposed to open for the wife even though she is a vice president. When the man is interrogated why he beats the VP (woman vice president), he replies that as far as he is concerned, he was not beating the VP, he was disciplining his wife. This is dramatic irony and mockery at the same time. Husband mocks the vice president while answering the people who interrogate him asking why he had beaten the wife. He ridicules his wife who holds a high position in the government by beating her and addressing her as a mere wife in public.

Liz's ability to bargain and negotiate for a fair title for house girls is yet another form of female agency. Through characterization, we learn of Liz's ability to disregard the title "house girl" reflecting an empowering character in her. The author writes against the sin of calling house

helps - house girls. It is written that Liz never wants to use the title 'house girl.' The house girl helps to build Liz's character as kindhearted. To her, calling "house helps" - "house girls" is demeaning and dehumanizing. Liz encourages individualism in a way that she expresses her opinion and idea of according house girls a fair title; house helps just like Ayn Rand (1943) an American philosopher and novelist in his book *The Fountainhead*. He argues that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. A decent title "house-help" helps house helps who are women to meet their mental, emotional, social, spiritual confidence and support. It gives them the ability to believe in themselves. The author explains that not only the Asians suffer this sin of calling domestic workers house girls but also here in Uganda. Calling domestic workers house girls demoralizes them emotionally and psychologically therefore by speaking up against the sin of calling domestic workers house girls, Liz is helping change the domestic workers into active survivors rather than passive victims. Characterization helps us to learn of Liz's ability to express her right of freedom of speech. Early and adequate psycho social support can prevent distress and suffering which would develop into something more severe and it activates female agency. Negotiation for psychosocial support is regarded as a form of female agency in a way that helps women domestic workers cope better and become reconciled to everyday life.

Collaborative problem solving is seen when Liz prepares to strike back against the thug who wants to kill her husband Ishaka. Her ability to decide to arm herself with a pounding stick and go for a mission to rescue her husband is a form of negotiation under female agency reflected in Okurut (1993). Autonomy and self-expression are also reflected. This is seen when she decides herself without external influence. As Liz prepares to go on a rescue mission, she goes under the bed and gets out the stick she uses for pounding millet. She gets a pounding stick and goes on a mission to rescue her only Ishaka. She describes her fears; "*In this case, my fear of the unknown future without Ishaka is a million times greater than the fear of darkness or robbers.*" (Okurut 1993:26) Vivid descriptions help us to draw a picture of the kind of fear Liz holds in her heart. We are also able to understand the trauma she is going through. Despite the much fear she holds inside her heart, she still believes that she can manage to fight the thief and defeat him. This depicts female agency. Liz goes on to tell of her fears asking herself; "*where the hell can the thief be? And if he has already injured my husband....*" (Okurut 1993:26).

The writer uses rhetorical questions to directly speak to us the audience in a way of engaging us as well as giving the reader a moment to pause and think about the questions. She later hears her

poor husband clearly breathing his last, gasping for breath. Not long, between the gasp he cries out for his mother in search for help saying; *"Oh, you are killing me."* Such words are often considered last words of a dying man. Liz kicks the door open as she raises the pounding stick high, ready to finish off the murderer of the piercing screech followed by the most urgent sounding fear filled alarm of all time. She makes an alarm, *"Walalala, walalala! Help! Thieves! My husband is being murdered! Heeeeeeeelp!"* (Okurut 1993:26).

Female agency is noticed. Liz's ability to make a loud alarm itself indicates negotiation for help from the village neighbors and the fire brigade team. Vivid descriptions allow us to establish Liz's request for help from the neighborhood. This is in line with what Ayn Rand (1943), a philosopher, advocates for in his works. He promotes individual rights and liberties. In this case the individual right is that Liz expresses freedom of speech whereby she makes loud alarm without censorship. An alarm is often interpreted as a need for help from neighbors. Neighbors pick it up and within a minute, village eleven the name of their area is resounding with different degrees of alarm. The entire village responds to empower her in such a great time of need. The entire village includes both women and men. Descriptive language helps us to establish men as enablers in female negotiation. Liz learns that there are people to support her in defending her husband from the robber. The writer has it;

It is amazing what one-woman cry can do to an entire neighborhood. We may pretend to be ladies who can't speak beyond a whisper just because we are around men, or to be precise when they are all around us. But when faced with the possibility of disaster, our true selves come out and they are seldom as pretty as our faces. (Okurut 1993:26)

This statement proves to us that, women have the capacity to emancipate each other if they only have to shake away the shyness and bargain for help. A good example is this, where Liz had to only make a single alarm and the entire village gets up to help. Help by the gathering of the village is a great signature of empowering women socially and security wise. The author vividly describes how the village members collaborate in bid to offer help to Liz who makes an alarm in search for help;

Some of the rescue team have whistles, which they used in the last presidential campaign and they blow them until their lungs almost burst. Others get their drums and bang away on them without any particular sense of rhythm (you can't blame them; this is no time for

celebrating). Yet others get tins of one type or another and clang them with such fury and urgency, this time the din is enough to send a pregnant ward, with immediate results. (Okurut 1993:27)

This signifies a collaborative spirit and that, women matter to them in the society, a reason they all get up to help. The author calls it “solidarity”. She explains that if there is an attribute their people have in abundance, it is Solidarity. The vivid description given above by the author helps us to clearly understand the kind of help offered which enables Liz to believe that people are ready to help her.

The act of solidarity in the book is called “*munno mukabi*”. This means when your neighbor is in danger it becomes your business especially in rural areas.

Negotiation is again reflected in the text Okurut (1993)), where some communities have different associations where women have an opportunity to participate in. This empowers women emotionally and socially. Women show the ability to choose, engage and maintain healthy relationships through associations, such as; “Twezikye”, “Twetambire” and “Munno mukabi”. These associations set in to help amidst problems. According to John Rawls (1971), he emphasizes the importance of individual rights and liberties in his work. Basing on this and looking at how village eleven members get up to help Liz at the haring of her alarm, there various reasons women gather peacefully with others. When one loses a partner, one is supported in terms of either money, food or even firewood. The writer has it that, “*So when somebody dies, it is the obligation of everyone around to contribute either money, food, or firewood. There is a book where everything is recorded.*” (Okurut 1993:27) For such groups, women work together to find mutually beneficial solutions in times of need. Collaborative problem solving enables the female sex to believe in themselves and also empowers them socially, economically and psychologically.

Through vivid description, Liz’s open communication through a phone call to receive help from the fire brigade team at her home to cease fire is depicted. This is represented in Okurut (1993:54). Liz imagines a fire outbreak in her house in the middle of the night, she sniffs and feels something must be burning. Being aware of her rights and the law, she calls out to the fire brigade team by phone call for rescue and they are there in time to help. In this, we see men as enablers of female negotiation. This portrays female agency for the team responds to a mere

woman yet we all know that usually women occupy the lowest positions; they are marginalized. This is total encouragement to Liz especially psychologically. However, the fire brigade team commander realizes that there's no fire. But Liz insists that there is. In disgust fire brigade commander insists saying; *"Very funny. Now cut out the theatricals, woman; there is no fire here!"* (Okurut 1993:54) Descriptive language allows us to learn that the fire brigade team has been called for nothing since there is no fire to cease. Liz is supposed to pay the hire fee and time but the commander of fire brigade team let's her be to keep peace as well as support her mentally and socially. Okurut writes that;

Madam, under the circumstances, I should charge you for having brought us here on a false alarm. Ideally you should have paid for the fuel and time we have wasted. But because you obviously have a mental problem the fire department will not charge you. (Okurut 1993:54)

Liz manages to use emotional awareness to navigate the situation. She indeed succeeds in that they leave her home without paying a single penny. However, Liz does not achieve this alone, she is supported by the fire brigade commander who decides not to charge her any money for the wasted fuel and time.

Negotiation is again portrayed in Okurut (1993) through vivid descriptions. While the three women sit on the cushioned stools busy pulling away at the poor girl's hair, they engage in endless gossip. The girl of about two and a half feels tortured to the point of being told not to move her head for comfort even when she is feeling pain. In negotiation for her comfort, she communicates through heart breaking sobs and screams saying; *"Mummy mmmmmmmmy! One of the tigresses puts her hand over the child's mouth"*. (Okurut 1993:74) Being aware of her rights, she buries all her molars into the hand of the woman plaiting her. The author uses indirect speech to portray the girl's negotiation of power hence female agency is reflected. Negotiation is portrayed in a way that children are meant to respect their elders even though an old person commits something unfair against the child. The child is not supposed to say or do anything like fighting or responding back. However, the girl challenges the societal norms and stereotypes because she forgets about her elders and she refuses to be ill-treated. Indirect speech is used certainly to create distance between the author and the reader's perception in such a way that it fosters intimacy between the reader and narrator. In this case, the little girl of two and a half

years fights for her rights by biting the rude cruel woman who is infringing pain on her head. The young girl shows ability to emancipate herself. Liz applauds the girl by giving a hilarious and breath-taking clap purposely to support and empower her psychologically. Liz's applause indicates that the girl's resistance has been successful.

Through vivid description, negotiation is expressed when Liz communicates within herself (intrapersonal communication) and decides without any external influence to visit the native doctor who gives her a concoction in five-liter jerrycan. This is in line with Ayn Rand (1943) who argues that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. Liz gets results that she initially had doubted. The author has it;

Truth be-told, I don't know whether it is the herbs or the potions or just mother luck or a combination of all those factors that does it. Obviously, I give birth, out pops a baby girl a raving beauty. She is a queen, is my baby girl. (Okurut 1993:79)

Vivid description evokes strong emotions of joy. In this case, both Liz and Ishaka are excited and happy for the birth of the baby girl. All this is caused by the good advice from Fina who advises Liz to take herbs and look, the entire family is happy. And Liz's ability to take a decision to visit the native doctor and then drink the herbs without being forced also portrays female agency. Fina's advice also represents female agency because she shows her ability to use her acquired knowledge about herbals in terms of offering advice to her one friend Liz. Fina's advice turns out to be the source of empowerment and cause of happiness to Liz and her husband Ishaka. Liz is therefore supported emotionally since she had been upset and stressed about the question of the kind of sex, she would conceive next. Liz is supported psychologically in a way that she is not sure of what the husband Ishaka would perceive in case she did not conceive a baby girl. Luckily, she conceived the right sex and socially Liz and Ishaka experience a moment of happiness. Ishaka is really excited upon having a baby girl as he holds her in his loving arms, he names her after his mother "Eva". According to us Africans when a kid is loved the most, they are named after the people loved most. Also, the author has it as evidence; "*The best way a man can show that he loves his daughter is to give her his mother's name,*" (Okurut 1993:79). Ishaka feels so proud of the daughter and says to her newborn baby, "*Eva the first woman, original woman.*" At this moment, happiness is attributed to Fina's advice to Liz which is in the form of a set of ideas unknown to Liz. Fina saves Liz from a nightmare of psychological torture, emotional

and social torture. First from the husband Ishaka, secondly; Manga who is Ishaka's mistress and thirdly; the society in which she dwells.

Through flashbacks we learn of the water silencer that Liz learns from her mother. Liz's ability to resist from quarreling with Ishaka her one husband is another form of female agency represented in Okurut (1993). To avoid quarreling with Mr. Ishaka after turning back home in the morning at 7: 00 am, Liz recalls of the water silencer that she gets from her mother. She dashes to the kitchen, quickly gets a glass of water from the pot. She quickly takes a mouthful, which she safely puts in either cheek and closes her mouth. Liz makes sure she doesn't spit out the water. Or else she may be forced to utter words which she may never be able to take back and this would ruin her marriage the more. It is written that Liz borrows this idea from her mother. Liz makes a flash back and this is what she has to say; *"This is an old remedy I got from my mother. If you do not want to quarrel with your man, simply revert to that old trick of water in the cheek,"* (Okurut 1993:61). This trick of "water silencer" becomes medicine to Liz. She indeed does not quarrel with the husband Ishaka anymore. Mother's words get her emancipated. The recalling of the idea she gets from her only mother saves her dignity and respect with her husband.

An example of a poor housewife and a witch doctor is given to bring out a form of female agency called collaborative problem solving which is a form of negotiation. She is never without a bruised face and battered bottom. However, being aware of her rights, she one day visits a witch doctor in search for herbs to save her from the beatings. The witch doctor listens carefully and gives her a parcel of herbs. He then begins to give prescriptions on how to use it. The witch doctor vividly explains; *"When he starts using hot words put the herb into your mouth, and chew on it – never answer him back; not a word from your mouth, you hear?"* Okurut 1993:61) Through this vivid explained action on how to use the herb, we understand that the doctor is not after spoiling the woman's marriage but rather emancipating her socially, emotionally and psychologically through open dialogue. The witch doctor succeeds at lying and more so manipulating the woman into using the medicine less herb to save her from the beatings of her husband. The witch doctor in the end saves her from being beaten by her husband. It is written that the woman returns six months later without a single beating from her husband. The woman herself bears witness in appreciation;

*You are the best doctor in the land; she declares;
And the crafty old witch doctor smiles at his wisdom for he very well knows that as long
as the woman does not bicker, the man can never botch her.*

Evidence;

*All he had given was a simple medicine less herb that could never cure the mildest
headache. (Okurut 1993:61)*

This clearly shows that the old crafty witch doctor offered advice to this woman instead of bewitching herbs like she expected since the medicine he gives her in the parcel cannot cure the mildest headache. This advice the old crafty man gives is a form of support for the good of the woman. In short, he is empowering the female gender such that her marriage can last without trouble.

Through flashbacks, negotiation is again portrayed through both Liz and her mother when they are discussing about the issue of pulling. Liz's mom sets her free from the partial feeling about the ideology of saying that a woman has to pull. This is exactly what Ayn Rand a philosopher and novelist asserts that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. Flashbacks helps to provide background information and past experiences about the idea of pulling. Pulling is the act of elongating some parts in the vagina called labia minora. Through dialogue of two, mother tells Liz that pulling, is a thing of the flesh and an opinion. It is why she is not surprised when Ishaka dumps her for Manga. Dialogue helps us to learn that Liz's mom is aware of her rights. She educates Liz regarding the issue of pulling. When a woman pulls, she does so with a sole purpose of pleasing a man. It is believed that when a woman has not pulled, she does not approve a man's superiority. That is to most of the western men of Uganda. The author has it thus, *"You are not paying homage to him and acknowledging him as supreme leader, somebody whom you please!"* (Okurut 1993:89)

This is interpreted as enslaving women. It means that women are just sex objects who are used by men more-so sexually just like Catherine Mackinnon (1989) states it that women do not have control over their bodies because they remain subjugated to their male counterparts. Mother advises Liz that what matters is the "you in you" that pulling are just things of the flesh "outward things". Descriptive language enables us to learn that Liz's mother is much aware of her rights as

woman. Being aware of her daughter's rights too, she gives her space to make her own choice upon her life. This signifies an emotional support to the daughter thus representing autonomy.

Through flashbacks, assertive decision-making is portrayed. Lydia decides to challenge societal norms thereby advocating change. This comes up when her hardworked for property is shared with an unknown co-wife after the burial of her husband. All the property had been registered in her husband's names. It is believed that a man in the family is the right person to own property even when it is a woman's money that has been used to purchase it just like Lydia is treated. John Locke (1690) disagrees with this belief. Locke argues that individuals inherently possess natural rights, that is; life, liberty and property. Reason why Lydia forms a pressure group to fight such injustice that the daughter never goes through the same. It is brought out in a flashback to portray women agency because in some way, it shows resistance and subversive tendencies from the women's side. It indicates that some women are aware of their rights hence the need to fight to gain control over their lives and properties. The forming of a pressure group to fight the injustice for widows especially in Lydia's position is total empowerment of widows in the society. Such flashbacks are used to portray Female agency and its forms; negotiation, self-advocacy and collaborative problem solving. The pressure groups help in informing women about their rights. Therefore, such flash backs are used purposely to bring events of the past to present and make them fresh to our memories. And it is from these fresh past events that some characters in the novel undergoing trouble like Lydia and Liz pick lessons and ideas that help them maneuver and overcome tribulations they are going through in their marriages.

Negotiation is portrayed through Liz's father after Ishaka has moved out and married Malaika. Liz's father strengthens Liz through dialogue with her. He tells her how a true African woman should behave; "*A woman dies at the cooking stones. At the frontline.*" Okurut (1993:150) This shows that let come what may in terms of struggles and stress in her marriage, Liz is supposed to keep in her marriage that that's what all women go through. So, it's not news that Ishaka married another woman and that it doesn't mean she has been rejected. The author writes;

And daughter, the fact that Ishaka got another woman, it does not mean that he does not care about you, the first one. (Okurut 1993:150)

By this statement, Liz's father is trying to empower his daughter not to lose courage, that she can go back and keep in her marriage with Ishaka. In this, Liz's father is seen as caring though stamping the age-old system;

Besides in our language, there is no word to describe infidelity. In Africa, a man can never be unfaithful; he can only be a man. (Okurut 1993:150)

Liz's father covers up for Ishaka but also largely tries to negotiate and mend his daughter's broken heart. Her father fights hard to heal her daughter psychologically. Liz's father opens up the real truth about African men. He confesses that they are never wrong when they come to marriage issues. That is why he says that in their language there is no word "infidelity". This implies that in Africa a man can never be unfaithful. He can only be a man. This statement does not mean that he fails his daughter. No! He is stamping in their culture. This is in line with what Catherine Mackinnon (1989) finds out in her study. She asserts that violence meted out on women (by men) is usually ingrained in beliefs and principles of male sexual right.

Through Liz, negotiation is again portrayed the moment she mentions the above statement in a dialogue with her father without a glimpse of fear in her voice. Liz expresses her opinions without censorship and this is exactly what Ayn Rand (1943) advocates for in his book. He argues that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. Liz refuses to be in a marriage that overlooks her rights. She in fact undermines the traditional rules of her forefathers.

Liz breaks ties with Ishaka in order to regain her rights. This is exactly what Rens SE (2021) emphasizes in his findings. He argues that in present culture, our society is overwhelmed with a number of readings and orations which actively place women as empowered, agentic, and decisive. Looking at Liz's decision, it is true that she is agentic and decisive in a way that she decides to separate ties with Ishaka.

Liz's brother is also seen as an enabler of female negotiation. The author has it; *My brother Justus is very supportive of my decision. He comes to my new-found home, loaded with chicken and champagne.*" (Okurut 1993:151) Justus stands in to celebrate with Liz upon her decision. His idea to celebrate Liz's decision enables us to establish his care for his sister Liz. This is in line with Rens SE (2021); who according to (Gill, 2007, Gill, 2008; Dosekun, 2015) state that; "A postfeminist sensibility is deeply entrenched in a neoliberal worldview that calls for the

celebration of individuality and choice said to be unrestrictedly afforded to women globally.” Justus helps Liz to believe in herself again after moving out of a cruel marriage with Ishaka. Through vivid description we learn of Justus’s supporting character towards Liz.

Through flashback we learn of the dialogue between Liz and her old grandma. The dialogue includes stories of long ago meant to relieve Liz of stress. The writer has it that; “.....a place whose legend has been told and retold to me by my good old grandma.” (Okurut 1993:34) Liz’s grand ma engages her in storytelling and through this, Liz is able to attain education regarding “*Ibare rya Mugore*”; rock of the bride, found in Nyabushozi. In doing so, grandma is resisting social exclusion, exploitation and oppression caused by the hegemonic neo-liberal globalization. She procures the social and political rights of Liz using this legend. She uses the idea from the story to search more about Ishaka. She says;

People like Ishaka have not found themselves, so they look for meaning from the supernatural. I have indisputable residences that Ishaka goes to look for his lost self at a place called Ibaare rya Mugore (rock of the bride). (Okurut 1993:34)

Liz is able to tell from Ishaka’s ways and how he does his things. Basing on the legend told by her grandma, Liz is able to interpret and tell what’s going on in Ishaka’s life. It is through flashback and storytelling that we learn of “*Ibaare rya mugore*”. It is told in a way of remembering what had been said many years ago by Liz’s grandma. This particular flashback helps us in the way that it provides a deeper insight into who Liz is and her grandma who helps her to believe in herself. It also helps us to learn of female agency depicted through an interesting person (Liz’s grand ma) who supports her socially by telling her stories of long ago like this of Bachwezi. Flashbacks also break the chronological flow of the story thereby making it more interesting and realistic.

Characterization is employed to unveil Liz’s character as compassionate and kindhearted in a way that she receives Ishaka back long after their separation when he is in a dilapidated mode. Liz accepts Ishaka back bearing in mind the children they have together; Ihorere and Eva. Ihorere and Eva develop Liz’s character as caring. By accepting Ishaka back, we learn of Liz’s ability to negotiate within self and take decisions as a mother and wife without influence. Depending on the bad terms that had caused their separation, one could not believe that the two

could ever meet again. But the fact that Liz welcomes Ishaka back to her house and life as well, develops Liz's character as loving and helpful.

Through flashback, we learn of Fina, a friend to Liz that offers mental support in bid to help Liz believe herself and fight insomnia problem. She does this by offering a piece of advice which is told through a flashback. It is written that;

Then I recall the advice Fina gave me in case sleeplessness shows up at a time when every soul ought to be in slumber land. That I should imagine a situation where there are fifty sheep trying to jump over a fence. Then I should start counting each sheep as it runs towards the fence and jumps over it. (Okurut 1993:43)

This flashback gives a deeper insight into who Fina is to Liz. It reveals the connection between Fina and Liz. Flashbacks give background information that help to develop Fina's character as kind and caring.

Through vivid description we learn of how Liz and Ishaka yearn for a baby girl. Fina, a friend to Liz, offers advice in time of need. Vivid descriptions enable us to learn of Fina's care. Fina tips Liz that if the man drinks a lot of liquor, he produces girls. Fina gives a vivid description of the whole ideology;

Well, you know they say that when a man is drunk, his sperm travels a little slower than usual, kind of gently. HE is not vigorous during the act, if you see what I mean. So the sperm goes slowly, gently up stream and the result is a girl. Whereas when he has sex when he is as sober as a judge..... she shoots with all the energy in his body and the sperm results in a rough, tumbling boy. (Okurut 1993:76)

It is through vivid description of Fina's advice that we learn of her social and emotional empowerment to Liz. Fina shows her ability to decide and advise a fellow lady without having to first consult anyone thus reflecting female agency. Through vivid description of Fina's advice, we learn of her social and emotional empowerment to Liz. Vivid description enables us to clearly understand how Liz and Ishaka shall be able to conceive a baby girl that they desire. The description that Fina gives paints the clear picture of using description words like; slowly, gently, vaporous and sober. Something that energizes her speech and the author's writing thus making memorable mental images stick to our minds. The descriptive words used also enable us to learn

of Fina's character as outspoken. Fina goes on to advise Liz to try using the herbal medicines in order to conceive a baby girl; *"But you know what, Liz, you should try those herbal remedies"* (Okurut 1993:76). This sets in yet another presentation of female agency. However, Liz first doubts the use of herbals. She (Liz) even argues saying; *"Oh please! Both of us have got masters degrees for heaven's sake! How can an educated person like you talk like that?"* (Okurut 1993:76) This shows complete dissatisfaction and resistance of Fina's advice. Liz cannot take it in, she simply feels that Liz cannot comprehend the kind of advice given. In short, she less imagines a person with a master's degree taking a concoction of herbal medicine for a change of sex. Liz thinks it is weird. Fina insists on convincing Liz to take on her advice and even tells her that *"there is no harm in trying."* (Okurut 1993:76) Arguing that it is being illiterate to dismiss herbs as a primitive practice when you know that most of them are medicinal. Liz remains adamant not until the day she witnesses a specialist in herbal medicine prescribe a gallon of some yellow liquid to her uncle who is not currently able to pass urine and guess what. Its performance turns out to be much better than its appearance. In short, the herbal medicine cures her uncle and doesn't cause harm to him.

It is through use of direct speech that we are able to affirm to her acceptance of taking on the friend's advice. She says; *"I consider all those things and decide that there is no harm in my taking herbal medicine in my earnest search for a girl child"* (Okurut 1993:79). This statement confirms that Liz is finally is convinced and willing to use herbal medicine. Therefore, the ability of Liz to finally decide to accept to use the herbal medicine reflects female agency because she displays her right to choose what she wants.

Another scenario is that of a woman well known to her who has a malignant cancerous lump in her breast. It is said that after administering some herbal-powder from a native doctor who tells her to mix it with honey and eat for a few days; *"Before long, the large lump is bursting with good health and frolicking with the case of a gazelle."* It is after witnessing all these and more scenarios that she believes in herbal medicines. Flashbacks provide background information and past experiences of how Liz conceives a baby girl.

In chapter four of text, we see self-advocacy a form of negotiation. Liz empowers herself while Ishaka gets a second wife known as Malaika.

While Ishaka reminds Liz of the function they both have to attend at Kololo airstrip at nine. Through vivid descriptions, we learn that Liz gets upset being aware that some people know them all Liz, Manga and Ishaka and wonders how they would be looked at.

Liz gains confidence in a way that she begins appreciating her own self and in so doing she empowers herself. She vividly describes her beauty;

....., I am much more beautiful than your Manga. Starting upstairs, down to the dairy section and down to the transport department, I am definitely much better endowed than Manga. I am a woman that people will look at and say: there goes a beautiful woman. Mind you, I am not claiming to be a head turner neither would I have won a beauty contest in my days. No, I do not halt the traffic on city streets, but I am comfortably beautiful.” (Okurut 1993:84)

It is clear that Liz believes in her beauty and this helps her to rub off the inferiority complex she develops because of her counterpart Manga. This self-belief is considered as female agency. Liz proves to us the audience that she is aware of her beauty and so believes in it. Vivid descriptions allow us to visualize her nourishing beauty. Liz saves herself from psychological and emotional torture in a way that she appreciates her beauty. It is the idea of her beauty that gives her courage to attend the function at Kololo Air strip.

Through characterization, the unexpected visitor; Fina interrogating Liz about her situation is depicted. Fina makes sure she utters everything she sees about Liz thereby exposing the real self of Liz. She talks about her appearance and partly how the rest of the world perceives her looks. Fina vividly describes Liz’s appearance; *“Your collarbones standing out like curved reeds around a freshly decorated Masai warrior’s neck proclaim your state of life”* (Okurut 1993:119).

The vivid descriptions show us readers that Liz is totally deteriorated. *“..... Collar bones standing out like curved reeds”* imply that Liz is in a shape of a skeleton. Through descriptive language, we are able to visualize the thinness Liz has acquired from stress. Fina’s arrogance is not with bad intentions. Her aim is to enable Liz make an informed decision. Fina drags Liz to her bed room in front of the full-length mirror and she says to her; *“Liz, look at that shattered visage in the mirror. That thing there is not you. Look at it again-perfect account of a scare crow.”* (Okurut 1993:119) Fina goes on to torment Liz in form of a rhetorical question;

“Have you seen those starring Africans that CNN likes TO PARADE? CNN seems to have a penchant for parading horror stories of Africans of children with oozing mucus and thousands of flies zooming about them? Children, either in advanced stages of starvation, or with bellies extended as if in the final month of pregnancy.” (Okurut 1993:119)

Fina rubs salt in Liz’s wound. She does this such that Liz can decide to end the stress she is going through. Fina goes to a point of pausing rhetoric questions to Liz and with these questions, she is appealing to Liz to think more about her current situation and decide. Fina has the zeal to say all this to Liz in order to open her mind and get her thinking like a wise lady. She also has this to say; *“In your state now, you would be a first-class candidate for CNN leading story”*. (119) Fina’s aim of making Liz angrier is to make her understand her current terrible looks and so that she can make a decision. Fina tells the reason for her visit; *“I have come so that you take a decision. You cannot remain the perfect victim for the rest of your life. Life is too short to be wasted just like that. You must take a decision”* (Okurut 1993:119) Through characterization, Fina’s caring heart is revealed. Liz helps to develop Fina’s character as kindhearted and loving. Fina advises Liz to go to the gym, dress well, be smart for her to live again. Fina shows agency in a way that she advises Liz to look good. In doing so, Fina is encouraging her friend to express her freedom of sexuality and actually women today are represented as enjoying their sexual freedom and unrestricted sexuality in the modern trending media forms than before according to (Gill, 2007; Gill, 2008; Genz, 2009; Cuklanz, 2016). This statement portrays female agency because Fina is aware of a woman's rights and is by all means emancipating her friend Liz. Fina vividly describes how Liz should take good care of herself by going to the gym such that she can once again look young and beautiful. Fina also encourages Liz to take an important decision on her life. By going to the gym, dressing well and looking smart, helps women feel emancipated in the society. When one is well dressed, smart and working, they will not fear to express themselves or even relate with others socially, be it politically. Good appearance of a woman gives her courage to achieve all she wants. According to Fina, beauty contributes a lot to a woman’s life.

Fina presents four options to Liz to choose from in order for her to live again. The author has the first option; *“Make yourself human again and get a man friend”* (Okurut 1993:121). Fina advises

like this such that the man friend will help Liz to believe in herself a gain and restore her self-confidence. Second plan is; *“Be-friend your co-wife. Make Manga your friend and the hurt will slowly melt away.”* (Okurut 1993:121) Fina argues that this plan B has worked for some women. When you be-friend your co-wife, she later ceases to be special to the man. She becomes like the Official wife. The motive she holds for the man disappears and becomes ordinary. She then gives plan C; *“Get saved.”* and plan D. *“You walk.”* Through vivid descriptions we learn that Fina’s plans she lays down for Liz are with the intention to help her to live again. Fina again tells Liz to either accept to stay in her polygamous marriage and carry out the most essential part-sex or to walk out of it. Through a proverb, Fina, then makes her very last remark to Liz in a soft voice; *“.....Impossible situations demand a clean cut and in order to make an omelet, you have to break an egg before you can get the yolk”* (Okurut 1993:126).

Fina is in all ways fighting for Liz to get out of the polygamous drama that her husband Ishaka and Malaika are causing. Fina is not only fighting to improve Liz’s social, emotional and mental state but also fighting for her conjugal rights. Through characterization Liz helps to build Fina’s character as caring.

Through flashback, it is noticed that Official wives are emancipated socially in terms of shelter. This encourages them to take on the responsibility of the official wife economically and socially within a family. Official wives in this picture are the ones to welcome family on several occasions, prepare nice dishes for visitors and more other responsibilities. In the novel, official wives are respected and loved something that encourages them to take on different responsibilities assigned to them;

In traditional polygamous marriage, the most beautiful house belonged to the official wife. It was known as the big house. The small house belonged to the second wife, a symbol that she was the lesser in status. (Okurut 1993:131)

In regard to the title of the novel, we notice that women agency is highly recognized through a flash back of how the official wife is treated. Men too are seen as enablers of female agency. This particular flashback makes the event of having a beautiful house sound fresh to audience. Building for the official wife is seen as a sign of respect and love.

Through vivid description, support of other women is portrayed when Fina who is Liz's friend (Alice) appears at her new home dressed in a suit that looks good on her and heels clicking with urgency. Fina purposely appears at Liz's crib to celebrate and jubilate upon Liz's decision of walking out of a cruel marriage. She embraces Liz with a hug that signifies victory on how they should celebrate. Through the author, Fina vividly describes the kind of celebration they should have; "*We are having a goat roasting party to night. You have shown the way forward for women in torturing marriages. Bring the glasses*" (Okurut 1993:152). Fina declares to her openly that she has opened the door for the rest of women who are facing hardships in their marriages. This implies that Liz does self-emancipation and not only emancipates herself but also emancipates the rest of the women in cruel marriages. She shows the rest of the women that also their lives as women matter. Justus is in full support of Liz upon her decision. He congratulates Liz for stepping out of the cruel marriage depicting social responsibility. That's why on the 1st November 2003, Joseph Were of, *The Monitor* wrote that *The Official Wife* "*has the same powerful effect of making even men see the world the way a woman sees it, a reality beyond sex.*" Basing on this and looking at how Justus supports his sister Liz, *The Official Wife* has the powerful effect for making men view the world the way women view it.

Direct speech creates a sense of immediacy drawing the reader into the conversation. Liz appreciates Arnold for awakening happiness in her. Arnold is seen as a facilitator of female agency by the fact that he rekindles joy and life in Liz's life. Liz feels life again and emancipated socially. Arnold and Liz meet again at Sheraton. Together they have a good moment. While they interact, Arnold helps Liz to believe in herself once again. This too causes emotional and social emancipation towards Liz. What takes place there after their meeting is what emancipates Liz that she confesses it herself; *Arnold, you have made me live again after five years. Thank you," I whisper, after fantastic love making.* (Okurut 1993:155) The author uses direct speech and it is from this narrative style that we learn of the healing therapy that Liz acquires from her new friendship with Arnold. This healing therapy helps Liz to believe in herself once again hence portraying female agency. Liz's meeting with Arnold at the health club proclaims her healing from the trauma she has been facing in her deserted marriage. Basing on the findings by Rens SE, it is revealed that "the contemporary culture" puts women in a place where they are able enjoy their sexual freedom as well as express their sexuality. An idea which validates Liz's action of going to the health club and having fun with Arnold to get rid of stress. This proves that

Liz made a right decision of walking out of a torturing marriage. She lives happily in her new home. She moves to public places during her free time where she is able to meet old friends that make her feel happy once again and feel the true meaning of life.

Through characterization, Liz's ability to accept Ishaka back is depicted. Her friend Fina tempts to stop her but does not listen to her discouraging words. Despite his sickness, Liz makes her personal decision to welcome back Ishaka after pronouncing his apology without any external influence. Ishaka and Fina help to develop Liz's character as kind and caring. She possesses a parental heart. Fina feels disappointed with Liz by the fact that she accepts Ishaka back in her life after all he made her go through. This gets Liz caught between interests; one of gaining her respect as Ishaka's wife and another of continuing to live her stress-free life. However, Liz is able to make a personal decision without involving her one friend Fina. Liz in fact shouts at her when she tries to remind her of the ill-provoking things that Ishaka previously did to her. Liz shouts at Fina because she wants to take care of Ishaka the father of her children. This makes Fina sad, and Liz apologizes to her. Liz expresses her regret of speaking harshly to her friend Fina. Through Fina's direct speech, we learn of her apologizing character because words come directly from the horse's mouth. We also learn of her humble character because she asks for forgiveness from her one friend for being rude to her. Fina helps to build Liz's character as apologetic and caring. Whereas Liz helps to develop Fina's character as humble and forgiving. Characterization helps to reveal both Liz and Fina's traits and emotions. The ability of the two friends to negotiate and reconcile to each other without any form of violence portrays female agency. They both forgive each other as they embrace one another.

In conclusion, the author mostly uses flashbacks, vivid descriptions, characterization and direct speech to specifically demonstrate women's ability to adapt and navigate complex power dynamics presented by the male dominated societies.

4.3 Synopsis of *The Switch* (2016)

The Switch is a novel that was written by Mary Karoro Okurut. It was published by FEMRITE Publications Limited in 2016. The book tells of the story of Chelimo, a brilliant young girl from

Kapchorwa, Eastern Uganda, whose life takes a dramatic turn after undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM). The novel highlights the traumatizing experience of a young woman Tezira Chelimo, the minister of culture who struggles to keep her dark secret from a man she loves so dearly. Chelimo goes through the ritual of female genital mutilation purposely to fulfill the cultural requirement as a rite of passage from childhood to womanhood and eligibility for marriage. When she regains the courage to tell her dark secret so she can say 'yes' to her lover's proposal for marriage, unspeakable challenges await her in marriage. The switch had been turned off! Female Genital mutilation that is done to Chelimo is the worst form of injustice and a human rights violation a woman can ever experience. Besides the physical pain, it is a big threat to a woman or a girl's reproductive health. When a woman or a girl is cut, it can cause prolonged bleeding. Sometimes the cutting can become infectious and in the long run can spark off a whole range of gynecological problems including; fistula and complications during child birth. She loses her first child due to the cutting that is done on her Genitalia. However, Chelimo is not silent to this evil practice. She displays resistance and subversion; we also notice health care and reproductive rights which are forms of female agency when she makes campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation an act dangerous to a woman's and girl's health.

In the text, there is a paragraph; *"To be honest, and I do not mean to be mean. Your switch is off. Chelimo; there is no trace of electricity flowing within. The lights are all out. Let's not pretend it's not dark in here"* (Okurut 2016:183). This seems to be the climax of the relationship between Dane and Chelimo. Yet it is at this point that Chelimo after coming across difficulties in her marriage with Dane, she sums it up with the trauma she faces as she is circumcised as a girl that she shows agency by joining hands with the community and government to de-campaign Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

As a growing girl, she had gone through the ritual of female genital mutilation to fulfill the cultural requirements as a rite of passage from childhood to womanhood and eligibility for marriage.

Chelimo thinks of the ordeal and trauma she went through as she searches for her daughter who had been kidnapped. The kidnapper with the aim of mutilating her since the mother has become an activist in the fight against female genital mutilation. So, it is this trauma that fuels the development of agency in Chelimo with much determination to empower girls to say no to

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). In this fight, Chelimo doesn't want any girl or woman's human rights to be violated anymore as it was in her case thus emancipating women psychologically, emotionally and socially which in turn helps the girls and women to believe in themselves. She empowers them emotionally since it brings about much pain and painful sex. Socially and psychologically since it brings about family breakages and aggravated infections respectively. Both women and girls participate in the campaigns against FGM and this signifies that they can make a decision of their own and refuse to be mutilated since FGM can bring about unstable health and death. Take an example of Chemtai, Chelimo's childhood friend who dies due to FGM. Her death is described as;

Chemtai has at that point hurried past the two hobbling women and went straight to hospital to find Chemtai. She arrived just in time to find her best friend being bundled off her bed and quickly wheeled out of the ward to avoid upsetting other patients. She was gone (Okurut 2016:100)

This is great evidence that FMG brings about death which comes with a lot of pain. Furthermore, FGM brings about diseases like; Fistula, painful sex, complication during childbirth and even family breakages, trauma and aggravated infectious diseases. The novel talks about various characters including; Chelimo; a protagonist, strong willed and determined to create change, Daisy; Chelimo's daughter, representing the new generation and the importance of breaking harmful traditions, Chelimo's mother; representing the old world and complexities of cultural expectations. Despite the trauma, Chelimo excels and becomes a government minister. She then embarks on a personal crusade to eradicate FGM, risking her own life and relationships.

4.3.1 Reflections of subversion In *The Switch* (2016)

In the novel, *The Switch*, Mary Karoro Okurut, handles different forms of female agency through female characters like Chelimo and Daisy including; subversion, resistance, manipulation, deception, negotiation and bargaining. But focus will be put on only how subversion is depicted in *The Switch* (2016).

Subversion is depicted when the Minister (Chelimo) takes an important action and begins de-campaigning FGM. Her refusal of FGM in Kapchorwa reflects resistance of patriarchal

expectations, her cleverness and knowledge on its effects. The minister exposes the effects of FGM which helps in creating awareness of female rights. Her speech on FGM effects advocates for change in the system. This is in line with what The United Nations General Assembly (1979) finds in its study. The United Nations General Assembly contends that equality for women can be achieved through legal and policy reforms within current social systems. Basing on this and looking at how Chelimo de-campaigns FGM, it is true that equality for women can be achieved through social reforms within the current social systems. Chelimo strongly urges her people in Kapchorwa to protect the female sex from the cruel traumatizing knife-rotwet. She says; “*My people of Kapchorwa, today I come with one message: that we must protect our girls and our women from the cruelty of the knife that deprives them of their true womanhood under the pretense of making them women*” (Okurut 2016:36). The author uses direct speech to avoid bias and remain subjective in the narrative for the audience clearly to get the right picture of Chelimo on FGM. In her speech, Chelimo shows cleverness and resistance by campaigning against rotwet. She calls for change as she explains its bad effects. FGM denies females their real womanhood pretending to make them women. To Chelimo, healthcare and reproductive rights of women matter. She advises that the knife should return to its sheath, surgeons to their gardens and cultivate. Chelimo uses vivid description to describe the disregard of the Kapchorwan rotwet. Her refusal of FGM portrays subversive tendencies. Vivid descriptions reveal political roles Chelimo performs. She gives rules that the knife should be returned to its sheath and surgeons to their gardens. Chelimo undermines the culture and tradition of her people. Vivid description is used to bring about resistance and subversive tendencies of Chelimo. The vivid description on how to keep the knife shows it is not needed anymore and also clearly allows us readers to see what the author has envisioned from the character’s speech.

Through vivid descriptions, bad effects of FGM are brought out. Chelimo stands up and becomes part of the empowering process to fight for women’s rights. She makes campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation in Kapchorwa. Chelimo talks about bad effects that come with Female Genital Mutilation. Female Genital Mutilation brings about diseases like trauma, fistula and UTIs. Female circumcision also brings about insufferable pain including; difficulty in child birth and painful intercourse. FGM brings about separation of companions and loss of marriages. Take an example; Chelimo separates with Dane due to female circumcision. Furthermore, female circumcision causes death. It is described that; “*You all know that we have lost some gallant*

women of this land due to the practice. We have lost mothers. We have lost sisters. Yet we have continued to shield this evil..... Let us all say No to the knife!” (Okurut 2016:37). Descriptive language helps us to understand the negative effects of female circumcision, making the bad effects memorable in our minds.

Community engagement is portrayed in a way that Chelimo gathers crowds to campaign against FGM. Men and women, girls and boys all gather to listen to Chelimo’s message. This is exactly what Ayn Rand (1943) emphasizes in his book. He emphasizes the importance of individual rights and liberties and that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. Looking at how the Sabiny express their right to assemble peacefully to listen from the minister Chelimo, it is true that individualism is important. Men join women to campaign against FGM. In this, men are seen as enablers of female agency. Chelimo’s decision to come out of the many and speak about the topic almost everyone is avoiding helps the silent majority.

Subversion is again depicted while Chelimo embarks on her journey to save her one daughter Daisy from the kidnappers and the dangerous rotwet. Chelimo and the person that leads an important organization that seeks to uphold the pride of the Sabiny interact briefly on phone. The organization representative claims to defend the sovereignty of their people and the integrity of their culture. It is purposely focused onto keeping its culture intact and not determining it. The stranger is determined to do to Daisy what Chelimo is saying should no longer be done to women and girls in Kapchorwa. The stranger that calls Chelimo does not want to harm Daisy nor take her for ransom nor even kill her but for FGM (just a little bit less down stairs). Chelimo gets desperate. She pleads with the man (leader of an organization of the Sabiny) so that she can give him any amount of money he wants but does not mutilate her daughter Daisy. Her bargains to emancipate the daughter Daisy seem futile. This whole saga becomes a chance for Chelimo to display her abilities and self-belief. Chelimo can’t believe what’s transpiring; she is upset to such a magnitude no one can understand. The Kidnapper switches her off and no longer has time for her. He gets to organize for the circumcision of Daisy. Chelimo faints for a moment and good enough Nicho is there to support her emotionally. As she waits, Nicho reminds her that people are watching. She holds onto him for strength. Nicho is depicted as an enabler of female agency. Chelimo quits Boma grounds where they have been campaigning to DPC’s office. Chelimo and DPC meet and plan for Daisy’s rescue. DPC organizes his crew and begin the search for Daisy.

The descriptive language helps us to understand that the crew that goes for the rescue mission is comprised of only male police officers. In this, men are seen as facilitators of female agency.

Through flashbacks, we learn of empowered communication from Chelimo's mother's words. We learn that she believes in herself as a strong woman who does not fear rotwet. In describing what a Kapchorwan woman has to go through, mother is stamping the age-old tradition. She asks the daughter to take courage and not be a coward. To Chelimo's mother, it is their pride to get circumcised. That's why her mother wants her to also earn the pride to herself and her family as well. Flashbacks provide background information of how important Female circumcision is to the Sabiny. Mother tells Chelimo words of hope. She unwraps her Kanga cloth and wraps it around Chelimo's waist saying she would need it. This signifies love. Chelimo gets courage to face rotwet. Young girls' flood of stamping feet sets to the door. Mother escorts daughter to the door and while she hands her over, she whispers; "*We the mothers will join you later!*" (Okurut 2016:68) This gives Chelimo assurance that her loving mother will be there to see her go through circumcision – a crucial step that turns a woman from childhood to womanhood as per Kapchorwan traditional norms. She stamps her feet to the rhythm of the other girls. When she wants to look back to see if her mother is still on the veranda, one of the girls advises her not to, arguing that it might bring bad luck to her. Her fear plus other girls' fear produce strength in Chelimo. Flashbacks reveal past experiences of how Chelimo gets circumcised.

In the novel *The Switch*, there's a character called Chemtai who displays confidence and self-advocacy. She is confident enough and unshakeable throughout her actions. Her aggressive character portrays subversive tendencies. Chemtai emancipates her fellow Cemeriyandets (Circumcision candidates) after they have arrived at the venue led by the fore runner. All Cemeriyandets faces look completely changed after arriving the venue of circumcision. It is written that; *They were very rude and tough; angry with everything around them. They were in a bad mood just ripe for rotwet -the knife.* (Okurut 2016:69) It is at this point of grief that Chemtai, Chelimo's best friend, being sure of herself encourages her fellow candidates. She talks all through, making the circumcision that is about to take place seem something simple and easy to take on. The author has it;

But her best friend Chemtai was a different spirit. She talked throughout encouraging the other girls and reminding them that this was the time to cross the bridge. Although some

girls were filled with trepidation at the prospect of going through the pain and achieve the sizeable feat of not flinching or appearing to do so, Chemtai was the exact opposite; rotwet couldn't come soon enough, as far as Chemtai was concerned! (Okurut 2016:69)

Chemtai's strong and encouraging character emancipates the fellow candidates and gets them ready for rotwet. Vivid descriptions of how Chemtai convinces them making the knife seem like it won't be that painful creates immersive atmosphere. Her ability to decide to go for rotwet without any external forces or violence signifies female agency. Chemtai reminds her friend that the time to cross the bridge has come and no need to fear anything whatsoever. The cemeriyandets are emancipated by their own mothers as they gather for the final dancing before circumcision. By the fact that girls, the cemeriyandets have an opportunity to wear their mother's Kanga cloths proves that their mother's themselves were circumcised and so that fact alone gives them courage to face the knife. Girls respect their mothers because they are circumcised. It is described by the author that their mothers were not cowards because they faced the circumcision situation as it occurred.

Subversive tendencies are reflected when Chemtai and Chelimo are about to be circumcised. This is learnt through a flashback of the circumcision ceremony. A cemeriyandet known as Chemtai fights for her right of freedom of movement. Chemtai's maturyondet punishes her because she insists on dancing her own kind of styles. This annoys her maturyondet and she reacts strongly dishonoring her amongst her fellow cemeriyandets. The author has it;

Chemtai's maturyondet was having endless problems with her. Chemtai, wild as ever, insisted on dancing her own way. The poor old woman tired and exasperated, slapped her hard ordering her to fall into step with the others. (Okurut 2016:75)

Chemtai feels so dishonored and undermined. She feels she cannot take it in. With great courage, Chemtai surprises everyone; *"Chemtai then shocked everyone when she perused, walked none pulsed to the old woman and smacked her hard across the face"* (Okurut 2016:75) And she responds; *Nobody beats Chemtai! Never do it again."* (Okurut 2016:75). Mathilde Pointiere (2021) argues that female agency often rises as a response to crisis, allowing women to disrupt social norms and assert their autonomy. Looking at how Chemtai smacks hard across Maturyondet's face, it is true that women often develop female agency as a response to crisis.

Flashbacks expose secrets and withheld information of a mere circumcision candidate to slap a maturyondet, adding depth to the narrative. This proves that Chemtai believes in herself and is bold enough to fight whoever stands in her way. Maturyondent helps to develop Chemtai's character as aggressive and strongheaded. She says the above words in affirmation that she is ready to fight for her freedom, especially freedom of movement as she wishes. This is in line with what Ayn Rand (1943) emphasizes in his book. He argues that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. Basing on this and looking at how Chemtai keeps dancing her own kind of styles, individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. However, the oldest maturyondent calms down the matter. She reminds cemerandet (Chemtai) that it is taboo to slap a mentor. Because according to their tradition, for a child to slap an old person is blasphemous. However, Chemtai does it to cover up her lost respect and right to freedom of movement.

Healthcare and reproductive rights is represented when the female and male youth reject FGM hence bringing out subversive tendencies. By saying no to FGM, they injure and break the traditional norms of their forefathers. Girls and women choose to make informed decisions about their own bodies and health. Even when Chelimo is circumcised, she takes courage after becoming a minister of culture to fight against this injustice. She chooses to fight for the rights of the silent majority. And a surprising huge number of young women, girls and boys are in full support of Chelimo's idea of saying "No" to female circumcision. It is clear that most of the women and girls realize it's time to take charge of their health, happiness and fight for their rights. A good or better example is Chelimo herself. She is a victim of rotwet, years later, she stands up and says "No" to it. She embarks on rallies de-campaigning the evil practice of FGM that leaves them half women. However, during her de-campaigning mission, some of the elders threaten girls who are in support of the minister's mission. It is written that;

The rumors stipulated that, girls had to apologize to elders for any insults lest a curse struck them and the wound refused to heal. The other punishment was that the genitalia would return as though they had never been cut off. That would mean that the girl would have to undergo the whole process again. (Okurut 2016:84)

This is exactly what Catherine Mackinnon (1989) finds out in her study. She finds out that violence meted out on women (by men) is usually ingrained in beliefs and principles of male sexual right. Vivid descriptions, help us to understand that the Sabiny mostly circumcise their

women to curb down the habit of prostitution. Even when scared by all sorts of strange words, Chelimo stands her ground. She undermines her traditional rules by involving the government to ban the evil practice of FGM hence portraying passive subversion. She is able to divert the thinking of the Sabiny youth from the common idea of female circumcision. She is open and honest. She keeps her pride, holds her head high and expresses the bad side of FGM to the youth.

Chemtai speaks up when she is hurt by Yapcherop (a Surgeon). Reason she repeats her declaration that she is a daughter of the Kapsumbata clan and that she (Yapcherop) the mutik should not even talk to her rudely again. She even calls Yapcherop stupid woman. This shows how Chemtai is determined to fight for her right of expression and movement whenever she wants.

Personal relationships are portrayed as Chelimo embarks on a journey home purposely to consult from Eyo (her mother) about the secrets of the river she had undergone many years ago. This is brought out through flashbacks. Chelimo's strong character is interfered with by the promise she makes to Dane. The secret of the river makes it difficult to make a decision on whether to marry Dane or not. Chelimo feels she should reveal it to him before accepting his proposal reason she visits home (Kapchorwa) to inquire from one person she trusts the most her one mother (Eyo). After supper, Chelimo still wants to talk to them but it's time for bed. Sleep evades her. She keeps turning and twisting in bed. A lot is going on in her mind. She quickly gets out of bed goes straight to her parents' bedroom. The author has it; *Chelimo tip toes to her mother's side of the bed and taps her shoulder softly such that they can go and together have a talk about her affair with Dane*. Chelimo whispers to her mother and asks her to come and sleep in her bed.

Chelimo's mother respects her daughter's request. She gets up quietly without any question, puts on slippers and follows her daughter to her bedroom. Chelimo's ability to decide to consult from her mother reflects female agency. This gives a good feeling to Chelimo. Chelimo helps to develop her mother's character as caring and loving. What Eyo does is really empowering and encouraging to the daughter Chelimo. Chelimo's mother is sensitive and understanding. She knows that whenever her daughter calls her "Eyo" there is something disturbing her. The author has it as; *It was rare for Chelimo to refer to her mother in Kupsabiny. Whenever she did the mother knew she really needed her attention*. Through mother, collaborative problem solving is

depicted because she supports and empowers daughter to open up what is itching her. Chelimo opens up and mother gives her courage after long negotiations.

From the comfort and peace derived from her mother's soft wrinkled skin, Chelimo feels secure, free and agrees to open up and speak to her mother what is perturbing her. Chelimo displays her right of speech when she opens up to her mother which signifies female agency. Even before she speaks it out, mother consoles the daughter Chelimo and urges her not to worry too much about life arguing that; "..... *There is always an end to every problem*" (Okurut 2016:131), hence emancipates her emotionally implying every problem has a solution. Chelimo opens up and tells her the story of Dane, the Mukiga Man, from Kigezi land and of the eventual proposal by Dane. In fact, she tells her mother the real truth that her visit is on a purpose of seeking her advice. In response mother asks;

Do you feel in your heart that he is the man you want to spend all your life with? Is he the man you want to produce children with, cook for and look after? Is he the one you want to spend your nights with under the same blanket breathing his breath and him breathing yours? (Okurut 2016:131)

This affirms mother's understanding of the daughter. Even when Chelimo asks "Should I tell him about it? Her mother understands it without Chelimo's explanation. It should be noted that a person to understand you, without much explanation is emancipating in its own way. It is again written that mother's questions summarize her way of asking if Chelimo loves Dane.

Mother's questions open Chelimo's eyes and mind and enables her to gain the ability to tell if she really loves Dane and enables her too, to make a decision on whether to marry Dane or not without violence.

Several questions asked by mother trigger Chelimo's mind to think deeper about Dane if he is really the one she has decided to marry. Mother asks again seeking Chelimo's say; *Is he the one, my child? He is, Eyo*. Chelimo confirms Dane as the one she wishes to share her life, bed and take care of. After her confirmation, mother permits Chelimo to go on and tell Dane about the secrets of the river. Mother simplifies everything for Chelimo and the author has it; *Then tell him, He will either say he wants to marry you or he doesn't want to marry you. For Eyo, it was that simple*". (Okurut 2016:131) Chelimo appreciates mother's effort of solving her puzzle;

Thank you Eyo. It will be as you say. On the fifteenth of August, I will tell him. Mother uses emotional awareness to navigate Chelimo and Dane's relationship. Mother wishes daughter good luck as she moves on to have a man, family as well as build her own home. This portrays women agency because Sunday morning Chelimo is armed with courage to tell Dane while Eyo cries out of excitement and fear for what would turn up in marriage. Having to face cruelties in marriage, out of emotions, mother cries uncontrollably but hides it from child to protect her mental state. The author has it;

She turned and faced the wall again and let the tears run uncontrolled. She did not want her child to see them or to know that she was crying. She was always trying to shield her daughter from the cruelties of the world. (Okurut 2016:132)

Through flashbacks, we are able to tell the pain Eyo is going through. However, mother's ability to hide her tears from her daughter Chelimo signify female agency. We all know that marriage is like a battle front and yet one has to protect it. Most part of it is that she clearly knows trouble that comes with female circumcision and yet cannot reveal it to the daughter the reason she is crying. She has nothing to do about it because also partly she wants and wishes her daughter to marry and also have a family and bear children as well. Even though Chelimo's mother hides as she cries, Chelimo discovers it by her own self that mother is hurting because of the strong bond between them. Chelimo however empowers her mother emotionally by holding her so tightly. Chelimo's embrace tightens a little bit as if to re-assume her mother not to worry too much. The two; mother and daughter encourage each other; mother advises daughter on what to do. She simplifies things for her in that she is able to make a good decision and on the other hand Chelimo enables mother to control her emotions as she gives mother a warm embrace; *"Chelimo puts her arm back onto her mother's bosom and they slept, each pre-occupied with a shared fear....."* (Okurut 2016:132)

Through direct speech, we discover portrayal of subversion in Chelimo's speech when she asks mother that; if circumcision causes insufferable pain, why has it gone on all these years? She prompts her mother for an answer. Mother dodges the question saying Chelimo has asked the same question again and again. However, Chelimo insists. *"Yes. And I am asking you again"* And having nothing big to say about circumcision, having no reasonable answer to her daughter's question, mother through direct speech defends herself still not giving a clear answer. This is

what she has to say; *You went to school. I did not. If you did not discover the answers when you left these hills and went to live out there, then may be its the same old answers that I will still give you.*" (Okurut 2016:132) Through this description we learn that mother is stamping the old age tradition of the Sabiny.

Saying that it is the same old answers that she will still give her means that she knows the effects of female circumcision but does not want to break her girl's heart. In this way mother is trying to protect her daughter from psychological torture and also is giving her an assignment to search further about FGM. Mother is worried that Chelimo might hate her having allowed and accepted her to go through that physical pain, trauma and its other bad effects like bringing about difficulty in child bearing. Mother does not want to discourage Chelimo from having her own home, but she well knows that it won't be easy for Chelimo to get married, sleep with a man and also bear her own children. It is the reason she turns and faces the wall and let the tears run uncontrollably. She is imagining what a hell awaits her daughter especially when she gets married. Chelimo is worried because of the secrets of the river. The above statement that mother makes, leaves space for bias. Because telling someone that you went to school, I did not. If you did not discover the answers when you left these hills and went to live out there, then maybe it's the same old answers that I will still give you. Mother appeals to Chelimo to grow up and make decisions on her own since she has gone to school. She implies that she cannot have better answers to her question than those of an educated young girl like her daughter Chelimo. To sum it all mother says; *Child, we know too many things but we keep quiet about them. Sometimes it is better to live like that.* (Okurut 2016:132) Basing on this, mother conceals a lot.

Most people of her age fear revealing the truth about FGM arguing that if it was done to them, their parents and their parent's parents who are they to change the culture? The statement mother makes also implies that she knows that FGM is dangerous and comes with a lot of pain and trauma, but mother is sending daughter to go and push against the patriarchal norms that limit women's rights and voices. She is sending her to de-campaign the ill act of FGM since for her, she has gone to school and working in the Ministry of culture. Chelimo's mother fears to raise her voice to talk against FGM lest she gets punished by old men of the clan and attacked by spirits of Kapchorwa land.

By telling Chelimo that she knows too many things but she keeps quiet about them, Chelimo learns that FGM is dangerous. And therefore, it is the reason she grows up and decides to launch a campaign, against FGM. It is also the reason she doesn't want her daughter Daisy to go through the same pain and trauma she has had to face. So, it is mother's statements as mentioned above that confirm to Chelimo that FGM is truly cruel and dangerous since she is one person she trusts. Mother therefore encourages and emancipates Chelimo who at a later stage in life becomes the Minister of culture to fight against FGM thereby saving future generations of young women from rotwet.

Through vivid descriptions, the trauma of the secrets of the river is depicted. Dane bargains and negotiates with Chelimo to feel free and not be bothered by the secrets of the river. After Chelimo uttering to Dane that she is circumcised, firstly the world seems to stand still as Dane himself is surprised. It is written that; "*Dane was in utter shock.*" Chelimo's ability to speak out about the secrets of the river to Dane without anyone forcing her signifies female agency. Dane recovers quickly, leads Chelimo back to the sofa and for a while, they sit silently thinking about that kind of culture. As Chelimo gets up, picks a spotless handkerchief out of her handbag as she prepares to leave, Dane holds out his hand towards hers and console's her. Dane apologizes even when he is not the one that circumcises Chelimo. He feels sorry for Chelimo and tries to support her emotionally by hugging her for too long such that she does not feel stressed in this hard moment she is facing. As if that's not enough to console her. Chelimo asks Dane gently to freely find another woman that will make him feel like a man and make him happy as well. Chelimo says with a lot of grief that she will also find one of her kind most probably from hills of Kapchorwa. While crying bitterly, Dane intervenes holds Chelimo closer, and consoles her. The Author has it that; "*Dane held her closer. He got the handkerchief from her hands and wiped her face.*" By holding Chelimo closer and wiping her face, woman agency is represented. Dane gives Chelimo the reason to believe in herself by loving and consoling her. Dane is emotionally and psychologically trying hard to show Chelimo that even though she is circumcised, he still cares for her and that his love for her has not changed. Through vivid description we learn of Dane's strong and caring character. The author explains how Dane cares to hold Chelimo closer for consolation and emotional support. More of Dane's care is portrayed; *Honey don't cry. I have just been thinking. You are that woman you are sending me to go and look for. Everything you have just talked about is in the past. You can decide your future. Please don't cry.* Through

flashbacks, we are able to get an insight into Chelimo's struggles of opening up secrets of the river which is one of the significant events that shape her future. Dane encourages Chelimo to just let go of her past and not to give up on life especially on the man of his dreams. Dane urges Chelimo to listen to her heart and also assures Chelimo that the future is hers to decide and she doesn't have to dwell on her past. Dane therefore offers free advice and urges Chelimo to make self-empowerment, that is; stand and make a personal decision and focus on the future; only then she can be successful in life. Chelimo seems not to listen to Dane, she continues to have and make self-pity saying that her being circumcised is not in the past. It is on her, in her, with her forever. And to rub away such thoughts from Chelimo's mind, Dane makes an assurance;

You do not understand me Cheli. You never too wanted so what if you are circumcised? This practice has been going on for ages but still the girls get married, don't they? Look Cheli, I am marrying you and not that damn circumcision ritual. I have always told you that nothing will stop me from loving you. Genital cutting or none. Those men of the hills as you call them are not different from me or any other men elsewhere. Besides, you are still you. A very beautiful, loving girl with a large heart. Cheli please, say you will marry me. (Okurut 2016:146)

Dane pleads with Chelimo to kindly accept his proposal for marriage and while he pleads female agency is portrayed as Dane takes a step further to emancipate Chelimo socially by giving an opportunity to believe in herself. In doing so, he is supporting and amplifying the agency in Chelimo who seems distressed. Dane goes on to describe Chelimo with heartfelt words. He describes her as beautiful, loving and one with a big heart. Such words can be so encouraging and redeeming to a person feeling down and their heart so weary. Dane explains that whether circumcised or not, it all means nothing to him, he is in love with the person and not the "circumcision." And in any case he inquires what difference is there between men of the hills and other men from other regions of the country (Him inclusive). Implying that if the men from the hills are able to marry circumcised women and live happily who is he not to marry her. Such kind of assurance, gives birth to hope in Chelimo's heart and she finally has this to say; "Yes, Dane I will marry you." (Okurut 2016:147)

Chelimo's decision to marry Dane portrays personal relationships. With excitement, Dane gets a jewelry box picks out a ring and places it on her finger. Due to much happiness, her eyes with a

film of tears embrace the moment and she melts into Dane's chest. Chelimo feels empowered emotionally because she did not expect a man not of her tribe to accept to marry her despite being circumcised. Even the author has it; *"Love ballads floated in the air as Chelimo melted into his chest. Her dreams were slowly coming to pass"* (Okurut 2016:148).

Chelimo finally gets emancipated after many hours of stress. She now kind of believes in herself and feels her dreams are slowly coming true as Dane restores her lost hope by counseling and putting an engagement ring on her finger as a sign of love, sacrifice, trust and seriousness. To sum it all, after a period of two months, Dane weds Chelimo. It is written that;*Dane walked Chelimo down the aisle. They were a couple to bind. Chelimo glowing in an off-shoulder, cattle-egret white dress and Dane in a cream jacket and black trouser. (Okurut 2016:150)* At least Dane does not disappoint Chelimo. However, after their wedding reception strange moments await them too. The fact that the two are virgins and to worsen the situation Chelimo had been circumcised. When finally the Best-man drops the couple off in a fine suit at the Speke Resort Munyonyo on the shores of Lake Victoria, the moment of truth suddenly sets in. The two feels tensed up, Chelimo skirts around as she holds this and that, speaking words that seem sticky in her mouth. She is tensed up, she recalls the secrets of the river as she is in the bathroom she takes too long in there and wanders at what is about to happen as she sleeps with Dane. She doesn't come out shortly. Dane, fearing that something might be the matter, he knocks cautiously at the bathroom door, as he calls gently. Dane struggles to console and encourage his bride to get back into the right mood. Its. written that; *Dane spent the better part of the evening trying to coax his bride out of the bathroom. When she finally emerged, it was clear that she needed to be left alone, at least for a while. (Okurut 2016:151)* Dane does not take it a huge matter, he considers her trauma and for that night he does not enjoy his long awaited night with Chelimo, his bride. But he becomes patient like that only to give his bride, Chelimo enough time to overcome the trauma and prepare her mind for the joy they are supposed to share as husband and wife. In giving the bride space, Dane portrays women agency, because he does not force her the act of sex. Chelimo decides not to sleep with Dane on their wedding night due to fear of secrets of the river and she is not questioned. He rather respects her feelings. More to that, Dane understands her trauma and handles her with a gentility he never knew he possessed. The author has it; *He talked to her softly, caressed her wet eyebrows and told her to relax and just let herself go with him. (Okurut 2016:152)* Much as she tries, Chelimo remains stiff with

fright. She expects Dane's love to melt away her fear. Implying that due to Dane's love and care for her, she chooses to trust his love to carry away her fear and make her comfortable. However, as Dane descends upon her, the image of the circumcision surgeon descending upon her with a knife, ready to scoop out her switch and all that related to it comes flooding back into her memory and into her entire body. The image of the surgeon and her husband above her, are intentioned. Panic sets in. It is written that;

The scream she withheld the day she was circumcised found this the perfect moment to go loose. Chelimo let out a piercing scream that caused both of them to recall; one shocked and frustrated, the other frightened. (Okurut 2016:152,153)

Chelimo cannot hold the pain, she is frightened and this confirms the kind of pain she is going through, Dane once again counsels her. He holds her in his arms. And he says; "*It will be alright darling*" Dane says this to console his bride and give her courage as well that in the near future she will do it without pain and shall even get used gradually. Through direct speech Dane assures Chelimo that all will be well. Direct speech makes us audience believe that what Dane says to Chelimo is true and his objective is right, no bias about it because it is from the horse's own mouth, no middleman to rephrase what is being said. So, we are convinced and believe that Dane is being nice to Chelimo. More two days of trial and failure, both admit that the honeymoon has been a disaster. They pack their bags and drive out of Munyonyo, to their new home Bukoto. Any other man would be too angry and feeling bad but Dane minds less of it and deep inside of him still loves his wife, "*.....but they held on strongly to the love strings that held them together tightly.*" (Okurut 2016:153)

Instead of Dane losing love for Chelimo his wife due to the lacking of some organs, he instead loves her the more in order for her to feel loved and cherished such that she can overcome the circumcision trauma.

Another form of women agency is seen when Dane manages to comfort his wife and help her reclaim power as they sit on bed and talk about the sores they both sustain in the process of having sex. Chelimo seems to see herself being the cause of the many sores they both have and as a result, she keeps saying sorry as she apologizes to the husband. Surprisingly, the husband Dane, doesn't want to know, he instead comforts her as always saying; "Darling don't worry. It

will get better.” He goes on to promise Chelimo. He stands up on attention as he makes to his wife a promise, to better the game; “I promise on my honor to make it better next time.” This happens after many times of trial and error. It has come to a point where Dane feels he is the one not doing it better. He also takes the blame for the poor intercourse they have been having. Dane partly blames himself; *It’s about me and you. This is a new journey we have embarked on and we must move on, ...we have only one option my love..... To move on.* (Okurut 2016:153) Dane chooses to share the blame such that his dear wife (Chelimo) does not suffer more trauma besides the circumcision trauma which entails secrets of the river. By doing so, he is emancipating Chelimo psychologically. He is fighting that Chelimo can gain some self-esteem, strength and the courage to move on and together they build their home.

Through vivid descriptions, subversive tendencies are reflected in a way of trying to achieve healthcare and reproductive rights as shown in the text. Chelimo manages to make a decision about her own body by accepting to go for a surgery such that she would recover from fistula. It is written in the novel that over the next few months Chelimo undergoes three surgeries to repair the damage, but none is successful. Chelimo gets heartbroken and returns home to her child and husband who seems not interested in her anymore. However, Chelimo picks courage and chooses to accept her fate thus portraying women agency. The author writes;

Her spirit and hope were subdued and she decided to accept her fate. She resigned herself to the use of adult diapers and smiled wirily whenever she went shopping buying pampers for the baby and then for its mother. She smiled even wider when she dressed her daughter first and then herself. Vivid descriptions evoke emotions of pity using the sensory details like “.....buying pampers for baby and then for its mother...” (Okurut 2016:173)

Chelimo manages to bargain within herself to live with her challenge of putting on adult diapers as she has lost hope for recovering. It only takes a person with a strong character together with courage and self-esteem to accept such a bizarre fate not for one or two days for eternity. Through vivid description, we are able to see clearly what the author exactly has envisioned. We are also able to learn more of Chelimo’s strong and decisive character because it is written that she decides to accept her fate, something out of the usual. Two years down the road, Dr. Medard alerts Chelimo about the opportunity of having young doctors who can do better to improve her

fistula situation. It should be noted that Dr. Medard doesn't get done with Chelimo even when he cannot diagnose her disease, he still cares for her and would love to see her in good health. The author has it that;

It was two years later that Dr. Medard alerted Chelimo about the Centre for Reproductive Health and Fistula Repair in Mbale, a private facility run by a quartet of youthful doctors who were famed for brilliance and their knack for adventurous surgery. (Okurut 2016:76)

Dr. Medard has customer care, he cares a lot for his patients because remembering a patient you last saw two years ago and then you refer them to some experts for medical help is not done by everyone. It only takes one with a big heart. Chelimo picks interest in Dr. Medard's idea and decides to seek help. Even though Chelimo's case is so complicated needing a skillful and experienced fistula specialist to operate her as said by the doctors at the Centre for Reproductive Health and Fistula Repair in Mbale due to Circumcision and difficult labor. It should be noted that circumcision often makes the obstetric fistula treatment more complicated due to the tissue resulting from cutting usually making fistula repair surgery more difficult. Nevertheless, Chelimo once again take another most important decision in her life regarding her health. I should call this self-empowerment. It is a risk because Dr. Musani the team leader tells her that her chance to get well is a probability and a risk. But amidst her dilemma, she is still able to decide upon receiving a fistula repair surgery hence portraying healthcare and reproductive again. Through direct speech, Chelimo confirms her decision of receiving a surgery. *"I will take the ten percent risk. I will do it doctor"* (Okurut 2016:176).

Autonomy is a form of subversion is reflected. Chelimo confirms her acceptance to be diagnosed no matter what. The direct speech that the author uses makes the story sound more objective. The bias is eliminated because the words of affirmation "I" and the decision comes direct from the horse's own mouth implying that there is no middleman to make it sound like reported speech. Direct speech makes it happen like we the audience are interacting with the character Chelimo as she makes a decision. The novel reads fresh because of the direct speech used and makes it appear like we are standing right there with the character. Chelimo's willingness and the power to decide bring her good luck as the author writes; *"When she recovered from the drugs and the doctors told her that the operation was successful....."* (Okurut 2016:176).

Chelimo's operation becomes a success, she recovers from Fistula because she strongly believed that she would heal through operation by the new youthful expert doctors that Dr. Medard referred her to in Mbale even though Dr. Musani had been clear to her that her chances of recovering by operation were just about ten percent. All this happens due to Chelimo's self-belief, she really believed in herself and most of all, believed in the youth doctors who made it a success. Also, through the youth doctors, women agency is portrayed because after examining Chelimo, Dr. Musani clearly identifies that Chelimo had been circumcised and yet it is true that; circumcision often tended to make treatment of an obstetric fistula more complicated, because the scar tissue resulting from cutting usually made fistula repair surgery more difficult. Nevertheless, the youth doctors given support and courage from Chelimo, they go on and operate her successfully. Therefore, Doctor Musani's and other youthful doctor's acceptance and their willingness to cooperate Chelimo contribute a lot to her successful operation hence women agency. Chelimo is glad that she recovers from the deadly and miserable disease (fistula). Out of much excitement, she cries tears of joy as her own way to celebrate her recovery from the stigmatizing disease Fistula.

Subversion is depicted in a way of reclaiming her lost love and marriage with Dane. Chelimo is determined to put to use all the available resources and help from Mrs. Orono in order to bring back and maintain the spark in her marriage. Mrs. Orono being Chelimo's perfect advisor and now her second mother since her own mother has passed on, feeds her with good advice on how to unify her family again. And end the session insisting that it all begins with Chelimo. Implying that if it is love, peace, joy, unity, it shall have to begin with her. The author has it that; *What will make all the difference will start within you.*" Mrs. Orono had told her over and over. (Okurut 2016:177) With Mrs. Orono's advice, Chelimo embarks on her way back home to light a spark to her dull marriage. To begin with, it so happens that Dane's birthday is close, so Chelimo thinks it's a perfect occasion to resurrect what was in essence a marriage that had died years ago. So Chelimo proposes that they have a quiet dinner at home, Dane agrees to the proposal and so they have the dinner at home. Chelimo prepares all the dishes herself and after they have enjoyed dinner, time for bed is here. So Chelimo smiles to herself as she starts taking off his T-Shirt is determined to make love to Dane, after all she is still deeply in love with him. She really wants to bring back the spark in her marriage. The author writes; *"Yes she had resolved to be brave in the face of pain so as to make Dane happy"* (Okurut 2016:177). Chelimo

shows her ability of putting all the acquired knowledge and ideas to use in bid to make Dane a happy spouse thus reflecting female agency. However, amidst her efforts to enjoy the long-awaited night, Chelimo gets disappointed. When everything is warm and cozy, Chelimo lowers the bedside lamp and reaches for him. Dane hoists from bed and turns the lamp to the brightest and stares down at her nakedness. It is clear that he doesn't want to touch Chelimo anymore. Even though he avoids her, it is clear that Chelimo has tried, she has done her best in order to make Dane happy. She has done what we call self-empowerment. It only takes a woman with great courage to try hard to recover their husband and marriage as well after they have been through a terrible health situation like Chelimo. Even though she fails, she has tried.

Political participation is portrayed when Chelimo makes a decision to join politics in order to serve her people of Kapchorwa. Through direct speech, Tezira Chelimo who is the minister of culture defies societal expectations around femininity by tempting to end FGM. Evidence; *"I genuinely want to serve my people to the best of my ability."* Chelimo is determined to show great resistance and subversive tendencies against the evil practice of FGM and the people practicing it. While she goes on de-campaigning mission in Kapchorwa, everybody welcomes her with open arms. Most people tell her opponents; "Our educated girl is back to serve us. We shall give her our vote." Kapchorwans really want Chelimo to stand and are ready to give her votes whatsoever. So, she goes through a smooth election and scores a landslide victory. The president also empowers Chelimo politically and economically when he invites her to be on board as the minister of environment, a position she embraces and graces with diligence and distinction. As if that's not enough, following a cabinet reshuffle years later, Chelimo is given the Culture portfolio and this marks the height of women agency in Chelimo's employment line. Because she agrees to take on the assignment rendered to her by the president. Furthermore, the new position she is given by the president centers her in their best position where she can best implement her ready mission of stopping any other Sabiny girl from undergoing the same pain she has suffered. Remember she is now the Minister of culture and female circumcision is right under culture. The reshuffle opens her journey of fighting for the Sabiny girls and women's rights to having their full body parts and most of all the right to good health. Direct speech brings the reader into the scene, making us feel like we are experiencing the conversation on FGM firsthand.

Daisy empowers herself by showing resistance to her kidnappers. This portrays subversion and helps to delay the process. Daisy seems to be in another world when the old woman asks her to take off her clothes. Daisy shocks the old woman when she takes hold of her clothes; *“Child, take off your clothes. Daisy did not. Instead, she held her uniform close to her body.”* The kind of resentment that Daisy displays challenges the old woman and signifies the zeal for self-empowerment as a young girl. Resistance and subversion are reflected through Daisy's reaction towards the old woman. It shows even though young as she is, she is capable and ready to fight for her rights and freedom thus portraying female agency. However, the old woman succeeds at taking off Daisy's dress; Next is her under garment. While taking it off, Daisy protests again this time being too serious. The author vividly describes the moment; *“The woman quickly moved her hand to Daisy's panty and begun to tug at it. Daisy protested and her hands automatically moved to keep the panty in place.”* (Okurut 2016:192) Even though she is tired, Daisy does not easily give up. She delays the entire process of circumcising her, giving a chance to the rescue team to save her situation and most of all to save her from the cruel rotwet. With her little energy, Daisy tries to resist from the old woman's orders and the other old women chose to do it themselves and by force.

Daisy shows total resistance and self-expression in bid to fight for her rights as a girl child when she yells again as the old woman applies the pre-circumcision herbs onto her private parts causing more chaos and destruction to surgeons with the mission to circumcise her in time. It should be noted that the destruction Daisy causes buys more and more time for her rescuers to get close thus she delays the entire process of her circumcision event. The author describes how Daisy destructs the circumcising team;

Her calm was disturbed by the old woman when she applied the pre-circumcision herbs onto her private parts. She jumped high and wild, screaming at the top of her tinny and tender voice, startling the women. (Okurut 2016:198)

The old woman holds her mouth as they assure her that all will be well in just a little while. Poor old women think they are doing good to Daisy out of ignorance. They don't know the negative effects of female circumcision. Despite the old women's assurance of the quick process of the event, Daisy cannot help it, she feels the fire shoot through every part of her body and into her inner being. The truth is; Daisy is not prepared for such eventualities. She has spent years of

sheltered life, protected like a gold fish in a fish room aquarium. She now appears like a little fish that has been ejected from the aquarium into the endless ocean. She looks so troubled. Nevertheless, she does not give up easily, Daisy shouts and screams for rescue from anyone that would hear her cry and rescue her. The author vividly describes the happening of Daisy's protestation at the river. She puts it that;

Tears and mucus flowed down her face as she struggled with her captors, screaming as loud as she could, like a little duckling, in the gap of the wolf, and quacking for life, praying that her quacks would be heard by a kindred soul who'd come to her rescue before the wolf sank its canines into her rump. She simply screamed, even as the old women struggled to keep her quiet. (Okurut 2016:199)

Through vivid descriptions, we learn of Daisy's protesting character and decisiveness. She completely shows great aggressiveness and self-advocacy. Amidst her protestation and screams due to the pre-circumcision herbs applied onto her vagina, Daisy decides to scream louder such that people can come to her rescue from her captors (surgeons) thus a portrayal of female agency. The vivid description made of Daisy's situation at the river makes one feel like they are present at the circumcision event. The description given of the situation appeals to our senses of seeing, hearing and feeling. Because one imagines how loud her screams are; ones that she decides to make not caring whether people hear them or not. Instead, she makes the screams louder such that people can come to her rescue. The screams and quacks must have been louder to raise a corpse from the grave. The description also appeals to our sense of feeling, the quacks must have been deafening and also one imagines the kind of pain that gets to Daisy; one gets to a point of imagining the pain Daisy feels. We, the audience, kind of feel the pain Daisy must have felt to make her scream a lot and louder. The description also appeals to our sense of seeing as the story unfolds especially the bit of circumcision at the river, through description, we are able to visualize Daisy jumping and screaming and crying for help. Therefore, the author uses vivid description to portray women agency and, in this case, it is Daisy who fights for her rights, firstly her right to have all body parts, good health and freedom of movement. Again, this protestation also delays her circumcision. It buys time for the rescue team though she is not aware. Now the time for the real course of action sets in and Daisy is asked to spread her legs further such that she can be mutilated.

The novel is narrated from the third person point of view for easier portrayal of subversion a form of female agency. The narration in third person is most of the time omniscient. In this case, the author easily goes into Chelimo's past to bring Chelimo's story to us. Because of this narrator, events happening at the same time but at different places are brought to us using the same tone in the characters' words. Events in Kapchorwa are narrated alongside events in Kampala while reflecting resistance and subversion, negotiation and bargaining. For instance, during campaigns against FGM, Chelimo bargains and negotiates with the kidnappers not to harm her daughter. Through direct speech, we learn that she is willing to pay all the amount they want so that they release her daughter. And since the narrator is an observer and not a participant in the story. We tend to believe that what she gives us is the truth.

The minister of culture, Tezira Chelimo's decision to campaign against FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) portrays subversive tendencies. In, Okurut (2016), there is no female Villain. Implying that she writes towards emancipating the girl child and woman as a whole especially in torturing societies like Kapchorwa. The females are rather the victims of the system practiced in the region. Female genital mutilation is the system being practiced which the Sebei regard as the rite of passage from childhood to womanhood. However, Tezira Chelimo disregards this kind of practice as she herself goes through the same but after facing and realizing its cruel effects, she mobilizes community and government to campaign against FGM in Kapchorwa. As the Minister for culture, Tezira Chelimo moves out of the cart to the big crowd that awaits her for almost five hours at the Boma grounds located in the heart of Kapchorwa town, the crowd greatly welcomes her in a special way. She really feels delighted as she applauds people welcoming her. The Minister eventually gets relieved of fear of standing in front of the huge crowd of people and then also talking about ending a sensitive practice of FGM that has been practiced by her people for quite a number of years. The fact that Tezira Chelimo is the minister of culture, reflects agency in her because she manages to be a good leader since she is determined to be of advantage to her people in Kapchorwa especially the ladies by de-campaigning FGM. So, the crowd welcome her with a huge applause something that motivates the female sex.

Through vivid description, subversion is further portrayed as Chelimo walks to the platform to discourage FGM. Chelimo challenges the status quo of the Sabiny as she speaks against female circumcision. Chelimo also speaks about reproductive health rights of women. She indicates that

FGM comes with difficulty in childbearing and painful intercourse. Chelimo believes that her speech will save more girls from rotwet and its bad effects hence female agency is reflected. Vivid descriptions enable us to well understand Tezira Chelimo as a good leader. Everyone welcomes her in Kapchorwa during her FGM campaigns. There is something about the applauding crowds that boosts one's confidence and, on this day, Madam Minister's confidence is particularly sky-high. The wonderful welcome that Chelimo receives from the crowd empowers her as there is evidence that "Madam Minister's confidence was particularly sky-high." The author uses flashback to bring fresh past events. The bulk part of the novel is narrated as flashback. Chelimo's welcome by the crowds sounds too fresh to our ears and we can easily visualize how people are excited and happy to see her. This kind of applause brings about female agency because also during the days the event takes place women were looked at as the marginalized sex. So, the fact that they welcome the female sex with such a loud applause, she feels empowered and this helps her to gain more confidence.

Through flashback, we learn of Tezira Chelimo as the first minister of culture to de-campaign FGM in the Eastern region of Uganda-Kapchorwa. It is through flashback that we learn of her good and leadership skills. For instance, as she sets in to the platform, being called upon by the emceeto address the Sabiny people. The crowd welcomes her and the applause is all defeating. The mountain folks of Sabiny- Land welcome their girl who has done them proud by becoming a minister. This kind of good applause gives Chelimo courage to take on the Microphone and Chelimo also being skilled in the art of public speaking she reads the moods of the crowds and comes up with the appropriate right rhetorical device to handle them. She greets them with honor. And the author has it;

"Oyei – yei!!", she screamed in greeting

"Yei!" the crowd screamed back

"Oleiiiiiiiiiii-yeiiiiiiiiiii!!" the Minister went

"yeiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!!!!" the crowd again, now worked up, charted back. At the Olei-yei, the crowd went crazy and the band, sensing the mood too, took full advantage and struck up a Checwoyet – a genetic name for circumcision tunes. (Okurut 2016:34)

Flashbacks are employed to reflect agency in Chelimo. As the story is narrated, female agency is noticed both on the Minister's side as a good leader when Sabiny crowds applaud her as she is given a microphone and the Minister herself emancipates the crowds which are made up of a number of women when she greets them with all her enthusiasm as she screams. Her greeting gives the crowds hope. So, you can imagine a whole Minister screaming as she greets mere village people who are nobodies, this signifies that she is indeed a perfect leader. It is really a favor and good opportunity for them, to be greeted by a Minister in such a way. Something that restores their hope. They indeed feel privileged, loved and respected. This action seriously portrays women agency. The minister also feels empowered by the way the crowds are eager to speak and listen to their Sabiny Minister. Folks are excited and they call the Minister their Sabiny, girl. They are excited about their Sabiny girl joining the Ministry to serve the country. They are happy that they have a representative in the ministry and so are encouraged and happy of having a Sabiny in the ministry to air out their views. The flashback helps us to understand why the minister's daughter Daisy is kidnapped and taken to Kapchorwa mountains. It is because the minister (Chelimo) arranges and de-campaigns FGM. So, the kidnappers make sure they revenge on her one daughter claiming that it's culture to perform Circumcision on all females since they believe that it is a rite of passage to womanhood.

Even though the minister is in a high position for ministers, she is not ashamed of her culture. She comes along with her own monkey tail to dance with hence representing female agency. As the crowds dance away in celebration upon seeing and greeting the one Minister Chelimo, she surprises them. The surprise comes in after the Minister Chelimo hears a Chekwoyet tune. The minister decides to take a collective action and the author has it;

Chelimo had come with her own monkey tail and she bobbed up and down, trying to remain dignified, while at the same time dancing well. A dance whose first requirement was that all dignity and pretenses there to be put aside. (Okurut 2016:35)

Through vivid descriptions, the author describes how the Minister-Chelimo makes serious but polite moves which leaves the crowds thrilled and happy. The moves make crowds more eager to listen to her beautiful encouraging speech. To sum it all, Chelimo takes them by surprise when she raises on her feet to dance with her own "monkey tail". This encourages the Kapchorwans the more and they confirm that the Minister (Chelimo) still loves her culture and has not let them

down like other females from Kapchorwa who move to the central part of the country (Kampala) and forget about their beautiful culture. Through vivid description, the author explains to us readers how Minister Chelimo displays her excitement, and we learn of how much love the Minister has for her cultural setting. A good example is when the Minister takes a purposeful action of coming with her own monkey tail ready to dance to the chekwoyet tune during the FMG mobilization.

We are able to tell that Minister Chelimo is happy and excited but at the same time we as audience through the description given by the author that she dances but she is also able to keep her dignity even though the Chekwoyet dance requires one to put aside pretenses while dancing to the Chekwoyet tune.

I am here to tell you my people of Sebei, that the God who created us was no fool. He knew exactly what He was doing when He gave every woman the various parts on her body. Nobody has the right to remove any part of it! God created woman full.....I want you to know that those who claim to be making her full by removing parts of her body that make her so, are instead making her less of a woman. My people you all know how terrible some of the effects of female circumcision are. You all know that we have lost some gallant women of this land due to the practice. We have lost mothers. We have lost sisters. Yet we have continued to shield this evil..... Let us all say No to the knife! (Okurut 2016:37)

Through vivid description, the author appeals to our senses as she vividly explains how God created women and the right for every woman to keep or stay with all her body parts. This implies that the minister is aware of her right to say no to FGM. The description opens our eyes that every woman has the right to keep all their parts especially in the private parts. The vivid description clearly depicts female agency and also enables us to know and understand why we women should say No to female circumcision because she tells us of the evil effects that come with female circumcision. Through the vivid description given we learn of the effects of the knife including loss of mothers, sisters and several diseases like UTI's and difficulty in child delivery. Therefore, by unveiling the effects of FGM the Minister wants the crowd

(Kapchorwans) to understand that rotwet is dangerous and so they can leave the evil practice purposely to defend and promote rights of their girls and women thereby promoting their health and socio-economic, political esteem. Hence the Minister is by all means trying to fight for women's rights thus representing female agency. Even though some elderly men and women shuffle like chicken whose feathers have been ruffled by a superior cock, both young men and women join and chant saying; "We say No! we say no! we say no!" (Okurut 2016:38). Implying that the de-campaigning of female circumcision becomes a success.

Chelimo's speech plays an important role in giving women and girls a voice. Their chant confirms that they are also saying no to FGM after listening to the minister Chelimo who explains that God created women the way they are for a purpose as well as ill effects of FGM something that has made them realize that God was no fool to include the parts they cut from women's private parts. The young people's roar is so empowering to Chelimo as it gives her more courage to speak on and on. She gets excited about the response, pauses for effect and readiness to deliver another "Bombshell" on FGM, its effects and why it should be left. The fact that young women and young men are in full support of Chelimo's speech of de-campaigning FGM, it already shows a positive impact of her rally. It in fact signifies that the practice of FGM in Kapchorwa will not last longer as people have learnt that it causes about death like the Minister Chelimo says in her speech.

In chapter three, through vivid description, female agency is portrayed as Chelimo decides to set on a journey back to her homeland Kapchorwa to rescue her one Daisy. The author has it;

As Chelimo sat back in the car, fear, worry, anxiety and anger were written all over her face. She was on a journey back to her homeland surrounded by Policemen and security operatives of all types on a mission to make sure her daughter Daisy did not undergo circumcision. (Okurut 2016:63)

Through vivid description of the author we notice the fear Chelimo carries, we are able to see clearly what the author has clearly envisioned regarding the terrible fear Chelimo is undergoing. The author explains how Chelimo is empowered by the IGP. Gives her a private vehicle and security as she embarks on the journey of finding her daughter (Daisy). Given the IGP's car, and security and words of courage to her, Chelimo gets comforted, feels supported emotionally and

politically even though she is still upset and does not show it. It is clear even though she is the Minister of Culture and deserves to be served right, this action signifies women agency since she counsels out her duties as a minister and decides to go save her daughter from rotwet and its dangers. Her ability to make such a tough decision full of risks signifies female agency.

Through flashbacks, we learn of her determined efforts to save her daughter. As she is being driven on a journey to rescue her daughter it is written that; *Her mind went on another journey, many years back, when she went through what her daughter must never go through. What no woman should ever go through*” (Okurut 2016:63). Chelimo totally disregards and shows complete refusal against female circumcision through flashbacks. The flashback of her getting circumcised makes the pain she went through years ago fresh again to her memory and on recalling the much pain she thinks to herself that her daughter Daisy must never go through it. And that no woman should ever go through it. She is really determined to save the daughter the excruciating pain of rotwet thus emancipating the female sex especially those in areas facing FGM.

Through the night, the girls received plenty of education on how to manage the family-including the critical matters of relating with in-laws, children, husbands and neighbors. (Okurut 2016:76) The girls' ability and will to learn essential matters of marriage prove female agency. Through vivid description, girls are taught how to live and relate with different kinds of people of the society which is something crucial because we are brought up in the society and live in the society. We cannot do away with it and people in it but rather comply and learn how to deal with people of all categories. So, eating habits and general social etiquette expected of the essential Sabiny housewife is also discussed that night. During the same night, the mentor goes on to emancipate girls and talks about the type of food a wife should prepare to ensure her husband's heart does not stray to other women. And lastly girls are asked to be patient in marriage if at all they want to be respected and also keep in their marriages. All this is discussed in order to impart knowledge which would help the girls know what to do and more so to believe in themselves once they are married.

Chemtai is a girl of her own caliber, she takes in and allows no nonsense. In short, she is a no-nonsense girl. She empowers herself more than any other girl amongst the candidates during the circumcision time. Chemtai encourages other circumcision candidates to speak up and make sure

they know the value of their opinions so that they are never scared to use their voice and indeed she sets an example while one of the matryondents tells her to be in one position when rotwet was due to harvest what belonged to her; *“Sip!” Chemtai cursed - rather than declared. “I am Chemtaidaughter of the Kapsumbata Clan, and don’t you ever talk to me like that again stupid woman. Nobody talks to Chemtai like that.”* (Okurut 2016:83) Through direct speech, female agency is reflected because she is outspoken and aware of her rights according to her speech. Chemtai leads by example, she boosts her self-esteem by taking courage to defend her human right of freedom to speech thereby reflecting her ability to speak up in matters where she is not comfortable. Hence direct speech helps to develop Chemtai's character as bold and a confident girl child since she is totally not scared of the elders. In her speech, she misleads others and displays objection and passive subversion by answering her matryondent in an arrogant way. To her, life and freedom matter a lot than any other thing on earth. She hates to be despised. However, other girls and everybody present is shocked at what Chemtai says. Chemtai even though exposed to negativity of saying she is not supposed to talk to Yapcherop (One circumcising) like that, she is not scared at all, she is determined to be her authentic self from a young age. By being herself, she does self-empowerment and also emancipate girls around her; they feel special. And even though she doesn't show it at this level.

Through vivid description, another female agency is reflected when Chelimo shuts down the negativity of forbidding her from seeing her fellow candidate, Chemtai her best friend who has not fully recovered. She boosts herself and decides to go visit Chemtai in the hospital. She hurries past the two hobbling women and she heads straight to hospital to check on Chemtai's health, if she has been attended to by a doctor and if she is improving or not. Bad luck, Chelimo just arrives in time, as she finds her best friend being rolled off her bed and quickly wheeled out of the ward to avoid upsetting other patients. Chelimo gets shocked and weeps. The author has the evidence; *“Weeping bitterly, Chelimo followed the mortuary attendant until her friend’s last stop for the time being the cold room where, alongside other bodies, hers would be preserved till the relatives picked her up”* (Okurut 2016:100). Chelimo is open and honest to her relationship with Chemtai even though she is gone. She keeps faithful and waits patiently at the mortuary for the now late-Chemtai's relatives to pick her body up. By doing this, she leads by example, she acts like a true friend should and with a good heart. It is written that;

Chelimo faithfully stayed at the mortuary and accompanied her best friend every step of the way, till she was lowered into the grave. While everybody else threw in fists of earth as the priest went through the “Dust to dust” motions, Chelimo threw in flowers after flowers, her vision blurred by tears that flowed freely like a water fall in rainy season. (Okurut 2016:100)

It only takes a real friend to accompany her best friend's body until she is lowered into the grave. Through the author's vivid description of how Chelimo mourns the death and burial of Chemtai her village mate, we realize that the two were too close friends. Also as others threw in fists of earth, Chelimo threw in flowers after flowers. This marks the climax and clear end of their relationship. It also signifies the much love Chelimo had for her friend Chemtai. Even in death Chelimo loved her one close friend. This Vivid language description of Chemtai's death clearly shows what the author has envisioned, and it is the reason Chelimo names her one daughter Chemtai Daisy. Chelimo wanted to keep memory of her childhood friend. Vivid language description also helps in character development because we learn of Chelimo as a girl able to make decisions on her own. For instance, when Chemtai, her friend, is taken to the hospital, of all people, she decides to go check on her health status. She awaits at the mortuary until her body is taken home and later on buried.

In chapter five of the novel, the narrator uses second point of view to bring out female agency. Daisy gets some hope only after reaching a small, non-descript compound about three kilometers up the mountain at the home of Emily Cherotich, an old widow. As Daisy stands in the compound, Adeni comes close to her and reminds her to cooperate if she requires peace. Adeni promises Daisy; *This will be very simple, Child if you cooperate. Do not do anything you are not told to do. Follow instructions to the dot. If you don't, we shall have no choice but to do what we all don't want.*” (Okurut 2016:109) Though kind of threatening, Daisy picks some courage from Adeni's direct speech he makes to her. Through second person point of view, we learn of an assurance that if Daisy does as required by Adeni and the rest of the Kidnapping team, she will neither be harmed nor lose her life. Daisy too is assured of her life – something that emancipates her conscience in her inner self. At least she gets a pinch of hope that as long as her life's safety is assured, then she can in one way, or another, acquire freedom as well but gradually. Or one thing she bears in mind is patience and self-belief since she clearly knows that her mother will

never find her very fast because she has been taken to a deserted place. Very far away place she cannot notice, even without people. Second person point of view creates an interactive literary experience of Chelimo's mother, bringing the reader into the story because of "you" which is used by the narrator to tell the story; *"She knew she had only herself to depend on."* The author uses third person narration to point out female agency. The above statement shows that Daisy now believes in herself and is left with herself to depend on since she has lost hopes of seeing her one mother. Third person narration allows the reader to well understand what Daisy was going through. So, bearing in mind that she only has herself to depend on, Daisy behaves herself and makes sure she does not upset kidnappers to do worse things to her. The old woman Cherotich dressed in a green and black long dress invites Daisy to sit down so they can talk and also proceed with the circumcision ritual. While they talk, the old woman introduces herself to Daisy; *"I am the doctor who is going to set you free"*. At the mention of *"set you free"*, Daisy feels happy for the first time since her kidnap. The author has it; *"Daisy felt a temporary twitch of happiness."* Out of excitement and self-emancipation Daisy pleads with the old woman who calls herself Doctor; *"Set me free, Oh grandma, Please set me free now so that I go back to my mother Please"* (Okurut 2016:111). Daisy at least becomes open and honest to herself and innermost feelings. She finally speaks up after a long period of silence. Daisy feels she can't wait any longer. She greatly misses her mother, her mentor, her sister, her only closest friend, her only parent she knows, her everything. The old woman responds saying;

You will soon go back to your mother. The freedom we are talking about is different. It is better than the one you are talking about. Child now you are like a prisoner in your own body. We shall set you free from some parts of your body which are stopping you from becoming a full woman of the Sabiny tribe. (Okurut 2016, 111)

The old woman keeps Daisy's hopes high however the kind of freedom, Cherotich talks about is not the real freedom Daisy understands. And also, in actual sense it is not freedom but rather captivity that Chelimo is fighting to end. Irony is employed when the author writes that; *"Child now you are like a prisoner in your own body. We shall set you free from some parts of your body which are stopping you from becoming a full woman....."* This is ironical in away, that you cannot make a woman full by removing some of her body parts. It is really contradicting. However, to the old woman Cherotich, she thinks she is emancipating Daisy by what she is about

to do to her. Cherotich thinks she will remove some body parts thus make her a full woman of the Sabiny tribe. Even then Daisy does not understand, she looks absolutely, totally blank as the old woman smiles as she leads her to the mat spread on the floor. Daisy resists something that signifies subversive tendencies. She is completely on the contrary. She causes chaos. Daisy feels disgusted as the old woman reminds her saying; “*Remember what your friend said? You must cooperate.*” When the old woman mentions of a friend, yet Daisy knows him as her Kidnapper she learns that they are all in the same plot and game. They are all against and about to deny her freedom. They want to get rid of some parts of her body thereby making her a full woman of the Sabiny tribe.

Through flashback, we learn of how Chelimo wonders about Samba falls and mostly Sipi falls and how it becomes a difficult part of her adventure to climb back to the top of the hill to meet with her driver. Such a scenario of a flashback breaks up the chronological flow, making it realistic and interesting because one imagines Chelimo climbing down the Sipi falls and then having to climb back without anyone’s help. This is done in the presence of women and children washing at the falls. Another interesting part of her climbing is when she walks on all her fours and then also looks back as she gets in the middle of the hill by mistake; “*She looked down and was frozen by fear*” (Okurut 2016:126). This wouldn’t be good but makes the story appear more realistic to the audience. Flashbacks help to reflect female agency through Chelimo and make the story appear fresh to us because one imagines Chelimo the minister of culture walking on all her fours like a pussy cat. It really gets one thinking crazy as if one is there watching her struggling to climb faster to the top of the hill. When she finally makes it to the top of the hill, she proves her ability to take a collective action to climb the steep hill at Sipi falls. Thus, flashback helps us to reveal Chelimo's abilities and character of endurance. She also believes in herself because she endures until she achieves her goal of reaching the top of the mountain.

Chelimo believes in herself again because of the emancipation she gets from Dane and Mrs. Orono, the head of Mothers Union at St. Luke Church in Ntinda. Chelimo gets emotionally supported by her husband and Mrs. Orono when she loses her one and only mother, one that she loves and trusts the most. Chelimo’s mother suffers from Cervical cancer but no one is aware. When the pain worsens, Chelimo sends a driver to bring her to Kampala, to carry out tests. This happens days after the burial of Chelimo’s son in Kabale. Tests turn out that its Cervical cancer

in its advanced stages. A few weeks in hospital do not help and she dies a painful death. Chelimo gets hurt by the death of her mother. She gets numb. Good enough Dane and Mrs Orono are present to intervene and comfort her;

Luckily, for her, Dane was supportive and by her side through it all. Chelimo was also greatly helped by Mrs. Orono, head of the mothers Union at St. Luke Church, Ntinda, who stood stoutly by her through the pain. (Okurut 2016:167)

Through vivid description we learn more of Dane and Orono's supportive character. The author describes how Dane stands by Chelimo after the loss of their beloved mother until when the vigil and burial are done. He supports her emotionally. Also, through the author's description of Mrs. Orono we learn that she is able to stand by her side to give her company and show that she is not alone. Mrs. Orono provides a shoulder for Chelimo to cry on thus emancipating her both socially and emotionally at the funeral of her mother. Chelimo takes courage and opens up to her husband about the predicament that has befallen her. Through third person narration, Chelimo tells him of how she can no longer control her urine. The author has it; *"A few days later, Chelimo mastered the courage to talk about her dilemma to Dane"* (Okurut 2016:169).

The third person point of view allows us readers to have a more concrete experience of what Chelimo is going through. We learn that she can no longer control the flow of her urine. It only takes one with enough courage, ability and self-belief to speak such sad news as wetting the bed. Worst of it all telling it to the opposite sex or to a person you share love with. After listening to her dear wife, Dane also does not sit on this bitter happening the wife is facing. He suggests that the Doctor should intervene and help with a medical solution; *"The following day they went shopping- this time for a doctor. They decided Dr. Medard would do."* (Okurut 2016:169)

Dane's empowerment to Chelimo creates in her self-belief because he encourages the wife to face the doctor so she can be diagnosed and get treated. Dane does not stop at advising, he accompanies the wife to the hospital such that they can altogether see the doctor. In doing so, Dane empowers Chelimo the wife and gives her courage to open up her health problem such that she gets an everlasting solution.

Chelimo tells her story of the last few days and the doctor explains apologetically that he is sorry, that the difficult labor while she gave birth has done more harm to her than they thought.

He adds that it left her with what we call vesical vaginal fistula. The Doctor ends with a remark that her system has been damaged. Chelimo inquires;

What does all that mean Doctor? Dr. Medard answers; “What that means is that your system is free flowing. Uncontrollable. Haven’t you heard of anything called vaginal fistula..... (Okurut 2016:169)

Vesicovaginal fistula is an obstetrical condition. When the wall of the bladder is ruptured, it eats into the vagina; thereby causing urine to flow through the vagina instead of the urethra which is otherwise the normal route. In that condition a person cannot control her urine, so it just leaks all the time. This is often after complicated childbirth especially when adequate medical care is not available. In simple terms, it has been described to be caused by prolonged labor, where the sustained pressure of the baby’s head on the mother’s pelvic bone damages soft tissues around childbirth canal, creating a hole between the Vagina and the bladder. The pressure deprives blood flow to the tissue and eventually, the tissue dies and comes away, leaving a fistula, which leads to constant leaking of urine through the vagina.

And it is worse for circumcised women because they have scant elasticity, which heightens the possibility for fistula. So, you see, you had no chance.” Dr. Medard helps to identify the disease Chelimo is suffering from; it is fistula. However, he does not provide an everlasting solution. Dr. Medard carries out another test in order to rule out cervical cancer. The Dr. makes a test and he explains that the link between circumcision, obstructed labor and lacerations to the cervix has been established and that the chain is known to greatly increase the risk of cervical cancer but if identified early it can be treated. Dr. Medard assures Chelimo that the test is for just in case. Just to rule it out, such that she does not get upset even before she can know the results. Nevertheless, Chelimo holds her head in her palms and begins to weep for best late friend Chamtai and her mother who has just gone. She weeps at the helplessness she feels at the realization that rotwet has taken from her the people that she loved the most. It has also taken away her own happiness. Meanwhile, Dane pulls her towards himself and holds her in his arms for consolation and courage as the two wait for Dr. Medard to return with the results for cervical cancer test. A few days later, the Doctor emancipates Chelimo with good news that give her some piece of hope for tomorrow. It is written that;

.....the doctor was pleased to call Chelimo with good news for a change, as he confirmed that the tests had not shown any signs of cancerous cells. He also gave her a reference to experts he though could handle the fistula. Two pieces of good news. For the first time in a long time, Chelimo smiled. (Okurut 2016:173)

Dr. Medard Manages to make Chelimo smile with his two pieces of good news after a very long time. Dr. Medard confirms with the sample for cervical cancer test but is also able to refer Chelimo to experts that can handle fistula problem. He assures her that fistula is treatable. Pitch of hope thrives upon her because she is sure the experts will soon solve her problem of Fistula.

Through flashbacks, female agency is reflected through Chelimo's courageous character. We also learn of her strong will to decide and to be brave in the face of pain all in the name of making Dane happy as well rescue her long gone marriage. Flashbacks bring back past experiences of Chelimo on the table. We learn that even though she fails to win her husband back, she loves him and that she does not give up easily. It is only after trying. Through flashbacks, we learn that Chelimo is a lady ready to fight for what she loves, she empowers herself to rescue her marriage through peace talks with Dane just before he leaves the house. Chelimo assures him that she is ready for anything that can keep their marriage together. She pleads with Dane and goes on to explain how they have always supported each other through all the challenges and asks him not to think of divorce. Chelimo begs to try again; *"We can live together as a happy couple again if we both give it a try."* Chelimo this time round becomes more open about speaking what is down inside her heart but Dane renders her efforts of pleading futile when he says;

My friend, the problem you have is not one to be brushed aside..... My dear girl, we both know that I have tried my best over the years and simply can't go on To be honest, and I do not mean to be mean; your switch is off; Chelimo; there's no trace of electricity flowing within. The lights are all out. Let's not pretend it's not dark in here..... Those women should have told you the day they took you through the secrets of the river, that when you take "The Switch" off; the current goes with it. (Okurut 2016:183)

With the vivid explanation Dane gives, Chelimo takes in the bitter truth. But she decides to de-campaign FGM. She is determined within her means to stop any other Sabiny girl from undergoing the same pain she has suffered. This depicts subversion in a way that she is questioning the values of the Sabiny. Chelimo decides to fight against female circumcision because of; firstly, the much pain rotwet causes as she gets circumcised while a young girl, secondly, painful intercourse with Dane, thirdly, complicated childbirth. Chelimo loses her first baby boy. She even acquires a strange disease – fistula and fourthly, she loses her marriage all because of rotwet. It is written that later Chelimo joins politics such that she can serve her people well. She is so determined, and the author captures her words; “*I genuinely want to serve my people to the best of my ability.*” Through direct speech, we learn of Chelimo's zeal and courage to serve her people in Kapchorwa. Inside her, she believes her people in Kapchorwa need her more than people elsewhere and she even makes it more specific; “those women need me.” Chelimo's ability to join politics reflects her political social role and female agency at large.

Through vivid description, subversion is portrayed through Daisy's power of resistance. Through vivid description, we learn of Daisy's courage and strength to protest the old women's rules and orders of undressing first, the dress and later her panty. Even though at the end, the old woman pry's away the girl's hands and brings her panty down. As her pants are brought down, Daisy seems resigned to whatever the old woman will have to do to her. Daisy pray's inside her heart and waits for God to perform miracles. She believes in the never-failing love and protection of her mother.

Daisy believes in herself because of her mother's strong character. In the face of trouble and danger for her life, Daisy still has the capacity to think about her mother, a role model and that well explains what Daisy's mother is to her. While she is being kidnapped and plans for circumcision are under way, Daisy thinks of no other than her mother. At the moment of life and death, Daisy has all her hopes in her mother to rescue her. This signifies female agency because the only belief Daisy has in herself is because of her one mother Chelimo.

Female agency is depicted through vivid description of how mother meets with the daughter. The author describes the passionate embrace Chelimo gives the daughter and vice versa. It is written that the two weep in each other's arms. Implying that they both longed to see each other and the description given makes one feel the freshness of the story making it interesting. Vivid

descriptions make one feel as though they are part of the story as if they are right there standing where the mother and daughter are embracing and hugging each other from. Vivid descriptions also help to bring out as well develop Chelimo's character as aggressive and determined.

Another depiction of female agency is portrayed through direct speech when one of police officers orders the arrest of the three old women who sit in big hut with Daisy. Somebody in the group cuts in saying circumcision is not a crime. The IGP also defends the three old women:

“No, it’s not. Kidnapping is a crime though. It’s a pity that these people genuinely believe that what they are doing is for the good of the tribe. Madam Minister, you have a long way to go with your people.” the IGP said. (Okurut 2016:204)

The IGP completely defends the three old women claiming of their ignorance and backwardness of how people act in the new era. There are some two police detectives who insist and emerge from the house pushing the three old surgeons, but the IGP empowers them as he orders their release thus winning them freedom. The author has it; *“Don’t the IGP ordered. The detectives stood still. These old women did not fetch the girl from Kampala leave them.” (Okurut 2016:206)*

Direct speech helps to reveal the commanding tone that the IGP uses to order the release of the old women who are to circumcise Daisy. Even though the detectives insist claiming that the old women will be required for assisting in investigations, he emphasizes that they will be coming from their homes. The IGP displays respect and social responsibility over the old women through direct speech. The author uses direct speech to bring out IGP’s orders to detectives of freeing the three old women. Direct speech used implies that the ICIP holds great respect and intends strongly the freedom of the poor surgeons in doing so he is empowering them socially and politically. Direct speech makes the story sound more objective because we clearly see that the words are coming directly from the mouth of the IGP. Direct speech takes bias away from our thoughts hence making the novel interesting to read.

Through vivid descriptions and dialogue, Daisy’s effort to challenge the kidnapper and women that want to circumcise her is depicted. The old woman struggles to undress her. But Daisy does not make it easy for her. Later, the women put herbs in her private part. Daisy gets hurt so badly. She thinks they want to sacrifice her because they have knives in their hands. Daisy creates chaos at the application of herbs because they are itchy. She disrupts the old women in the

process. The disruptions help Daisy to slow the process of her circumcision. As the old woman goes down with a knife, she looks but cannot cut. It is described that;

They forced my legs open. I tried to fight and kick but they held me firmly to the ground telling me not to waste my time and their time. The old woman held a curved knife and bent over between my legs, but suddenly she started cursing asking the other women why nobody told them that the girl was seeing the moon. They all exclaimed and said that it would be an abomination to cut me. They then released me from their grip. (Okurut 2016:207)

The kidnapper and the old woman in the hat build Daisy's character as subversive. She does not make it easy for them to circumcise her very fast like they had planned to. Dialogue helps us readers to understand what daisy goes through when she is kidnapped. It is through this dialogue that she tells us of how the old woman and the rest of the kidnapping team organize to mutilate her. She does not leave a bit of it untold. The applause the IGP, Chelimo and the rest of the rescue team make is meant to reduce and gradually take away the trauma and psychological torture that Daisy has just been through. And more so it supports her to be able to tell everything that the captors and surgeons have done to her such as applying the herbs to her private parts. Through flashback, Daisy tells of her ordeal as a child. As she tells her ordeal, the story of what happens to her appears fresher to our ears and makes it sound lively as if while the surgeons applied the circumcision herbs from the river, we were right there watching her as she screams. Daisy's ability to shout signifies female agency.

Through flashbacks, we learn of Chelimo's resistant character because despite the ordeal she has to go through, she remains aggressive and determined to end the practice of FGM:

Chelimo remained the minister for culture and continued her crusade; mobilizing the many institutions that were fighting against female genital mutilation. She was thrilled when the May 2011, the practice was outlawed in Uganda. Her joy and pride knew no bounds when she addressed the nation in a live broadcast that was carried out on all radio and television stations in the country. (Okurut 2016:210)

Liberal feminism has various key tenets and of which one of them advocates for reform through legislation. This is exactly what happens in the book. The government of Uganda in May 2011 outlawed the practice. Liberal feminism helps us to understand that changes in legislation enable

female agency. Chelimo gradually wins the battle of saying “No” to female genital mutilation hence a clear portrayal of female agency. Her success comes after a long and serious fight. Even though it does not work out there and then. Chelimo has a hope that with time there will be completely no FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) since it has been outlawed in the country. Through flashbacks we learn of Chelimo’s strong character of not giving up. Once she sets out to do something like the campaigns of saying “No” to female circumcision. Even though it causes the kidnap of her own daughter with the intentions of circumcising her like her mother or any other Sabiny girl, even when she does not belong to the tribe (her father being a Mukiga from Kigezi) Chelimo does not give up. Chelimo does not give up her mission of seeing a future where girls no longer suffer the cruel knife (rotwet). The Kidnapper develops Chelimo’s character as resilient and strongheaded.

Flashbacks make events right from when Chelimo is young and as she grows appear fresh to our minds. They also make it look like for some captured moments we are right there watching especially when Chelimo herself is being circumcised with other girls, then the death of her best childhood friend Chemtai, due to rotwet, their schoolteacher who had been born & raised in Kampala but returns to Kapchorwa to teach some primary school. She gets ridiculed because she had not circumcised. She faces a lot of torture and is later forced to circumcise at the village market square. Due to shame of circumcising her in the face of many she suffers stigma, mockery, is called coward and as a result she deserts her home area, and they do not see her ever again. Flashbacks used make all these past events fresh to our minds. Flashbacks enable us to learn more of the characters involved in the novel.

Subversion is again reflected when the government supports female agency. It gives a warning to all surgeons who are carrying out the operations on girls and women. Chelimo believes this is done out of ignorance. Yet the Sabiny think that they are doing it for the good of the tribe. Through vivid descriptions, we learn that the government calls on all surgeons to stop FGM. It is good enough not to wage a war but rather to shield them. The government promises that any surgeon that does not give herself in, the laws will take its course. The government sensitizes the people and asks them to stop the practice. It calls on the surgeons tell their people to embrace education because an educated parent cannot allow his or her daughter to go through the callous and calamitous practice of female genital mutilation.

Through vivid descriptions, Chelimo continues to sabotage her traditional expectations. She secures programs on Radio and television where she speaks against FGM. She advises people to al, say no to FGM. In doing this, she displays her ability to be a good leader that fights for individual rights of her people. During the minister's speech on Radio and Television, she urges and requests people to fight against FGM;

Let's stand up strong against Female circumcision. Let's adopt other respectful forms of passage into adulthood. Thank you for listening; may the lord bless all those women out there who still bear a cross they were forced to carry and may the lord bless Uganda.
(Okurut 2016:210)

The minister's ability to campaign against female circumcision represents subversive tendencies. Descriptive language helps to bring out how Chelimo guides people on how to live together in harmony by avoiding FGM. In her speech, the minister makes women and the girl child aware of their rights especially their right to say no to female circumcision. She educates them about the bad effects it brings to their bodies and life as well. It's written that Chelimo feels a sense of peace settle upon her. She finally drives her point home. Her point of "No" to FGM. She gets contented that such a day has come when she and all the women of her land have triumphed over the worst form of female oppression. It is now upon the women to say no, since they now have the law on their side to protect them. Reform through legislation is one of the key tenets of Liberal feminism and this helps us to understand the importance of laws in developing female agency in *The Switch*. Basing on this and looking at how government puts up the law to protect women against Female circumcision, changes in reform through legislation is important.

Women in the text Okurut (2016) mostly use subversion to navigate patriarchal systems, advocate for their rights and secure resources and benefits. As I conclude, subversion as discussed in Okurut (2016), offers ways in which women challenge, defy and undermine societal norms, expectations and power structures that restrict their autonomy, choices and empowerment as well as reclaim power. The author uses a number of narrative techniques clearly bring out subversion and they include; flashbacks, vivid descriptions, direct speech and third person point of view to bring fresh past events as well narrates the story objectively. It should be noted that the bulk part of the novel is narrated as flashbacks as Chelimo remembers the life she undergoes as a child and a girl. Her experience of being circumcised and the trauma she faces is brought out

and is major in her mind as she makes flashbacks. It is these traumatizing flashbacks that push her to move to Kapchorwa on the rescue mission. Thus, the author uses these narrative techniques to perfectly bring out subversive tendencies, show women's capacity for strategic thinking and problem solving.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

5.1 Summary of findings

The researcher examined the portrayal of female agency in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016). The researcher pays much attention on subversion and negotiation (the forms of female agency) and the narrative techniques the author uses to bring out female agency in the three selected novels by Mary Karooro Okurut. The study brings out the different forms of subversion and negotiation which women use to demonstrate their abilities to adapt and navigate complex power dynamics as well as their capacity for strategic thinking and problem solving. The study also showcases the styles the author uses on her women characters to well represent their agency in *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (1993) and *The Switch* (2016)

The study investigated the forms of female agency specifically subversion and negotiation since feminism has become outdated and all the attention drawn to agency. Furthermore, agency is a common theme in the selected novels from Uganda. The researcher analyzed how women fight to overcome trauma, build and improve themselves by making a critical study of the three novels that are the primary texts of this research.

The research examines the concern of female agency basing on the Ugandan context since all the three novels are set in Uganda. The study uses three novels to have a bigger perspective of women agency. The study explored the forms of female agency and also analyzed how vivid descriptions, point of view, characterization, direct speech, flashbacks and other writing techniques are used to bring out portrayals of female agency.

The study is geared towards the two objectives; to investigate the forms of Female Agency in the selected novels by Mary Karooro Okurut. and to examine how forms of Female Agency are depicted in the three texts by Mary Karooro Okurut.

The researcher used a qualitative approach to collect, analyze, interpret and present data. Data was collected by closely reading the primary texts; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official*

Wife (1993) and *The Switch* (2016). Further information was got from secondary texts specifically those on the topic under study which is female agency. The primary texts were closely read to get the forms of female agency specifically subversion and negotiation. The researcher went ahead and represented the narrative techniques used to depict subversion and negotiation by critically reading the primary texts.

The study was conducted using tenets from Liberal feminist theory. According to Camille Cottais (2020), liberal feminism demands political equality, women's right to vote and ability to stand for election and access to the labor market. The theory helped the researcher to view the forms of female agency and the narrative techniques used to portray female agency as presented in the three novels.

The study found out that there are various ways subversion and negotiation is depicted in the texts under study. Some of the ways include; autonomy, self-expression, social and cultural activism and political participation. All the female characters depicted in the three novels are represented using subversion and negotiation, the forms of female agency. Portrayals of female agency were depicted through various narrative techniques including; point of view, vivid descriptions, flashbacks, direct speech, and characterization among others. It was noted that each form has a way it portrays the female character's abilities. The researcher found out that the female characters represented are resilient, confident, outspoken, subversive, have capacity for strategic thinking and problem solving, high bargaining power and determination in the face of oppression.

The study found out that there are various ways through which a woman can show her abilities. The study discovered the ways of subversion and negotiation which were discussed expansively in chapter four of this thesis. The study found out that many females only show their abilities to live independent lives when faced with hardships unlike in the past years where they would suffer in silence. It found out that female agency in the three novels of study only arises when trauma is encountered. Females who prove to be agentic included; Chelimo, Chemtai, Daisy in *The Switch*, Nkwanz, Atim, Maama in *The Invisible Weevil* and Liz, Fina, Malaika in *The Official Wife*. It was found out that there is an exceptional force that pushes females to be agentic and that is trauma or emergency. On the other hand, basing on the trauma, torture and emergency situations that these female characters went through tended to produce positive results. These

negative influences ranged from physical torture, social and psychological torture basing on the level of trauma and emergency one is experiencing. For instance, the emergency and crisis that befalls Chelimo the moment she learns of her daughter's (Daisy) kidnap is loud enough and forces her to immediately show the agency in her.

5.2 Conclusion

The study explored subversion and negotiation, the forms of female agency and narrative techniques used to portray these forms in; *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (2003) and *The Switch* (2016) all written by Mary Karooro Okurut.

The study used language and style to discuss the objectives which were well discussed in relation to agency. The objectives were; To explore forms of Female Agency in the selected novels by Mary Karooro Okuru and to examine how the forms of Female Agency are portrayed in the three novels. The study asked these questions; What are the depictions of subversion portrayed in Karooro's *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) and *The Switch* (2016)? And What are the representations of negotiation reflected in *The Official Wife* (1993) by Mary Karooro? The research was a descriptive study of three selected Ugandan novels.

The author uses a number of narrative styles to perfectly bring out the portrayals of subversion and negotiation the forms of female agency including; vivid descriptions, imagery, irony, alliteration, direct speech, flashbacks, dialogue, third person point of view, characterization, indirect speech, second person point of view, exclamation mark, rhetoric question and others.

To my observation as a reader, all females deserve to enjoy their freedom and rights like the males after all they are both created in the image of God. According to the novels selected, most of the female characters are mistreated, tortured psychologically and treated as the weaker sex. In spite of this, the main characters like Chelimo in *The Switch*, Nkwanzu in *The Invisible Weevil* and Liz in *The Official Wife* turn out to be resilient and outspoken due to the problems and much trauma they go through. Depending on the findings, it is true that female characters develop agency as a result of trauma and as according to Pointiere, Mathilde (2021). And it is this much trauma that triggers them to employ the tactical forms of female agency to achieve their goals, protect themselves and gain power in situations where direct confrontation is not possible.

For instance, women access good jobs in the text Okurut (1998). Ladies like Maama, Nkwanzu and Atim and occupy big positions in the ministry and even other women secure themselves good jobs that help them to earn a living. Other female characters also access good jobs like Chelimo in *The Switch* is promoted and given the post of Minister of culture which helps her to take care of herself and her one Daisy when Dane deserts home for his mistress. Whereas Liz in *The Official Wife* also secures herself a good job in an NGO and it is this job which helps her to move on with her two children (Kirabo and Eva) after separating ways with Ishaka.

It is concluded that, females in the three selected novels of Mary Karoro Okurut are resilient, spirited, elastic, irrepressible and warriors. But they do not use physical violence to obtain what they want. Instead, they use strategies to navigate patriarchal systems, advocate for their rights and secure resources and benefits for themselves. They know what they want and they fight hard to empower fellow women. For instance, in Okurut (1993), Fina supports Liz her good friend, by offering advice which helps her to believe in herself and live again after being disappointed by Ishaka who chooses to marry Malaika as his second wife. In Okurut (1998), Maama insists on Nkwanzu reporting Honorable Minister Rex to police who rapes her as she waits for Genesis to marry her. In doing so, Nkwanzu exposes the evil of rape and this saves other girls from weeping in silence. And finally, in Okurut (2016), Chelimo de-campaigns the evil practice of FGM successfully which often leaves a number of girls and women lame and helpless since it always comes along with bad effects like painful sex, very difficult labor, fistula and death.

In conclusion therefore, female characters in the selected novels use subversion and negotiation to challenge oppressive systems, laws and social norms often in covert ways. Female characters manage to exempt freedom and ability to shape their journey in life hence I agree with Mc Robbie, Storey (2018;176) who argues that the present culture completely overlooks the feminist gains of 1970's and 1980's. He suggests that such feminist gains are out of fashion and aged. That feminism is no longer needed in this era where women have the ability to figure out and profile their own progress in life.

5.3 Recommendations

I recommend the complete condemnation of FGM because it comes along with only bad effects. Basing on this study, the society should strive to promote; the right to bodily integrity and autonomy, conjugal rights, freedom of speech, the right to live free from violence and discrimination, equal rights in family law and freedom of sexuality. The society should fight against female genital mutilation since it deprives a woman's happiness, their right to have all body parts and denies them freedom of sexuality. This can be done through; talk shows, community campaigns, dialogues, and developing literature specifically regarding the promotion of female agency. In the novels, it is evident that female characters face crisis and also undergo trauma due to cases like; rape, discrimination, kidnap, FGM and denial of conjugal rights. I therefore recommend that the society should join hands to promote female agency in order to avoid such occurrences amongst women.

I recommend that the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development should continue producing literature which educates women about their rights and the different forms through which they can develop agency and become independent. The ministry should organize workshops in which the young and old females can be sensitized on the advantages of becoming resilient in times of crisis.

I recommend that the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development should establish mentorship programs pairing women with role models and mentors. The ministry should also promote these three selected novels by Karooro by coming up with female agency programs on televisions, radio stations and in print media. I also recommend that Uganda Human Rights Commission should carryout quarterly activities offering sexual harassment workshops in workplaces, running community agency literature campaigns, and counseling male perpetrators of violence. This would offer females a quick and clear understanding of the forms of female agency and the various techniques through which female agency can be portrayed. I also recommend that The Uganda Human Rights Commission should advocate for policy reforms that promote gender equality, monitor and evaluate progress towards promoting female agency, advocate for women's rights to own and control property as well address gender-based violence and provide support services for survivors.

The government should provide vocational training and skills development opportunities. These will engage women and give an opportunity to easily penetrate the job market. Challenge and change societal stereotypes and biases. government should ensure access to reproductive healthcare services and information.

5.4 Areas for further study

This study focuses only on subversion and negotiation the forms of female agency and the narrative styles used to portray female agency in three Ugandan novels by Mary Karooro Okurut. Therefore, there is need for more research on the subject of female agency in Ugandan novels and even other novels on the African scene to further understand the theme of agency. Apart from the selected novels, other Ugandan novels are still missing the studies on female agency. Hence, I propose the study of the same on other Ugandan novels and African novels as well.

This thesis concentrates on just one genre of literature; the novels. Also, extra studies should be done on other genres apart from novels on the subject of female agency. Studies should be done in drama, the short stories and poetry from Uganda and Africa as well. This is so because even these other genres handle the theme of female agency. Once this is done, it will help in clear understanding of the matter of female agency.

Studies should be done on, how factors like education, financial independence and female bonding impact African women's empowerment and agency in literally works. More studies should be done on, the significance of education in empowering African women and promoting female agency in literature. More studies should also be done to find out why females always wait to be hit hard by a crisis for them to become agentic. The underlying causes and effects of agency amongst females. And finally, I wish that scholars make another study on; why is it agency and no longer feminism.

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