



**FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION**

**DISSERTATION TOPIC**

The vulnerability of both genders in HIV and AIDS narratives: a study of Lutanga Shaba's *Secrets of a Woman's Soul* (2006), *The Haunted Trail* by Philip Chidavaenzi (2012) and Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006)

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Honors Degree in English and Communication

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APPROVAL FORM

The under signed certify that they have read and recommended to the Midlands State University for acceptance of a dissertation entitled,” The vulnerability of both genders in HIV and AIDS narratives: a study of Lutanga Shaba’s *Secrets of a Woman’s Soul* (2006), *The Haunted Trail* by Philip Chidavaenzi (2012) and Valerie Tagwira’s *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006)

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Nonceba Wendy Dhlula student number R147489N, hereby declare that this dissertation for the Bachelor of Arts in English and Communication Degree at the Midlands State University, submitted by me, has not been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other institution, and that this is my work and all reference material contained here have been duly acknowledged.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom who took care of me on her own, tried by all means to make sure I completed the degree.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the Almighty for guiding me throughout the course of my study. The success of my scholarship at Midlands State University lies in the hands of many people who contributed to this research. I would like to extend an expression of gratitude to my supervisor Mr. A. Mutekwa whose constructive patience, input, unending guidance and consolation, has made this research credible. I am lost of words to adequately thank my family who were there to uplift me and my colleagues for their support and encouragement when I almost gave up

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research examines the vulnerability of both genders in HIV and AIDS narratives focusing on Lutanga Shaba's *Secrets of a Woman's Soul* (2006), *The Haunted Trail* by Philip Chidavaenzi (2012) and Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006). The novels speak expansively on the issues instigated by societal expectations and the stigmatization in the context of HIV and AIDS. The thesis also focuses factors that influence the vulnerability of both men and women during a time where AIDS was considered a death certificate.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1.1 Introduction**

For quite some time it has been recognized that gender plays a significant role in the understanding of HIV. When it comes to HIV and AIDS, It is important to note that gender influences greatly on the different experience that men and women face socially and culturally sometimes even economically hence through the critical analysis of Philip Chidavaenzi's *The Haunted Trail* (2012), *Secrets Of A Woman's Soul* by Lutanga Shaba and Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty Of Hope* (2006) this research will focus on the vulnerability of genders in HIV and AIDS narratives. The proposed research aims to highlight that not only women are prone to the disease, not only women are vulnerable to socio-economic, cultural factors but men also regardless of the percentage. It will also bring out how female writers present women regarding HIV AND AIDS as compared to men and how male writers write about the same subject. This research will bring to light the representations and misrepresentations of both sexes regarding this subject and how gender-related dynamics contribute to the vulnerability of both genders to infection and the access to getting treatment, and how these issues are generated from socio-cultural, economic and political factors.

### **1.2 Aims**

In the intervening time, the representation of women in the narratives of HIV/AIDS has changed, women are expected to safeguard themselves by insisting on safer sex through the use of male condoms. Most literary works on HIV depicts women as exclusively "vulnerable" to HIV and AIDS due to biological defenselessness and the sexual power and privilege that men have. On the other hand, men are seen as active transmitters of HIV but not really active agents in

prevention. Meanwhile, men who have multiple sex affairs remain an unimportant group in HIV narratives, even when they are the victims of HIV/AIDS, literature has a way of making them the transmitters of HIV and AIDS. Yet in other literature written by male writers women are rendered as main sources in the spread of HIV, thus disseminating sexist ideas. Therefore the aim of this research is to bring out that both men and women are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and other socio-economic, cultural factors in HIV and AIDS narratives and bring out how previous writers on the same topic favored one gender.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The research outlined above can be approached through a set of research objectives:

- To investigate the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of both genders as depicted in Zimbabwean writing
- to reveal the impact of cultural beliefs and practices on gender aspects in literature
- to investigate how gendered identities and stereotypes are challenged by Zimbabwean writers.
- To bring to light the vulnerability of both genders in selected narratives

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- How is HIV and AIDS depicted in Zimbabwean literature?
- How are the gender roles of men and women manifested in Zimbabwean writing?
- What are the strong points and gaps in the depiction of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwean narratives?
- In what ways has the theme of HIV and AIDS impacted understanding of sex and sexuality, masculinity and vulnerability in selected novels?

## 1.5 Literature Review

It is important to depend on the existing knowledge as it help the researcher in understanding the specific area and coming up with new knowledge. Literature review is a compilation of what other scholars have said on the area of study one is working on. Literature review is important in the sense that it educates, provide some sense of direction and guidance so that the researcher will be able to notice the gaps in their work of study.

Aggleton (2001; 8), is of the view that gender is socially constructed and determines certain ideologies, norms that are associated with behaving appropriately by both men and women. The article goes on to explain how gender shapes the different responsibilities men and women have and its significance to their interaction. Stereotypically, gender norms assign greater access to authority on decision making, power, productive resources to men as compared to women, which eventually results in an unequal balance in power in gender relations between both genders.

According to Smith (2002, 5), HIV/AIDS is one of the major hindrances to achieving development in Africa, where it has become the leading cause of death. Women who have limited economic options and powerlessness, may end up selling their bodies so as to cope with the economic decay. This therefore exposes them to HIV and AIDS infection and they eventually spread the disease to their clients. Young women are vulnerable to HIV infection because of early and premature sexual relations, violence, and limited access to educational information. Society shuns young girls from learning more on sex, forgetting that at a young age people are naïve and can make irresponsible choices in the name of experiment. This article focuses on HIV/AIDS, gender and poverty paying special attention to girls and elderly women. It starts with basic facts about HIV/AIDS, and progresses through providing a framework for analyzing the vulnerability and impact of getting infected basing on gender and age. Researches like this have

one weakness, and that is only concentrating on women and their vulnerability, prostitution for example, they focus on the conditions that pushed the women forgetting how that prostitution can make the men vulnerable.

A thesis by Chitando Anna (2011) is focusing on how Zimbabwean female writers of her choice narrate HIV and AIDS. She argues that, generally, she observed that the dominant images of women in Zimbabwean literature are devastating. She sorts to challenge Male authors who have been portraying women in negative ways like being loose, dangerous, dependent on men and weak. The thesis goes on to say the unjust depiction of women got worse because of prevailing issues of HIV and AIDS. Women have been depicted as the dangerous group in the spread of HIV, thus prolonging sexist principles. Due to the belief that women can write and represent themselves in various empowering ways, this research investigated on how female writers portray female characters in contexts of HIV.

This research aims to contradict how women are represented in male author's books and how men are misrepresented by female authors as agents of HIV and dismissing the gendered dimensions in regards to HIV and AIDS. In my point of view, feminist writers see any line of work by men as an outward attack on women forgetting that when they write they also do the same to males. Which is why my research is on how it can be made possible for society to understand that both genders are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and other socio-economic, political, cultural factors.

Male writers when writing on the HIV and AIDS subject have another point of view different from female writers, they make women agents of HIV and AIDS and prostitutes etc. female writers make men violent and abusive, refusing to wear protection etc. Hudson-Weems (2004;

44) notes that, It is up to women to define themselves, to empower themselves if they do not someone else will define them in unspeakable ways, marginalize them and misrepresent them.

The quotation clearly articulates that women put themselves in questionable positions and when things get ugly they run to say they are victimized by men. It also notes that it is not the issue of being vulnerable to men but how women position themselves in the social hierarchy.

According to Couser (2013, 84), are of the view that when it comes to HIV and AIDS they are not just talking about the disease but also problematizing politics in accessing treatment, alienation and name calling. He explains that the difficulty in talking about HIV/AIDS results from the fact that AIDS is culturally constructed and is written as narratives. The narratives will end up establishing themselves as “hegemonic scripts or metaphors” (Couser 86) that inform how HIV/AIDS should be talked about. Couser views these narratives to a larger extent influence how people talk and relate to HIV and AIDS. for example, the way AIDS treatments are understood as death sentences or as Lee Edelman (1997) notes, how representatives and even doctors themselves imply that people can get infected through multiple sex relations, what about those who were victims and had nothing to do with promiscuous acts.

Higgins et al. (2010; 2), considers the etiologic and evolution of what they call the vulnerability paradigm which is a model that focuses on how women are defenseless and vulnerable to HIV. It notes that women are vulnerable because of their biological differences, marriage, custom that are in favor of patriarchy and other socio-cultural factors. This paradigm assumes that women want to prevent the spread and contraction of HIV but the power to do so is lacking. Men are represented as transmitters of the disease. The paradigm ignores how variability in biological, social and cultural contexts influences the probability of infection of both genders if they are

exposed, in this regard it gives this research more relevance in bringing out how sexism can make judgment more biased.

In other words, these writers and their paradigm model assume that women want to protect themselves from HIV and AIDS, but men do not really care and neither do they want any protection. Correspondingly, men, are presumed to engage deliberately in risky practices forgetting that there are women who become prostitutes by choice. Lastly, the paradigm applies gendered, structural understandings and women's behaviors but not that of men

In my research I will therefore be focusing on the misrepresentations that clouds both female and male writers on the aspects regarding HIV and AIDS and also how society and gender has power over these issues, how they influence people in believing in the marginalization of one gender and all gender inequalities that result from HIV and AIDS. Most scholars on this subject have written only in favor of women which is problematic because they are implying men are not also affected by the coming of the disease. I will add up where they were missing and that is focusing on how men are also vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. I will be focusing on texts that have been done before but in a manner that most writers did not, focusing on *The Haunted Trail* by Philip Chidavaenzi (2012), *Lutanga Shaba's Secrets of a Woman's Soul* (2006) and Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006). These texts will give evidence on how vulnerable both men and women are to HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwean writing.

In addition, as this research will be focusing on the vulnerability of both genders and how they portray each other on the theme of HIV and AIDS, it is important to note that earlier reviews of Zimbabwean literature that focused on gender distorted gender relations and portrayed women as the victim and not say much on the vulnerability of men. It is known that postcolonial Zimbabwean literature did not really focus on gender it focused on themes like the liberation

struggle and the reconstruction of the African identity for example texts like *Year of the Uprising* (1978) by Stanlake Samukange or *Strife* (2006) by Shimmer Chinodya. This research is filling the gaps left by previous reviews on HIV and AIDS mainly on how women and men are vulnerable. It identifies the views of previous writers and attempts to build on them through interrogating the different depictions of HIV in selected novels. This research focuses on how authors talk about issues of gender, agency and power. The different power dynamics between men and women and how it impacts on their vulnerability.

### **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

Two theories will be used in this research. Sexism and The theory of gender and power, this is because every theory has a weakness and the researcher used these so that one weakness of the other will be filled in by the other.

Sexism which is a theory that suggests that sexism is divided into two parts, "hostile sexism" and "benevolent sexism". Hostile sexism focuses on the negative assessments and stereotypes about a gender for example, the view that women are incompetent and inferior to men. Benevolent sexism characterizes the appraisals of gender that may appear subjectively positive but are actually destructive to relations, people and gender equality for example, the view that men are super-beings, strong and supreme. Benevolent sexism is manifests in the everyday relationships between men and women. By accepting the system of benevolent sexism, women ignore the stereotypes committed by the men they are intimate with (Glick & Fiske, 2001). One of the devices through which sexism uses to convey gender inequality is through stereotyping. Men and women are stereotyped with different and opposing weaknesses and strengths (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Men are given agentive stereotypes, such as independent individuals, ambitious, superior and competitive. In contrast, women are assigned common stereotypes, such as people who have nurturing, interdependent, and considerate characteristics, which are suitable for the duties of a proper wife and mother (Good & Sanchez, 2009). While these domestic roles are important to society, they impose the ideologies of viewing women as subservient to men, incapable of financing themselves and incompetent (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007; Glick & Fiske, 2001). However, as long as these stereotypes of women are seen through positive lenses it is hard to justify their oppressive tendencies because even the women see these stereotypes as duties and qualities a real woman should possess. Men are also less likely to think of female stereotypes as sexist, because it is not typical for a sexist agent to recommend positive stereotypes of women (Barreto, Ellemers, 2005). Therefore, both men and women unconsciously promote gender inequality by endorsing benevolent sexist ideas in gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

This theory of sexism is relevant for this research for it brings to light how stereotypes about a gender can cloud one's judgment and in this case the fact that women are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS than men, allegedly.

The second theory is the theory of gender and power developed by Robert Connell in 1987 and is based on writings that explore the depths of sexual inequality as well as gender and power imbalance (Wingood, DiClemente, 2000). There are three social structures that make up this theory which are, sexual division of labor, sexual division of power, and the society. These three constructs work together in defining and explaining the gender relations and is mainly concerned on women's health than that of men (Connell, 1987). The constructs of the Theory of gender and power identifies the risk factors and biological factors that relate to issues that affect women like STDs in relation to condom usage as well as violence against women (Wingood & DiClemente,



2000). The theory has been used by scholars to address women's health issues and look deeper into the gender-based inequalities and differences in women's health. This theory focuses on how society prioritize the health of women as compared to that of men, which gives relevance and a backbone to this research.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

Gibbon and Sanderson (2002), are of the view that for there to be progression in the research one ought to know the theoretical aspects of their study. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument for data gathering, who spends time in researching thoroughly on the area of study. This research methodology unlike the quantitative that uses graphs and charts, uses words as form of data. Data will be in the form of words and those words will be evaluated basing on various scholars to come up with a conclusion. The Ideas are in the form of themes or motifs and data presentation is more descriptive and narrative in style.

Prior to what is mentioned above, this study will use the qualitative research method. This method allows the researcher to unravel the complications of social realities in the broader context of socioeconomic, cultural and political structures. This study mainly focus on Zimbabwean literary works of three selected novels on HIV and AIDS. It is essential to use these literary works because it makes it easier to identify the gaps at which other analysts left when examining the specific area of study. The study also makes widespread use of secondary sources related to different aspects of gender and the vulnerability of both genders in the context of HIV and AIDS.

In other words the researcher will conduct this research through the use of desktop researches, library resources, articles written on this particular subject and the internet.

## **1.8 Significance of Study**

This research is important because it will be bringing to light the injustices around gender and power when it comes to the theme of HIV and AIDS. It will also point out that not only women as many researchers wrote are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS but men too. This research is important because it points out how literature has influenced the beliefs of viewing or portraying one sex as more powerful or inferior than the other. It will show how these stereotypes affect the other sex into getting health treatment opportunities because they are not really considered as people who are also vulnerable but rather the transmitters of HIV and AIDS.

## **1.9 Delimitations of the Study**

In this research the researcher will be using fictitious works by writers who were exposed to the situations that arises in the context of HIV and Aids and would write basing on their experience, which is brainwashing to the reader. Then some wrote out of what they observed so one can therefore argue that there is lack of truthfulness as the writers were writing basing on emotion, gender and personal experience. This however makes one write in support of their gender and misrepresent the other. Also in the research the researcher is bound to use only the specific texts that they chose for their area of study although there are other things that can support their area of research. This research is focusing on both men and women therefore the researcher will not support one side in the expense of the other.

## **Chapter layout**

I propose to divide my study into five parts;

- In the first chapter there will be the introduction to the study that characterizes the problem of the study, aims, objectives and its research questions, the significance of the study which will assist the researcher to produce a perspective of looking at the problem, theoretical framework, methodology and literature review.
- In the second chapter the research will concentrate on the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of both genders
- The third chapter will focus on the theme of agency ,power and gender
- The fourth chapter will scrutinize the impact of society in the context of HIV and AIDS
- Chapter five is the concluding chapter that summarizes the findings of the research and gives recommendation for further research on the problem.

## **CHAPTER 2. THE UNCERTAINTY OF HOPE AS A SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST MOTIF**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Valerie Joan Tagwira is a Zimbabwean female writer who is also a medical doctor. In 1977 Valerie Tagwira graduated from medicine school at the University Of Zimbabwe. She has a strong interest in health related and developmental issues affecting women.

Tagwira's novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, (2006) examines the cumulative difficult lives of women in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The author discusses the various ways in which Zimbabwean citizens lived for them to survive the economic crisis of Zimbabwe occasioned by the ruling party. The author explores controversial issues like HIV and AIDS unemployment, Operation Murambatsvina (Clean-up the dirt), land redistribution, urban destitution and many other aspects that makes the female characters carry a double yoke that is from the instabilities of the economy to the suppression through culture. It also looks at how some of the factors mentioned above contribute in the vulnerability of both genders.

There will be reference made from the issues listed above, this chapter mainly focuses on how both genders are vulnerable and the various ways they try to negotiate survival in an HIV and AIDS context. Valerie Tagwira gives us different women with different backgrounds and the ways in which they handle the aspect of 'the obedient woman', they empower themselves differently although there are some who will do the bare minimum. Tagwira introduces us to character Gari, who is a representative of negative masculinity, when women appear as if they are raising their heads to find means of speaking out their opinions, patriarchy often sees that as a threat to manhood which will result in violent means of silencing the woman. Gari is Onai's husband.

*The Uncertainty of Hope* is an illustration of the relations between Zimbabwean men and women in HIV and AIDS situations. The main idea of this chapter is to focus on how female characters rewrite their own stories, how they challenge masculinities, how they relate to gender inequalities. Tagwira extends the push on the narration of gender, agency, and power by making her female characters undermine gender expectations, which resulted in their vulnerability. They bring to light their personal experiences that were painful which characterizes the hardships in their lives in a depreciating economy and where AIDS is regarded as a death certificate. The action of a woman writing about a controversial topic as HIV and AIDS stands as a voice to the voiceless. The author is refusing the negative identities that comes with being a woman, being 'the other' for example, Tagwira is saying women have a voice too to speak for themselves and define themselves in ways that best suits them. Tagwira's women characters show the different levels at which people can be made vulnerable by gender and power, depending on who creates meaning

This however works in favor of the two theories that will be used for this research, sexism. Tagwira seeks to liberate her female characters from being portrayed as silent sufferers who remain subalternized even when they try in some male writers' works like Chenjerai Hove's *Ancestors* (1996) at the same time giving overtly negative evaluations and stereotypes about male characters in her novel, which is also known as 'Hostile sexism'

The things women do to progress and live their lives the way they want is often seen as dangerous because it challenges the supremacy of patriarchal dominance (Hudson-Weems 2007:289). The novel however becomes a perfect example of ways in which women reconstruct womanhood when writing about HIV. Sontag suggests that in as much as society cannot avoid metaphors, it should however try to shun those metaphors that promote stigma and alienation

when it comes to HIV and AIDS (Sontag 1988). Tagwira questions the prevalent portrayal of women as slow and incompetent in relation to HIV and AIDS and displays how a woman like Onai can survive the dangerous disease. This Also is in favor of the second theory of this research which is the theory of gender and power which is based on writings that explore the depths of sexual inequity as well as gender and power imbalance (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). There are three social structures that make up the theory of gender and power which are sexual division of labor, sexual division of power, and the society.

The novel is set in Mbare, a high density suburb although at the end of the novel the reader is introduced to a rural setup, not so different from Mbare and its difficulties. The novel explores how the country had gone in shambles, people were now forced to resort to illegal ways of life to makes ends meet. On top of a collapsing economy, people were dying because of HIV and only those with money had access to the treatment. Although Aids was at its peak at killing many people, people did not hesitate to resort to prostitution as a survival tactic, in as much as they fear HIV, they still needed to eat and shelter and prostitution became a source of revenue for most women like Sheila and Gloria.

This chapter however will give a detailed account of how different socio-economic, cultural factors contribute to the vulnerability of both genders in *The Uncertainty of Hope*.

## **2.2 The Socio-Economic Factors in *The Uncertainty of Hope***

Patriarchy is a prevailing ideology that disadvantages women to achieve male happiness. Men like Gari have a way in which they make women tolerate abusive marriages. Uncle Toro is empowered by patriarchy that the male relatives have power over the widowed and their children, which is why he came to claim the properties after Gari's death. In spite of Zimbabwe

becoming an unbearable place, things falling apart in all directions, with all social, political, economic hardships Tagwira empowers women like Onai and Katy to be the ones that fend for their families.

*The Uncertainty of Hope* signifies an oppressive atmosphere where women struggle more than men to make a living. On top of the scarcity of food supplies, hyper- inflation there is HIV and AIDS causing unbearable sickness and eventually death. Sheila who is Gari's previous girlfriend, succumbs to AIDS. She resorted to prostitution as a way of surviving the tough economy and confirms Jackson's assertion on single women which says that single women are no longer innocent but rather angels of death in the age of Aids (Jackson 1999: 163).

However, Tagwira shows that HIV does not attack women only but men also. The gender inequities that came with sexual orientation and power are challenged in the novel, through showing how both genders can be victims and not only one gender, which usually is the woman. Tagwira depicts men like Gari who had a sense of entitlement, victim of masculinities vulnerable to social and poli-economic complexes of a diseased nation.

Butler (1990:14) advocates for women to have separate identities because being categorized as just 'women' uniformly has proved to be more dangerous, women have different ways of living hence grouping them as just women is subjecting other women to victimhood. Sheila and Onai have two different lives, Sheila dies with AIDS and leaves an unhealthy baby behind, and Onai negotiated with the situation and survived infection. The novel depicts Sheila as a marginalized and disempowered woman. Sheila has a flea market at the stores but in addition to the income that comes from the market she is also selling her body. During this time sex was used to trade for basic, small things like food, Sheila in looking for food strays from womanist frames of women taking care of each by giving a fellow woman distress through having sexual relation

with her husband, Gari. It is almost ironic that in the end after learning her HIV status, she knew she was going to die and asked for forgiveness from Onai who had been taking care of her even when she had become a scary sight. Sheila is represented as one of those women who as sexism explained, conform to the gender stereotypes for example being a home wrecker, danger to the society and as if it's not enough she contracts HIV because she lacks awareness on the dynamics of the illness.

It is important to note that scholars who have written on the theme of HIV and AIDS only victimized women making them look like the most vulnerable. (UNAIDS 2015) is of the view that HIV and AIDS extremely affects women because of they have an unequal status in the society, socially or economically. The relations between both genders are vulnerable to the gender violence that comes with tradition and customs, laws that only disadvantage women like do not deny your husband his conjugal rights in the bedroom. It entrenches gender inequality, leaving women more vulnerable. This notion is supported by the theory of gender and power, TGP identifies exposure and risk factors as well as biological factors in relation to issues that adversely affect women's health such as HIV and STD risk in relation to condom usage as well as violence against women (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000).

The Theory of Gender and Power has been used by researchers to address women's health issues and look deeper into the gender inequalities and gaps in women's health. This point of view is similar to sexism that base everything on stereotypes, men and women are stereotyped with opposing strengths and weaknesses (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This theory focuses on how society prioritize the health of women as compared to that of men, which gives relevance and a backbone to this research and also gives the reader a better understanding of why The Uncertainty of Hope



portrays women as victims through the suffering of characters like Onai, Sheila and Gloria. However the sexist scholars chip in and say analysis shouldn't be based on stereotypes.

In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, AIDS is powerful and killing a large scale of people because of the failing economy. It's destructive to the extent of killing Onai's twin brothers on the same day. the health facilities cannot help everyone who is sick because they have few things to give, in fact the health facilities is personified as a human being in the intensive care, who might die at any given time. The hospitals are failing to give people any form of treatment, the people to even attend to the sick are few most of them had quit, those that are there are overworked, Emily for example (273). This manifestations of a falling nation in hospitals puts human lives at risk and the statics of deaths became more unbearable. The incident when Onai was beaten mercilessly by Gari and got admitted in the hospital, she was in real pain but due to the scarcity of drugs she had to endure the pain. If the hospitals could not supply a simple pain killer what more anti retrovirals, the infected died premature deaths because they couldn't access any form of medicine to save their lives. The shortages of health facilities due to a collapsing economy therefore made both men and women vulnerable.

Sheila's death is a result of accepting the view that other people do not really matter. She had went back and forth to the hospital to get medication but failed to get any even when she could see others getting them. This became a survival of the fittest kind of situation where people had become so desperate to sell lifesaving drugs at a communal hospital and those who have no enough money to be corrupt will go home and die slowly. Sheila had given up, she was told to come back the following year to get medicine but she was convinced she would be dead by that time (61).society forced her to believe her life had little meaning and she eventually gave in and quit the fight against patriarchy and dynamics of HIV and AIDS. Sheila falls prey to the

stereotypes of women as weak and powerless. Her response to this situation is a different manner in which women respond to issues of HIV and AIDS, some persevere others like Sheila chooses not to seek any form of medical help. Sheila is therefore represented as both a victim and an agent of her self-destruction.

However, this is often not a situation of blaming those that are victims. Its associate credit that even within the most stressful, painful trials of life humans have a way of putting effort in finding ways to pull through but sadly for Sheila she chooses not to fight for her health . She is passive and quits to a death that could have been avoided if she had agency.

As portrayed in the text Zimbabwe has become a country where political domination is normalized and a tradition. To prove this the author introduces the dismantling of houses and shacks living the people destitute. The flared gap between the elite and the poor masses give evidence to how society had become dangerous, survival is measured according to wealth. In that society women introduced a project referred to as 'kushinga', which accurately suggests that ladies ought to be strong and brave to possess their opinions detected in a very aggressive political and cultural setup. It may be argued that instead of physical violence the author resorted to empowering females by giving them abilities to see that they can challenge oppressive ideologies and violence in positive ways and that's through the Kushinga project. However factors like Murambatsvina made society vulnerable to poverty, HIV and AIDS etc.

### **2.3 Men**

Gender, as already highlighted in this chapter, refers to the socially recommended roles for both women and men. It also represents the power relations between women and men as social beings. The preceding chapter have concentrated on the representation of women in *The*

*Uncertainty of Hope* showing how patriarchy and other matters have suppressed women. One of the key boundaries of works that have analyzed gender in Zimbabwean literature is that they have focused entirely on the portrayal of women for example texts like *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo (2013) or Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988). This therefore has given a wrong impression on what gender really talks about. Gender are those social roles attached to being female or male although they tend to be more in favor of the men. This chapter however will focus on the men in the novel, how are they represented and is that representation a true reflection of the society today.

Masculinities in *The Uncertainty of Hope* blossoms on irresponsibility, violence, the subordination of women, and insatiable sexual desire. The masculine state withstands itself through unjustifiable cruelty, after Onai was robbed in the house in Gari's absence he still blamed her for it and beat her, he hits her so hard that she fell headlong and had to be admitted in hospital.

Contrary to Gari's behavior, other cultures the female body is treated delicately, its considered as fragile as an egg and treated with respect but postcoloniality came with different opinions of the female bodies. They claim to defend their manhood by ambushing and attacking unarmed women of the Kushinga project since they deemed them a danger to the society. Tagwira brings out how men are the master minds of violence and women suffer as the receivers of that violence. This violence is not only found in the streets but in individual homes, Onai and Gari's home for example.

Gari is portrayed as a catastrophe. He represents every negative, toxic, imperfection of masculinity. He is a father by just solely calling him one, but he has no idea of how a father should be like to his family. He believes being a father meant inflicting pain and fear to his family and this somehow created the gap between him and his family. To his family whether he is around or not there is no much of a difference. When he is not around, the family get attacks for example when thieves came and took their television and when he is at home there is chaos like when he brought Gloria his girlfriend home as his second wife, this shows the inflexibility of wild masculinity. His tragic death does not present any noticeable gap to his family because he was already dead to them. Tagwira depicts Gari as the walking dead from the beginning.

Gari is an annoying character and a barrier to progress. He is depicted as a victim of wrong socialization, and this is evidenced by his ways of inflicting pain to show his dominance. He is not what a man should be, the man of the house is expected to fix the lights, broken doors, the garden but instead he is an unreasonable and cruel man .his irresponsible nature became a norm even to his children, they knew that waiting for him to come home and help them with their homework was a waste of time. He was hardly home and even when he was there, he would be too drunk to even open his eyes.

Gari's irresponsibility is awful. When he got retrenched instead of going home and do something with the few money he had, he chose to please Gloria. Not even a single page does the reader encounter Gari having positive plans or doing something productive. This however shows that he is represented as a catastrophe in fatherhood and husband hood. Gari is careless, he forgot to even pay for his medical aid even when he was going to work. The only worth it asset he left in his name was the house. Gari is represented as a violent man, lacks compassion for his family, selfish and insensitive but a man who is effortlessly stimulated by Gloria's sexuality and

appearance that he forgets the responsibilities he has as a father and as a human being. He wastes the little resources he has on women.

The perception of having a small house or other affairs outside marriage with younger women features suggestively in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. This concept means men have a limitless sexual appetites that require them to have a number of sexual partners. In a patriarchal society having a small house is seen as a symbol of honor and that one is a real man regardless of their financial struggles. Gari is always celebrating his relationship with Gloria because to him he has made it up to the point of being called ‘the men’ and society has already normalized men having multiple sexual affairs. The perception of ‘*tiri varume*’ which is on page 36 of the text is a danger to both genders because its giving men a sense of entitlement and the platform to do harmful things to women and fellow men. It is society that normalized and constructed the view that men have insatiable sex appetites and it lead to them being vulnerable to HIV and it is because of this socialization that leads to men viewing women as sex machines. They eventually lose their respect of the female body and end up being violent and abusing them. Men believe their physical strength marks how stronger and strategic they are as compared to women. This supports the sexism theory on stereotyping one gender based on their physical strength and body orientation, women are seen as sex objects and child rearing machines.

The theory of gender and power has a subdivision, the sexual division of labor, at a societal level, divides women and men into gender specific occupations where women are assigned to unequal, lower paying positions. At the institutional level, women are often assigned to do “women’s work”, uncompensated responsibilities such as childrearing, housework, and caring for the sick and elderly and are assigned less value because they are not income generating (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). *The uncertainty of hope* depicts the perception that men have

towards women as weak and always complaining. When the reality that they were losing their jobs finally struck them, Gari and Silas took false relief in the fact that they are men. In this system men are fearless, always have something up in their sleeves and are not easily intimidated and would rather face any obstacle head on. Gari cheers his friend saying that as long as they are men there is nothing to fear, they shouldn't mop around like weak women.

Men in as much as they want to portray themselves as intellectual beings, when it comes to reproduction and safer means of sexual relations they have no clue in reality. There is a young man who had no idea about how a condom is used to the extent of asking if they were recyclable or washable (339). Gari is even worse because he fails to notice or even feel that Onai is using a female condom. Usually he is too drunk to even make an evocative move. This confirms that in as much as cultural ideologies try to construct men as sex gods, realistically their competence is nowhere to be seen. In as much as masculinity depends and flourishes on dominating women it's not all men that succeed.

It is also important to note that there is a pseudo household in Onai's home. On the cultural setup the man is supposed to be the provider but in this case there is a shift of gender roles, Onai is the breadwinner, she is the one taking care of her family. In this we see that the economy has made men look as weak and women stronger than what society perceives. The women who work in informal points manage to get more bread for their families as compared to men who have actual jobs. This subverts the gender stereotypes that men are the providers. In marriage, a woman who is financially secure than the husband is often vulnerable to violence because men have internalized the view that they get more bread than the woman (Tumusiime 2010). Gari becomes more violent towards his wife Onai when her small job gave her money whilst he was retrenched and financially insecure.

## 2.4 Culture and Hiv/Aids

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. The author chose women as the center of her argument because they have been silenced for a long time and have limited means to better their lives. Often women appear to be less educated and unemployed and this is because of their vulnerability to bio-cultural, social and economic factors. Although *The Uncertainty of Hope* places more weight on socio-economic and political factors, the text is also attentive to how female subordination is impacted by cultural ideologies. Gari's abuse of Onai and other events that unfolds in the narrative is informed by culture

Cultural ideologies are strategically positioned by men to secure their advantage in the exploitation of female characters. Men find solace in 'our culture' to make it easier for them to suppress women. It is evident that culture plays a pivotal role in the vulnerability of women and is positioned to make sure women remain the 'other'. Uncle Toro customarily takes over the home living Onai and her children destitute which is a mockery to her immense effort to having tolerated Gari's injustices.

Culture teaches women to be strong and persevering. That is the reason why Onai had to persevere in her marriage in as much as it was painful and toxic. She set there like a hen warming her eggs, she had to endure Gari's ill behavior for her children's sake and the dignity of being a married woman. Society despises single and divorced women, onai was not ready to bear the shame of being a divorcee, she would rather have black eyes everyday than face the world as

a single mother. This clearly shows that marital status was everything, women had to be stoical even in violent homes.

Through culture men have internalized the view that women are created to be at their service. To them women are sources of entertainment and should make it a point that whenever a man is down, they find means of lifting their spirits. Gari compared Onai to Gloria, Onai refused to give him his conjugal rights in bed but with Gloria he didn't even had to ask. She made him feel like a king, a real man.

Women's role as caregivers now brings with it the extra burden of looking after family and friends with HIV and AIDS. Onai took care of Sheila even if she was HIV positive. Society didn't tolerate infected people which is why Sheila thought Onai was going to ask her to leave and find somewhere else to go since she had Aids (62)

An article relevant for this discussion is that of Vambe (2003) titled, "*HIV/AIDS, African Sexuality and the Problem of Representation in Zimbabwean Literature.*" He contends that the African woman is subjugated by cultural beliefs that marginalize her and become defenseless and prone to any attack instigated by patriarchy. He also mention that the African woman is viewed as the carrier of disease and in this case, HIV and AIDS, they are depicted as people with loose morals and need patriarchal norms to keep them in line (Vambe 2003: 475)

HIV and AIDS is a dominant factor in the narrative, not only women are vulnerable to it but men also, this is evidenced by Gari who was a victim of circumstances. After Gloria had heard that her former lover had died of HIV she was both afraid and angry, she was astute enough to realize that she was next to get sick and die too but before that one man had to pay for what other men did to her and in this case Gari was the sacrificial lamb. Gari is vulnerable in this case because he



is suffering for what other men did to and with Gloria. She was aware that she might be positive and if she misses her chance with Gari she would not get anyone better, Gari is manipulated and agrees on making her his second wife.

Gari is also a victim of tradition, it made society believe condoms were for extra marital affairs only and once one is your wife they are not of any use because it will be a total waste of the 10cows he paid as *lobola*. Which is why it was easy for Gloria to infect him with the illness once she became his second 'wife'. Onai refused to have sex with Gari without a condom and a married woman refusing her husband his conjugal rights means she has failed a woman. (69) Although she was defying culture female condoms were a blessing to her, they gave her freedom and more in control of her sexuality, health and less vulnerable to Gari and his demands.

Scholars who focus on gender activism are of the view that the customs and beliefs that have any means of female subjugation and promoting their vulnerability to HIV and other factors ought to be reconstructed or worse still eliminated. As long as gender is a social construct then it's not entirely impossible to deconstruct its supreme tendencies of suppressing women. They believe it should actually be remapped and give women a voice they deserve. The critics whose works have been mentioned earlier offer new viewpoints on gender relations in the face of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe. Most of the scholars are women who believe that gender inequalities should be deconstructed and there are male critics in support of this Vambe for example, they suggest other ways in which society can deal with issues of HIV and AIDS.

The most informative assessment of masculinity comes from Gari's surrendering to AIDS. Once was a hostile man HIV reduced him to a piteous site, vulnerable. Lizzy Attree (2007) explores the notion of 'strong healthy man' as they are defied and threatened by sickness, the male body have been a symbol of strength and health but HIV is threatening that ideology and making it

easy to see that representation can be misrepresentation. Gari who used to see himself as ‘the man’ is reduced to just a man and he actually admits that AIDS have finished him. AIDS have ways of reconfiguring the male body and finding the middle ground of its supposed vivacity. It powers men to think extremely about what it really means to be a man.

Patriarchy endows men with power over women and authority and the woman a voiceless being. The patriarchal ideologies favors men and disadvantage the women and young girls. The gender equities are the so reason why HIV increases because women at times are forced to please the men at their own expense. For prostitutes, a male client, if not all might not be comfortable in using a condom because they are the ones who are financially powerful, the woman is therefore forced to comply with the risky act for the sake of money. Women then find it difficult to negotiate for safer sex. Nevertheless, gender inequity does not expose women only to HIV men also are vulnerable. It is also important to note that, the same power men are given by patriarchy is the same power they are vulnerable to, when it’s irresponsibly used it’s a threat to the well-being of the one using it.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The Uncertainty of Hope is an extraordinary novel that demonstrates a profound awareness of the struggles of women and their relationship with men in contemporary Zimbabwe. Tagwira has been commended for creating powerful women like Onai in a patriarchal system and how they stand their ground. Nonetheless, this might create the wrong impression that all that women need to do is to try harder and their situation becomes better. There is always the need to acknowledge the overall cultural, economic and political context in which women and men are supposed to make choices. Many women find themselves in the shoes of Sheila and Gloria and men in that of Gari (Tagwira 2006).

It is noticeable that men in *The Uncertainty of Hope* fail to defy the negative stereotypes of men being violent and cruel creatures. There are characters like Mawaya who appear to be soft but a closer look into their character there are condescending traits, Katy's husband is admirable but is not hesitant to traffic girls to Johannesburg, Tom appears to be considerate when it comes to Faith, but he is depicted as a man who is money conscious. The rest of the male characters are either full of hostility like Gari or are into raping like Boora. Valerie believes that men lack the leadership skills that benefit the country and their families which when looked into very closely is partly in favor of the benevolent sexism.

The novel also manages to explore the factors that determine the vulnerability of both genders e.g. socioeconomic, cultural and social. The economy is bad to the extent that women like Gloria and Sheila are pushed to indulge in risky ways of living like prostitution and black market, men have no jobs and the only way to relieve their stress is through refreshing with prostitutes and small houses. The culture and its society created ideologies that marks up how individuals are supposed to behave, for women divorce is not an option which is why Onai had to put up with Gari's ill-treatment. 'We are men, *tiri varume*' sort of guided the minds of men, they did things in the name of being a man which led Gari into falling into Gloria's trap. Tagwira (2006) also shows how these factors made families vulnerable, Gari was a bad example of fatherhood and Onai took the responsibility of taking care of the household and also taking care of herself. Women's role as caregivers made it easier for Onai to take care of Gari on his deathbed regardless of what he had done.

It is also vital to note that culture especially the Shona culture is responsible for the vulnerability of women. Toro took the house after Gari's death because it was his brother's and as always death is usually blamed on the wife and left Onai and her children vulnerable to poverty and

destitution. Gari and Katy's husband are vulnerable to masculinity which leads to Gari being infected with aids.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3 POLITICS OF A DISEASED SELF NARRATIVE

#### 3.1 introduction

The previous chapter was concentrating on various factors that lead to the vulnerability of both genders in a society through Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006). The argument emphasized that the novel is a representation of the relationships between Zimbabwean women and men socially, culturally and even politically. The chapter depicts that Onai the main character in *the uncertainty of hope* appears to be an empowered, stoical and self-assured woman. She is self-assured and redefines herself in the facade of HIV and AIDS and patriarchal norms that are shown through her husband Gari. While Tagwira thrives in describing Onai as a confident woman, her storyline has restricted options for women like Gloria and Sheila who are infected with HIV/AIDS, and are fated to die because of the lack of proper support system.

This chapter is going to highlight the surviving strategies that women with HIV have to undergo. This chapter will build on the themes of agency, power and the impact stigma and discrimination have on society. Through focusing on the autobiography of Lutanga Shaba titled, *Secrets of a Woman's Soul* (2006) this chapter will investigate how women negotiate a living in a patriarchal system. This narrative deals with individual experiences of HIV, which was once regarded as a taboo and how women give themselves a voice after being silenced by patriarchy. This chapter seeks to discover how black female writers convey their identities out of victimhood to subjects of their own life stories. This chapter will also look into themes of power, agency, gender and masculinity as depicted in the narrative. "The monster woman," as according to Moi Toril is the type of woman who defies subjugation, a woman who gives herself a say and is in charge of her own sexuality, masculinities regard this woman as a monster because she is a threat to manhood

(Moi 1985: 58). This chapter will explore various ways in which main characters of the novel refuse to comply with gendered identities prescribed for them. Similarly, in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Onai is depicted as a monster woman because she denied her husband his conjugal rights and chose to emancipate herself and protect herself through using female condoms that is proof of her agency.

The power of Shaba's narrative lies in its ability to go beyond the diseased body and its pathological condition to focus on the metaphorical illness of the entire society that exposes, contaminates, blames and excludes victims of its moral bankruptcy. Harris (2008) uses an apt metaphor through which bodily dirt is extended to subsume notions of moral dirt which point to the degeneration of the whole body politic.

### **3.2 "Can the Subaltern Speak?"**

"Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) by Gayatri Spivak relates to the manner in which western cultures suppress, inferiorate other cultures. She writes about the relationship between the colonized also referred to as 'the other' and the western ideologies or 'the center'. The other has experienced marginalization and their voices are not considered, they are regarded as illogical, that they are everything that the center is not. Now in this case women are the ones who have been facing marginalization, can they really speak and be heard? The colonial woman is a victim of triple oppression, through race, class and gender. Colonialism reinforced the subordination of the African woman by African patriarchy through systems that reduce women into minors.

Lutanga Shaba is an activist for women's rights, a political critic and a lawyer. She has been an active member in speaking on behalf of silenced women, she extends her concern through writing *Secrets of a Woman's Soul* (2006). She is a leader in a number of women empowerment

programs and around 2008 she held a campaign on ‘women can’ that encouraged women to be candidates in elite positions in the elections both general and presidential. This campaign is a response to Spivak’s *can the subaltern speak*, women are marginalized and referred to as the ‘other’ and Shaba is saying enough is enough, women can actually represent themselves, they do not need the guidance of the men. The main goal of this campaign was to show society that women did not serve the purpose of pleasing men but can actually challenge even their leading skills. She insists that women have a voice of their own and it is high time society starts listening.

Lutanga Shaba’s narrative, *Secrets of a Woman’s Soul*, is a pitiful story of mother and daughter who are as much victims of those people who are involved in their intimate lives as of society in a general sense. It tells the story of Lingalireni, who is Lutanga disguised, and her mother, disguised as Beata, and their tormented existence in a society that does not believe that women can and are capable of surviving and knowing themselves outside the narrow confines determined by male interests. *Secrets of a Woman’s Soul* is a narrative that presents women’s existence as complexly underground as to give a common narrative of suffering whose historical root is oppression by patriarchal values. Linga’s life is woven intricately into her mother’s, and by extension into that of women in general, in a way that makes it a communal women’s autobiography. Ngoshi and Zhou (2010:47) fittingly define this narrative as a “disguised autobiography that identifies the mother and daughter as one woman’s soul.” The expression “one woman’s soul” can assume the meaning of Woman the universal. What then is established through this description is a unity of experience that subsumes not only mother and daughter, but the women of the Third World in general.

Shaba has imparted her gender activism into the narrative, *Secrets of a Woman’s Soul*. In the narrative one can easily see that the author is passionate about female empowerment. Her

struggles in life are the strengths of Linga created by her imagination. She dares society to do away with its stereotypical utterances and construction of women which is unethical. In a patriarchal setup women have limited choices as compared to men, they endure shame and resort to being secretive because society have painted sharing problems as an immoral thing to do. Women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS and other factors results from ideologies that are in favor of the male specie. Nonetheless Shaba is not silenced, she voices out on what needs to be done. It is through this autobiographical narrative that Shaba shows society that the 'marginalized' can speak. Society must put away harmful dogmas and embrace gender equality. She speaks against sexist ideologies that stereotype people depending on their sexual orientation. In addition, Shaba believes in giving women a voice and this is evidenced through her character, Linga, who was admired by other women for being very outspoken and would say everything she felt and thought. She got this power from her mother Beata who was not brought up to talk about her feelings, she was taught that men were super beings and if you caught him cheating, confrontation was not even something that she should consider. She was taught that fighting for a man was disrespectful and it was better to walk away with your dignity intact than to tarnish one's image. She, Beata, did not wish this for her daughter, she taught her to speak her mind and if you are no longer interested walk away without giving the man a chance to explain himself.

### **3.3 Agency, Gender and Power**

Agency according to Thesaurus dictionary (1889), the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power. It's essential to cross-examine if the author entirely believes women stand no chance in the society considering the ways they tried to let society hear them. Shaba is convinced that in as much as society can be stubborn when it comes to listening to women, she believes there is a passageway that needs unlocking for things to go in favor of women. Women



have positive abilities that enable them face numerous life challenges head on. If given the emancipation they deserve they will find ways to negotiate their survival in whatever road life leads. Lutanga Shaba believes that women should be given a chance to get educated, that education will work as a critical step towards their liberation. This is evidenced with her character Linga education empowers her to take control of her own life and accept her Hiv status. She does not lose focus after her HIV results instead she ate well, read and became even more optimistic and took her treatment unlike her mother who dies a premature death due to lack of emancipation.

Education only cannot fix all the problems faced by women but an educated woman constructs her own reality in an emasculated society, she is able to negotiate her position than comply with every oppressive ideologies society constructs. It is because of this education that gave Linga the strength to take care of her mother and herself and speak up her mind in a stigmatic society. She has power over her body and is not bound by norms that men are superior, she no longer wants to be vulnerable to her sexual orientation this is evidenced by, the fact that after her experience with HIV she took no chances, she moved with condoms in her bag and kept some in a drawer at her house (81). By reading this one can confirm that it is evident that Linga is an agent of female emancipation. Generally it is the men who are known to carry condoms but Linga is carrying her own condoms which puts her in control and also shows that she is aware. Shaba refuses to construct the subject Linga as an object of pity and vulnerable to all the dangers of HIV.

The theory of gender and power talks of women's health as more vulnerable than that of men. (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Connell developed t this theory to address issues of gender inequality that are instigated by cultural norms. Women perceive themselves as powerless when it comes to condom use and have internalized the cultural morals they were taught that condoms

are for the promiscuous and it's not proper to wear a condom for your husband. These customs victimize both men and women.

This theory clearly shows how women's minds are programmed to think men are the ones aware of the dangers of HIV hence they should know more on condom use and all protective measures. Shaba sorts to differ, women's agency plays an important role in *Secrets of a Woman's Soul*. The notion of men being the only ones who carry life and death in their hands through condom use, women are now given the same power. Women are now in charge of their own survival. They are now taking charge of their sexuality and safety.

Gender identity refers to a personal identification with a particular gender and gender role in society and the term 'woman' has historically been used interchangeably with reference to the female body, meaning there are certain things the female body is constructed to do that the male cannot. Women have different roles in the social setup one of them being child bearers and men have a tendency if taking that ability for granted and use it to their advantage, that is impregnate and leave. In *Secrets of a Woman's Soul* women find ways to get rid of norms of being impregnated and left with practicing abortions, Mucha is a victim of this as a result she turns to Beata for assistance in aborting and returned to her small body statue again (48). The issue of abortion is risky but in a way women are reaffirming their agency and power over their bodies and social labels like 'single mothers'. Men essentially have slight power to make sure that women carry their pregnancies up to delivery. This is why abortion is a provocative topic because it stirs and fuels up men's feelings and threatens manhood and the existence of mankind.

Beata did not understand Linga's quest for legalizing abortions. To her and when she grew up legal actions were never an issues to be discussed, 'one just did what one had to do' (39). Meaning women had the power to abort a pregnancy with herbs and other means if she was

smart enough. A woman always in full control of her fertility and it was not even up for discussion with the men, she could just go ahead and do anything she pleased with her body. Unfortunately the generation that followed is presented as fully dependent on what men think.

Women on the other hand endanger themselves by making the wrong choices even if they are of a good reason. The councilor uses his power to manipulate Linga into sleeping with him, she could have chosen to lose the job and just keep her dignity and health intact but instead she chooses to sleep with the councilor. There have been rumors of him impregnating his wife's younger sister and she dropped out of school but her ambition to be a lawyer gets in the way and makes her sacrifice herself. She knew the dangers of what she was about to do but she still proceeded. One can say that men misuse their power to manipulate and take advantage of the disadvantaged and in this case it's the women. Women also give men the power they crave over the female bodies, Linga could have taken charge of her own body, own sexuality but instead she gave the councilor the power to do what he pleased with her.

### **3.4 Hiv/Aids in Secrets of a Woman's Soul**

The central theme in Lutanga's narrative is HIV/AIDS and the broad social implications it has spelt for individual lives and the nation at large. Taken as metonym and metaphor, the question of HIV/AIDS raises significant politico-ethical problems of 'representability of life'. Hayden White (1987) notes that the value of narrative representation is its knowledge as well as ignorance to the fact that what it depicts is version of several potential narrative stories of the self.

Shaba seeks to empower various ways for women, of living and existing in a patriarchal society. She defies society for treating women as if they are less important and in her defense women

were marginalized for a long time and deserve a chance to be treated as humans as well. She challenges society to abandon its hypocrisy and stop judging women unfairly, in her defense women have been the subaltern and seeks to give them a voice. She advises the society to shun all ideologies that suppress women and make them victims of circumstances.

Linga, the central character, experiences worst fates in life. After her parents separated and then the father died, only to be raised by one parent, it was a big responsibility left on her mother's shoulder to provide for Linga and her siblings. She, Beata, finds a job as a general hand at the city council and unfortunately ends up having a sexual relationship with the councilor to secure her job, that of Linga and to fend for her family. The tragic part about this whole dilemma is that the same man is having a sexual relationship with her daughter, Linga. Both women end up contracting an HIV related illness, STDs which are a sexually transmitted disease. It is clear that the councilor represents negative masculinity, he has taken advantage of his position, his power to manipulate the desperate women. This tragic event also proves the point that women are capable of doing anything to make ends meet, they are very much capable of putting themselves in compromising positions and later play the victim of patriarchy. Men on the other hand take advantage of women who are desperate for survival thus proving that both men and women are vulnerable to society but most evidently to themselves.

In the novel, *Secrets of a Woman's Soul*, the shock of herself and Beata being infected is difficult to shake off, she struggles to accept. On top of it her marriage fails after she had tested positive and the husband negative, this meant that she was promiscuous and the husband couldn't take it nor give her a chance to explain herself. This sequence of events are evidence to the myths that say women are a danger to masculinity and victimize 'innocent' men. This was a blow on her

face but she soldiered on and kept buying treatment for herself and her mother in that hostile economic situation.

Gender topics are essential to the understanding of power relations in the society, including sexuality and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. It is known that social gender roles are learned from childhood and consolidated throughout life, when the individual seeks to establish his identity and plan more specifically for his future. It is culture that construct gender roles and those roles serves as a guideline of how individuals should behave. These roles and customs are responsible for making women internalize suppression, women are made to believe that their bodies belong to the men and what men say goes thus proving that men are stronger than women. These masculine ideas attributed men to have a wide range of sexual relations, a sense of entitlement, believing the world owed them something and it was their right to have as many women as they wish.. This is evidenced by Daudi who had many sexual relations for example with Josephine and other women who came before and after his marriage to Beata.

Poverty also impacts the vulnerability of people to HIV and AIDS. In the narrative as the economy got bad so did it leave people with few choices to make, college girls would go in hotels with men so as to cater for themselves during college schooling. Prostitution is at its highest form, their options were limited and they had to find possible ways they could to fend for themselves. Theorists such as Gaidzanwa (1985) and McFadden (1992) prominently said that it is poverty that pushes women to get involved with unsafe sexual relations. Women are forced to participate in transacting their bodies for money and food. In the novel Beata and Linga had to use their bodies to get what they wanted and in this case was a job and little money for Linga's fees and wellbeing, Linga as innocent as she was, joins the list of young women who are vulnerable to economic hardships and inconsiderate men. She loses her innocence for money. In

some occasions, women tend to endure toxic relationships even when love and understanding is missing. Women do not have the luxury to just pack up their bags and leave, unlike men who leave their wives when they are positive, women stay and endure. Society shaped the woman as people who endure (86).

Spivak (1995: 28) is of the view that women are marginalized and have been shadows of their male counterparts. Lutanga however believes that women have a voice and if they are really willing it's easier for them to fight against oppression. The female characters in her novel defies masculinities in various ways, they prove to be exactly what the society view as dangerous. In *Secrets of a Woman's Soul*, the subaltern actually speaks in rebellious means against oppressive masculinities sometimes these rebellious speeches are depicted as contradictory.

### **3.5 Depiction of Male Characters in *Secrets of a Woman's Soul***

In the narrative it is almost impossible to point out a 'good man', Shaba portrays her male characters unforgivingly and as powerful agents of patriarchal norms that sets to victimize women. Amazingly in as much as Daudi would abuse Beata, he never laid a finger on Linga instead he loved her and would make sure she had great opportunities and ambitions in life, even when he sent the other children and their mom to exile he made sure Linga never lost interest in becoming a lawyer. Daudi taught Linga not to accept anything from anyone even dubious authority figures. He also encouraged her to question authority even his this is evidenced by the incident when Linga confronts her father for opening her letter in her absence.

Men are constructed as violent. Men's violence shows that one is a real man as according to social and cultural norms. Daudi physically abused Beata in front of his children which makes him less of a protector but a weak man who escapes his reality by inflicting pain on his wife.

Linga remembers how her father used to beat up her mother, how he punched her hard whenever she tried to defend herself (26). Men in this case, Daudi, attain self-actualization by undermining women. Violence against women consequently results to physical and emotional trauma as well as attacking the spirit. The terminology changes when she is talking about issues that concern men. She makes use of violent diction, words like ‘punch’ to show how men can be wicked toward women, basing on their physical strength.

Shaba also depicts men as heartless and uncompassionate, this is evidenced by Simba Beata’s husband. When Beata passed away, Linga cried and was depressed and needed something or someone rather to cheer her up and make things a bit easier, generally women are emotional beings and show their emotions through crying but that is not the case when it comes to men. Society has stereotypes like women cry but ‘big boys don’t cry’, men are supposed to be tough and carefree yet not all men are tough and strong but are forced to do so. Simba fails to sympathize with his wife who was grieving, men are not trained to deal with emotions, and they are socialized to be strong, this is why they are not able to comfort those that needs comforting. If only when they played *mahumbwe* when they were young, boys should have tried the role of the mother. This would have made it easier for them to understand and learn how to deal with emotions that comes with being a woman. The socialization of men to be strong and unsympathetic brings misery and vulnerability of both genders.

Simba is unforgivingly depicted as a self-centered man. His self-centeredness is represented as a danger. In Shaba’s narrative men’s self-consciousness is seen when Simba realizes that Linga is positive whilst he was negative. He end up divorcing Linga because to him this only meant Linga was immoral and unfaithful. This is reflective to the society and its stigmatization and beliefs that women with Hiv were immoral. In the society, no one would think that maybe the

man brought it in the home or maybe she was born that way, the overall conclusion is the woman was promiscuous.

Beata's husband, Daudi is not a stirring man. He subjects Beata to violence and practice cohabitation with different women (34). While he thinks that he is broadcasting his manhood, his beloved Linga sees it differently. To her she sees a weak and coward who hides his insecurities through beating up women (42). Though Daudi is depicted as an authoritative man by dictating his wife, he fails in his role as armament to the family when unknown political men came to 'discipline' him for supporting the wrong political figure. His daughter almost got raped whilst he was crying from the brutal beating and even after they had left he still cowered in his bedroom instead of checking if Linga was unharmed. This however sets to remind manhood of how powerless they are and how much they need to revise the ways they treat women and that in as much as they go around punching women they are still weak in the inside.

Men are represented as agents of negative masculinity through the councilor who abuses his power and position and ends up putting Linga in a difficult position. Health-wise the councilor is a danger to himself and that of women like Linga and Beata, he uses his position of authority to treat unfairly the desperate. In the end, anti-women and the inhuman inclinations in men is a threat also to their health as evident in the novel, the councilor is also infected with HIV. The creation of men as people with unquenchable desire for sex is dangerous to both genders, although he was married he still had a girlfriend and still went on to have sexual relations with Beata and Linga.

Their negativity is also shown through the different men with fancy cars and big bellies who asked for Mucha's hand in marriage after seeing her beauty. Mucha decided to court one of them, he persuades her to fall pregnant and immediately after she told him she was pregnant he



suddenly remembered he had a family that he had to take care of and would not leave that family for Mucha. This proves that men have a tendency of impregnating women, taking advantage of their biological setup and refuse to father the children and making them single mothers.

Malfunctioning socialization is the reason why men have a sense of entitlement to pleasure at the expense of women. Linga remembers that when they used to play *mahumbwe* boys refused to also play the role of the mother, but girls could play the role of the father. The young boys knew the role of the mother included cooking, sweeping, carrying the babies, in other words it was a burden. The way society shaped boys made them lose respect on women at a tender age. The shaping of boys has made them conscious of the low position of the mother, even from a very early age. Linga's two brothers, Lamulo and Zondwayo are the exact replicas of their father's uncooperative nature. They are irresponsible to the extent of misusing their fees, order their mother around and are just terrible people to live with to the extent that they were chased out of the house.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In summation, it has been argued that Shaba is intensely eager to lure attention to women's vulnerability to HIV in *Secrets of a Woman's Soul*. Her main goal is to show how women in their marginalized way can overcome the social, bio-cultural and political problems. Her main concern is to show how women are marginalized by patriarchal norms although there are critics such as Moi, McFadden who have complained or criticized the inclination of portraying women only as victims, Linga got infected and it was tough accepting being positive when the husband is negative but after Simba left her she got back at her feet and took charge of her own sexuality. Linga became self-conscious and starts to protect herself and empowers herself through condom use. Yes she was already infected but she could not comply with ideologies that say infection

means death, and patriarchy that says a man has power over the female body. She challenges patriarchy through holding onto using condoms. Despite being forced to live in shame and secrecy about Hiv and aids, women find their agency and fight for their dignity and self-worth.

The men in the narrative are presented in all negative forms. Shaba's depiction of male characters is sexist in the sense that the only good thing that a man did is Daudi loving and taking care of Linga. She presents men as evil, selfish, inconsiderate and agents of negative masculinities and even if they try to present themselves as powerful, they have weaknesses, Daudi, is a coward who could not protect his family, proved his manhood through violence but could not stand up against fellow men. Men are also depicted as humans with an insatiable desire for sex and Gari in *The Uncertainty of Hope* is also of the same characteristics of Daudi

## CHAPTER 4. *THE HAUNTED TRAIL*: HOPE FOR THE INFECTED AND AFFECTED

### 4.1 introduction

*The Haunted Trail* (2012) is set at a time in Zimbabwe when most people believed being HIV-positive was a death sentence. Stigma and discrimination became a lifestyle, infected people and their immediate families had experienced more deaths to last a lifetime. This book is exceptional in its depiction of women. Chidavaenzi refuses to depict women as failures rather in their varied characters, he manages to show important aspects of womanhood in a positive manner, it is almost ironic that he chooses to emancipate female characters instead of empowering his own kind, men. Philip Chidavaenzi tears down stereotypes and shows the importance of detail in narratives.

Patriarchal cultures construct values that they consider to be appropriate and moral for the society, to shape the way they behave. Masculinities decide on what should and what shouldn't be done, they decide the levels of immorality in people who sell bodies for money. What is unfair is patriarchy condemns what women who sell sex do but are ok with the men who are buying the sex. Women are the ones who get monitoring when they sell sex, those women who are doing transactional sex get negative identities as compared to men. Men can safely call themselves a ladies man and take pride in it but it's a different issue for the woman. This proves that women do not have a voice, even if they try. Gayatri Spivak however states that subaltern only gets positive and intellectual recognition from the society after they have done what is prescribed for them. (Leitch 2001:2196), It is up to the women to define themselves, to claim their identities and wear them in ways comfortable for them, to do things the way they want and not because that's what society requires them to do. In the novel there are powerful women like Chiedza and Jackie who refused to be silenced and were somehow a threat to masculinity.

## 4.2 Vulnerability, Desperation, sex and HIV and AIDS

Morals are principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior. Morality are ways of maintaining order and harmony and good relations amongst people of a certain culture. In the African society women are constructed as respectful and should be respectful to the community and its principles. Women are victimized by traditions that favor men more than they favor women. Women are obliged to stick by men that unreasonably ill-treat them. Society set rules and regulations that marks how people in the society are supposed to behave. People's actions must conform to certain essential norms and values, which translate to moral virtue and one who lacks these features lack *Ubuntu*, personhood. Eckenberger (2004) is of the view that morals are essential to human life and they shape how people relate to each other. African tradition believe that morals shape a person, they shape one's character and they shape personhood, which goes back to a proverb by the Zulu that says *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Broodryk, 2002, 31). One who goes astray from this Ubuntu is a disgrace to the society.

Chiedza and Jackie are women with varied backgrounds who met at University. While Chiedza sits in her hostel room reading and preparing for exams Jackie goes to a bachelor's party and parties until the next day. Preaching the gospel of morality in the traditional setup was a way of cementing a shared meaning and a mutual understanding amongst individuals. People were supposed and expected to behave the same way because that's what society constructed them to be. People were expected to behave the same way, according to the norms and values of that society (Kingongo, 1991). Traditional education sorts to educate the society on morality and good behavior but these teachings have a loophole and this is evidenced by the difference in behavior between Chiedza and Jackie. Chiedza a hard worker, chaste, focused woman who

condemns fornication and believes it's a sin against God versus a free spirited, independent woman, Jackie. Jackie knows what the world is capable of and Chiedza sees good in everything and believes if you are good nothing bad will harm you. Although Jackie has sexual relations with various men, she knows how to protect herself, she does not allow herself to be vulnerable to masculinity or the world as a whole. Jackie is a female Casanova, she actually calls herself a men's lady, she knows men love her and she uses them whenever she wants, this trait is masculine and we see that Jackie portrays male characteristics.

Jackie is a fireball of energy, smokes, drinks and has successfully migrated at a discursive sexual level, from just sex to 'safe sex' unlike her roommate Chiedza. Jackie uses condoms and even carries them with her just in case the man doesn't have. She is protecting herself and is well educated on how to practice safer sex and still enjoy it. This act of carrying condoms proves that Aids is or can be manageable. Chiedza is naïve and has no clue on how to practice safe sex, all she knows is abstinence to her none of this is normal.

*She still remembered the shock that had struck her during their first year after bumping into a pack of men's condoms in Jackie's handbag (3)*

Jackie is enlightened and emancipated from masculinities, she learnt to take care of herself at a young age. She used to be vulnerable to poverty, men with sexual hunger and it is at that time that she learnt to make decisions on her own and not cry about them later, this is why it was easy for her to sleep with Chiedza's fiancée. She uses her masculine traits to protect herself from gendered identities like women are sex machines, with Jackie the gender roles are shifted she is the one who use men as sex toys. She indulges into affairs with men that are married and use them for pleasure, money and her upkeep. Women are the ones who are prescribed to be used as

sexual objects, child rearing machines but Jackie defies all those identities and possess male characteristics.

Chiedza contrary to Jackie, comes from a protected background and attracts danger by escaping the protected small town environment. She even refused to go to Africa University and would rather migrate to Harare and go to University of Zimbabwe, in search of a man who had given her butterflies, Michael. There is urban to urban migration which is prompted by the need to find Michael. Michael was known as 'Mr. Harare' because he was a ladies man, Chiedza still loved him even after knowing that he wasn't what she imagined. Chiedza is fascinated by the danger she sees in Michael, he is a mystery, which she is inquisitive about and is ready to explore. In her relationship with Michael, she takes the role of the light, the hope in Michael's life which is symbolic to her name. The two are different in every sense. Chiedza had a well cultured and confined childhood as compared to Michael's whose childhood was dark and secretive. The way he grew up influenced the man he turned out to be, it is that childhood that made him non hesitant to making dangerous and dark business deals and take risks through having multiple intimate relationships. Michael sees Chiedza as the light that will transform him and keep him sane, little does he know that he is vulnerable to hiv because of the adultery he continues to pursuit even when he has Chiedza already. His actions are making everyone in his life vulnerable to shame, infection and alienation.

Chiedza's pampered infancy has not exposed her to the wickedness that is found in the big cities like Harare. She genuinely believes that as long as she is a good girl, nothing bad will happen to her. This belief betrayed in preserving herself. Even when she had a feeling that Michael was a cheat, ill-mannered she still held on to the relationship and got to the extremes of getting engaged. After the engagement she does not take caution with her safety to ask for an Hiv test,

she trusted too much and it is this trust that made her vulnerable to heartbreak. She as an individual was just scared of testing for Hiv. Chiedza seems to fulfil the assumptions that men have independence while women lack the self-sufficient capability to reason on their own (Anderson2003). She inevitably authors her own tragedy by failing to reason and believing that as long as she explains herself about sex Michael will understand

To Jackie, Chiedza should not be horrible, and continue her naïve acts of not sleeping around but should quickly take caution and warns her that there is power in a condom for it holds life and death inside of it (21). Chiedza only takes heed and have a realization that a condom was not as bad as she thought after she had tested positive. If only she was as aware as Jackie maybe this wouldn't have happened to her. The author in a way is proving that being positive is not always a result of promiscuity, some people women to be specific are vulnerable to men like Michael. The position she is in is different from that of Linga in the sense that although both women are vulnerable to masculinity, Linga actually had sex willingly but for Chiedza it was an ambush, Michael took advantage of her naiveness and got her drunk so as to take advantage of her. The very first she loses her innocence is the same day she becomes pregnant and to top that, hiv positive. She is exposed and vulnerable to stigmatization and alienation in the society. Masculine ideologies on morals despise young unmarried girls who fall pregnant, and this meant that Chiedza was now vulnerable to being judged by the society as a person with lose morals.

More so, Chidavaenzi argues that there is a multitude of families that are poor to the extent of getting involved with transactional sex for ends meet. Jackie orphaned at an early age to Aids started having sex at fifteen. She stayed with her grandmother and cousins and Shelter, one of her cousins who was already sexually active gave Jackie advice that shaped her character forever. To Chiedza sex is consecrated and should be preserved for marriage. Michael and

Jackie have a different view on sex, to them sex is just sex because they were socialized to it at a tender age and they normalized sex through seeing it at that young age. Having sex and that experience with it ruined their view on life, love and the act of sex, to them sex was a model of escapism and fun, no strings attached. Jackie learns at a young age that for one to live comfortably she had to improvise. She learnt at a tender age that men loved the female body to the extent of giving her all their salaries, after that realization she began to transact her body (35-36)

She started having casual sex so that she could eat and by then she had sex for soft drinks and sweets but it became boring and predictable that's when the desire for older men was born in her. Women are depicted as vulnerable to their background and also economic situation, they tend to do things unimaginable for earnings meet, this is juxtaposed to Linga and Beata who also do the same for job security.

Michael is a damaged man and have no clue on what's moral and what is not. To him there is nothing wrong with having other sexual affairs with different women even after he had asked Chiedza to marry him. He has the feeling of entitlement and believes women are created to serve men and entertain them and it was his divine right to enjoy. The fact that Chiedza wanted to wait for the wedding night was absurd, to him sex was just sex and the way Chiedza took it made him have sex with Jackie, Chiedza's best friend. Michael is vulnerable to his own sexual orientation, he believes a man should just have sex with anyone at any given time. He is a victim of wrong upbringing, his life at the *shebeen* taught him that women were cheap and sex machines that as long as you had money you could get any woman of your choice. He believes that women are used to pleasure men, sticking to the view that women are there for the enjoyment of men (Muponde, 2006:12) Beauvoir argues that during the course of time women have always been



minors, treated with disrespect and treated like the other, the subalterns. They fall prey to the demands of a patriarchal society. In the text we see Fiona falling into Michael's trap, he threatens to fire her and go for a hearing and to avoid this she had to cheat on her husband and spend a night with him in a hotel room. This happened because she has no choice but to do whatever it takes to keep her job, masculinities still wins. Michael's egotistical and misogynistic nature is revealed through the fact that he is not in love with her or neither does he feel any sense of attraction towards her but he has sex with her to feed his ego and show his supremacy. Michael is a victim of his upbringing, he was sexually abused by prostitutes at his mother's *shebeen*, and he watched his mother sleep with different men and that took all his innocence in valuing the plight of women as a whole.

### **4.3 Masculinities**

"Be a man, be strong, boys don't cry" are some of the phrases that society uses to construct and shape self-destructive egos in men at a young age. They reinforce the ideas that being a female meant being emotional and being docile and being a man meant being violent and powerful. These doctrines also teaches men to never show empathy and to confuse fear with respect. They are born innocent and caring but socialization makes them appear as cold hearted.

Feminism speaks of a one sided story when it comes to inequity. It depicts men as free from gender stereotypes and negative gender identities but in reality men face a whole new level of societal pressures at a young age. It is the misogynistic nature of the society and its norms that socialize boys into cold and heartless beings. Men too are vulnerable, only that few researches want to look at it through those lenses.

Michael's insatiable appetite for success, money, wealth and women is his Achilles heel, the tragic flaw in his character. He has an enhanced social status, that is he is the CEO of a bank and feels like he is on top of the world and he believed that as a CEO he would never show any trace of fear to his subordinates. He had to win their faith and confidence. He often made them wait for him for twenty minutes in the boardroom whilst he looked outside his office window, a reminder of who is in charge. It is Michael's insensitivity to the plight of others that is symbolized by the injured bird, it is the hallmark of his failure. He tried to help the bird fly regardless of its broken wing and it tried but eventually it fell to its death. This is symbolic to his life, he was persistent on flying which later led to his tragic fall (5)

The above quote is a premonition of the tragic fall of Michael, the metaphor of the bird with broken wings is juxtaposed to Michael who insists in flying higher even when he is damaged inside. It is hunger for power and dominance that leads to his downfall.

Also masculinities are predicated on aggression, competition, individual violence, cruelty and insensitivity to the needs of other people. Michael had fought his way up to the top of his career but nothing seemed to appease his hunger, his obsession with success. His only concern was 'profit' which made him settle for unscrupulous business deals

*Michael nodded. Sometimes one has to flirt at the edges of the law if profits, even from the most unlikely sources, are to be realized. So as long as we all keep our lips sealed, then you shouldn't have anything to fear gentlemen. (7)*

Even as a child he nursed a single obsession and a desperate ambition and that is to make it in life. Anything that was a fog to this ambition he terminated, this is why it was easy for him to kill Gatsby who wanted to expose his dirty games. The Darwinism inclination presented by Michael

lives him in a compromising position, it has become a survival of the fittest lifestyle, a competition to make it to the top. To Michael a man had to fight his own battles and make sure he excels. Michael and his colleagues' work ethics relied on self-centeredness which resultantly contributed to a major fall of the bank and Michael. Munyaka (2006) confirm that *Ubuntu* integrities are anti-egoistic since they deject selfish decisions that will harm the next person.

Michael is an inconsiderate man who flops at how to sympathize with a sick mother. The sight of his infected mother still haunts him and even when she was alive he cowered and left her. He is irresponsible and cannot take responsibility to anything he does. Michael does not learn anything from Stella's illness because instead of staying and learn and take care of his parent he chooses to abandon her, this is why it was easy for him to leave Chiedza when she told him she was Hiv positive. At a young age he impregnated a girl, Lina, and he refused to take responsibility which resulted in Lina's committing suicide. He chased her away and similarly this act of not taking responsibility is evidenced with his reaction to Chiedza's status, he knew very well that Chiedza would never cheat on him and that he was the adulterer but he still blames it on Chiedza, calling her lose and taking his engagement ring back. Broodryk (2002) believes that, care is also a significant figure in *Ubuntu*, Michael however lacks that care, and he is an agent of old masculinities that believe the female body is dangerous and the carrier of diseases. His mother, never hid to her immorality henceforth he adopted the same tactic.

Venomous masculinity is the obedience to traditional male gender roles that restrict the kinds of emotions allowable for boys and men to express, including social expectations that men seek to be dominant. In *The haunted trail (2012)* toxic masculinities are unveiled through Michael Denga, Michael believes in his supremacy and can do anything to show he is dominant. He did

what is called ‘carpet interviews’, this is sleeping with women who come looking for jobs, out of desperation they would fall prey. He only did this to quench his ego, he had made it in life, and women like Fiona did anything to keep their jobs. His sexual risks contributed significantly towards his downfall. Michael even after driving from Harare to Mutare for Chiedza, he still thought of his night with Fiona.

Taruza, Michael’s father is always involved in brawls with other men. His name means defeated or loser, which is significant to his way of living and death. He was involved in a gang and always came home with fresh wounds as proof of his recklessness. After he went missing, he was later found in a drainage pipe with six stabs deep on his chest. He died fighting for Melina, a common prostitute, yet he had a wife and small son at home. Michael’s father represents irresponsibility, aberrant toxic masculinity which are the traits Michael later unveils. After Michael learnt about his father he started acting like him even when Stella tried to warn him. These are the negative effects of a father figure in his life. A father figure has an anchoring effect on children (61). There were men who he saw as father figures who had sexual relations with his mother but to his disappointment they always left him. This marked how he later turned out to be, not reliable and always left when push comes to shove.

Michael was sexually abused by prostitutes, they called him ‘little husband’, and making him touch their private parts. He is a victim of his sexuality. This had an impact on his sexuality and had a negative permanent effect on his relationships with women and it ultimately exposed him to HIV and AIDS which led to his death. Michael had no regards to commitment and the same applied to Jackie who continuously flirted with him every time. Michael’s masculine fragrance hypnotized her and the magic aroma of his unmistakable hunger set up her nerves on fire. These

ignited feelings made it easier for both of them to betray Chiedza, they had sex because Jackie believed she deserved everything she wanted even if it w meant betraying her best friend, Michael had sex because he believed he was being denied his 'right'.

Michael when he was faced by trouble, he enters the nihilistic form, he wasn't able to handle losing his company and being HIV positive at the same time. These tragedies can be juxtaposed to male castration, he has always viewed himself as a powerful and fruitful man who was invisible and nothing dared to stand in his way. These events emasculated the patriarchal societies that sort to convey men as strong and divine. The irony part of this story is Michael left Chiedza in a depressing state, unable to eat and edgy whilst he continued with his life, in denial telling himself that he was strong and healthy and aids could not touch him.

Chidavaenzi does not only depict the haunted trail as a narrative of failed masculinity but he gives the reader a glimpse of hope in masculinity through Mr.Mazembe, Chiedza's boss. Who had everything Michael had, if not more but was a considerate, caring man. He valued his subordinates and never treated them like minors but would encourage them to excel. To him success came after hard work contrary to Michael who gave credit because of shady deals and promiscuity.

#### **4.4 Body management, HIV/AIDS and Managed identities**

Jackie is depicted as a dangerous woman, she does not want commitment but rather have companionship. She is an orphan to HIV, both her parents died of it and she made sure she would manage her body, sexuality in ways that will not lead to the same fate as her parents. She

practices safe sex through condoms and is in charge of her own body and pleasure. Unlike Chiedza who is a bit careless about her safety basing on the fact that morality keeps one safe, she gets infected with HIV and pregnant in the end. The author in a way is telling the reader that religion is not bad but one should not let it blind them into the reality and evils of this world.

The theory of gender and power have a section where it focuses on the sexual division of power, as the power inequality between men and women increases and favors men, women will be more likely to experience hostile health outcomes and Chiedza fits into this observation thoroughly. Jackie takes caution of her own body and health and even tries to warn her friend, Chiedza who believes men are the ones who initiate sex, who believes men are the ones who are in charge of the female body as long as they marry you. These beliefs were risky because they led to her downfall. Therefore, the physical exposures and behavioral risk factors are theorized as variables and constructs, they are assessed by scales with proven reliability among diverse female populations. Connell is of the view that the physical exposures of women who take caution, who have power over their bodies are a result of their being sexually abused at a tender age. Jackie is powerful because she was taught to sell her body for food at a young age, now she is aware of the dangers and implications of having sex.

Michael is depicted as a man who cowers when it comes to responsibilities. This would be characterized by business deals, where he plays dirty and kills people so that he will not take responsibility to any failure. He even refused Lina's pregnancy and threatened her, which led to her committing suicide. His suicide and refusing to have infected Chiedza with it, to him it is Chiedza who had been promiscuous because since he was a 'big boy' AIDS could not touch him.

He neglects the fact that he was careless with his health, jumping from woman to woman, instead he blames it on Chiedza and takes his ring back.

Michael's childhood was full of negativity, neglect, abuse, loneliness and he had a single parent. His mother was a shebeen queen who sold her body for ends meet. Michael was a lonely child who had no one to tell how he really felt, even in a room full of strangers everyday he still felt empty which is why he resorted to drug abuse and gang fights to take his mind off the burdens of being Stella's son. These are some of the negative effects of single headed families, in as much as Stella tried, Michael's life had a gap that needed a paternal figure. Taruza, his father had no respect for women, he was a loser and in as much as Stella always told Michael to never become his father at the end of the day, Michael turned out to be just like his father. He died a loser's death, defeated by AIDS and pride.

All his life he had lived in the shadow of fear- the fear of failure, a remake of his father, he had always shuddered at the thought of turning out to be his replica. Michael failed to reconfigure identity. After finding out he was positive he did not give himself a chance to get a post-test counseling and allow himself to heal and accept. He immediately went to drink beer, apologize to Chiedza and then killed himself. Chidavaenzi is conceptualizing the myth of the 'strong health men', men are not as strong as they try to be. Women have been subalterns, the inferior specie but in *The Haunted Trail* we see that women are stronger than men. He believed killing himself was better than allow HIV take away his dignity and make him as vulnerable as his mother was before she died.

*I could not take it when I learnt that I was HIV positive. It scared the hell out of me. I was not prepared to go through the nightmare that was my mother's life before she died of AIDS...a man has to defend his dignity and honor to the last breathe (130).*

Identity refers to the state or fact of being the same one as described, or the condition of being oneself. No one has one identity, humans have several identities for women you are a mother, daughter in -law, sister, aunt etc. so in this narrative we will look into different identities.

Frightened, depressed identities. Identities predicated on a sense of shame and fear. After Chiedza learnt she was positive, she had no idea of how she was going to face the world, the councilor had told her being HIV positive was not the end of the world but hers was crumbling down harshly. After being rejected by Michael she had no idea on how she was going to face the world, pregnancy plus aids, how evil could the world be. Society believed that the only women to contract HIV were the ones who were being promiscuous, selling their bodies for money in the big cities, *pfambi*. She could take any name calling but being called a prostitute, she was not ready for that because she had tried to be virtuous. Throughout the journey Chiedza was in deep thought, frightened and could not look at people in the eye, she felt as if it was written all over her that she was positive and people would call her a prostitute. Due to unawareness society was very quick to judge and she was not ready to be judged and gossiped about (105).

Michael had the images of his mother in his head, how skinny and sickly she had become because of AIDS and he was not willing to be associated with any of that again. When he heard Chiedza was infected the memories flashed back and he knew then he had nothing to do with her anymore, he believed his blood was clean and even when his doctor told him to go for a test, he



didn't. Michael believed his mother died because she was just poverty stricken and had a life which was nothing other than a fiasco. He believed because he had money AIDS could not touch him.

Aids changed Chiedza, she has a wholeness of that person who has learnt the hard way, she found herself and knew that she was strong enough to go through a tragedy and still survive. She lost a part of herself but she still felt like she is whole, this can be called survivalist and resilient identities. Being chased out of women groups because she had gone public about her status had made her feel like an outcast but she got back up, she was convinced she had to survive, she started eating well, took her medication, read about living positive and prayed. She had a spiritual inflicted identity from then, she prayed to God remembering some people face challenges and would not be capable of transcending on their own, Michael for example. She needed a helping hand, a spiritual guidance to face anything thrown to her direction head on. As a survivor she became a symbol of hope just like her name. Society after hearing about her pregnancy and status expected to see a lifeless, crushed woman awaiting death to locate her but she was reborn, powerful and full of life. Her acceptance and energy was life giving and she was an inspiration to other women who were in the same position but could not speak. Chiedza became the voice for the voiceless.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The main goal for this study is to bring out the vulnerability of both genders in HIV and AIDS narratives, in the text studied for this chapter it was important to note that both men and women are vulnerable to different things. Women like Chiedza are vulnerable to men like Michael because she values love not safety, she is a victim of circumstances, and she is a victim of

religion. Men are victims of masculinities and are also vulnerable to their backgrounds. It is clear that gender plays a vital role in people's lives, it maps whom they are and what will become of them. Chiedza was a well nurtured person who believed in chastity and unfortunately her naiveness led to a tragedy. She was drugged and raped by Michael her betrothed and he gave her the disease and instead of consoling her he even blamed her. Chiedza is a victim of love, religion and culture and these betrayed her and made her vulnerable to betrayal and disease. Jackie on the other hand is a powerful woman and does not have to worry about getting AIDS because she knows how to play it safe. She is in charge of her own body, sexuality and pleasure and believes all men are narcissists hence she will not commit to anyone.

Michael is a victim of his childhood. The way he grew up implicated heavily on what he turned out to be, his mother a shebeen queen instead of protecting him from the abuses and horrors of her jib she left him whilst he was being sexually abused by older women, she allowed him to see her sleep with a different man each day. This taught him that a man could get any woman he wanted as long as he had money and that women were nothing but sex objects which is when it was easy for him to think of Fiona when he was with Chiedza or even sleep with Chiedza's best friend.

The economic breaches that exist between the fortunate and the less fortunate marks how one will behave in the society. The circumstances that push the poor to do things, unspeakable things for survival does not make sense to the rich, the rich use their resources to exploit the poor and the poor do anything for survival. Women like Jackie had to sell their bodies for food at the age of fifteen, Fiona had sex with Michael to secure her position and others who slept with him for an interview. These people are judged by society and are called immoral but what society fails to see is that at times these people do not really have much of a choice.

This novel theorized the relations between men and women, how women's desire for marriage can lead to their downfall and how men's hunger for sex and wealth can also lead to tragedy. It also focuses on how women are stronger than men, they accept defeat and carry on but men are not as strong. Patriarchy taught men to be strong but Michael cowered and killed himself.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In this study I aimed at bringing out the concept of vulnerability of both genders in Zimbabwean HIV and AIDS narratives. The incentive of this research was to disclose the power of cultural norms and beliefs, socio-political have on gender dynamics in Zimbabwean literature.

In my earlier chapters I attempted to find answers to the following research questions;

- How is HIV and AIDS depicted in Zimbabwean literature?
- How are the gender roles of men and women manifested in Zimbabwean writing?
- What are the strong points and gaps in the depiction of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwean narratives?
- In what ways has the theme of HIV and AIDS impacted understanding of sex and sexuality, masculinity and vulnerability in selected novels?

## 5.1 Research Findings

The focus of the first question was to understand the various ways in which Zimbabwean writers write on the concept of HIV and AIDS. These narratives studied for this research were all written during a time where AIDS was a sensitive topic, being HIV positive was a death sentence, the stigma was still tense and those infected and affected were outcast in the society. The three writers gave an insight on every negativity that came along with HIV. Prior to the theories used for this research the way writers like Valerie Tagwira represents her female characters fits in what (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000) were saying about women and their health in the theory of gender and power. Feminist authors and critics like Alice Walker, Tsitsi Dangarembga have challenged women to reject any cooperation in their suppression. The writers tried to empower women regardless of social norms that make them vulnerable and also show that men are not always demigods or supreme but are as vulnerable as women. Agency means the ways women try to emancipate themselves over suppressive leadership. Through analyzing the selected texts it is evident that women can actually raise their voices and fight for their freedom if need be although there are some who are too reluctant and fearful. Shaba links patriarchy to the discourse of HIV, power, gender inequity and exploitation. In her novel women can speak but the way they speak is limited, they do not really have a say in issues that are HIV related. The protagonist and her mother both get infected by the same man, her friends like Chipso die of an HIV related illness. These negative factors that shape women's lives in *Secrets of a woman's soul* reappear in the other two novels studied for this thesis.

The texts did not only talk of women's agency but men too, men like Gari and Michael are vulnerable to masculinities, the beliefs that there is nothing wrong with being promiscuous. Men are also vulnerable, although their risk is not as severe as that of women.

Positively, women in that patriarchal setup still have the urge to raise their heads and find ways to survive in the suppressive society. Onai in *The Uncertainty of Hope* is a courageous character who is well equipped on safety and survival in the verge of Hiv and patriarchal ideologies. Chiedza and Linga contracted Hiv but they are persistent in carrying on with their lives, they defy stereotypes that Hiv meant an automatic death, they survive against all odds. These women emancipate themselves, accept, digging deep inside themselves and find divine means to live with HIV, they are reborn. The authors also show how women enable themselves through education. Chiedza an accountant, Linga becomes a lawyer, these women are crossing the boundaries of theories that believe women are only given inferior jobs like teaching yet men have intellectual jobs like doctors and lawyers. Although in spite of these women being as educated, they failed to read the signs when it came to HIV and AIDS. The writers are confirming Stuart Hall's reflective theory of representation, they depict the negative status of women as a reality.

Therefore, it is vital to evaluate the degree to which each author represented relationships between women and men. Inclusively, men were represented negatively. Men are depicted as sexually hungry, predators in *The Haunted Trail*. Michael is portrayed as a womanizer. Gari in *The Uncertainty of Hope* is a hopeless men who dies without doing anything a noble and reasonable man will ever do. The councilor in *Secrets of a Woman's Soul* is not hesitant but takes pride in taking advantage of the women and of his position, he uses his power of authority to manipulate young girls and women. The narratives problematizes the wrong socialization these male characters had that made them believe women were nothing but sex objects and that they, men, had an insatiable desire for sex. This resulted in them believing they are invincible, nothing could touch them, AIDS included and they became *condomphobic*. Unfortunately what

they did not think of as having multiple sexual affairs required 'safe sex' for one to survive thus these men are vulnerable to HIV .

However, this study also found out that men are victims of patriarchy and victims of themselves. Society socialized men in dangerous ways that made them believe they were invincible. Men in three texts studied in this research resemble negative masculinity, Michael is a victim of ill upbringing, vulnerable to sexual and emotional abuse and it constructed him to be a Casanova who never felt any remorse and also lost his respect for women. Simba, Linga's husband is vulnerable to sins of his fellow men, his wife was taken advantage of by other men, she transacted her body for job security and she contracted HIV in the process. She expected her husband to bear with her but without looking at it in feminist lenses, it was a selfish request. Simba divorces her, which on the other hand is a sexist decision because if it was the other way round Linga could have been hurt, asked for space to consider and then still stay by his side. The councilor is a victim of his sex orientation, he contracts AIDS as well because he internalized the belief that every men have a strong desire for sex. Gari is also vulnerable to bitter women, in this case Gloria, she was hurt and ill-treated by previous men, she feared one of them had infected her with Hiv but still she vowed to lure Gari into marrying him and that he will pay for what other men did to her.

The authors show the vulnerability of women and men almost the same but the difference is that after the worst has happened, women soldier on, endure and survive but men in as much as they are deemed as strong they tend to cower, Simba files for divorce, Gari dies, Michael commits suicide. Both genders are vulnerable to the socio-economic, political, cultural, biological factors and HIV and AIDS but the only difference is how they handle situations.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Focusing on the findings of the study drawn above, the study recommends that:

- Creative writers should be more hostile in challenging the gender stereotypes of both genders.
- Literary critics should concentrate on the theme of masculinity more in order to understand men's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS and other factors too.
- Society should avoid constructing negative and toxic masculinities in the name of culture

I recommend that writers should be more hostile in challenging gender stereotypes of both genders. Previously researches focused on one gender exempting the other. I recommend that more balanced researches should be done. That is the only way gender inequalities can be beaten and done away with.

Theme of masculinity should be understood, researched on more so that researchers and the readers get to know the story from both angles, men can be victims too.

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