

Psychosocial Dimensions of Migration in Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga*

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Abstract

Studies have shown that the relationship between psychology and literature experiences is intricate and multi-dimensional, encompassing the emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of an individual's life. In this way, a number of researchers have applied the concept of psychology in the analysis of literary texts. In view of the above, this paper provides a psychosocial analysis of migration as depicted in Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga*. By examining the protagonist's psychological and social struggles, the study elucidates the complexities of identity formation, cultural dislocation, and the pursuit of belonging within the Nigerian diaspora. The study adopts a qualitative research design. Utilising Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development, the research explores themes of alienation, resilience, and cultural conflict, and how these themes manifest in the experiences of Nigerian migrants. Through a detailed literary analysis, the paper highlights the psychological, emotional and social dynamics of migration, offering insights into the broader implications of diasporic life. This study positions *Woes of Ikenga* as a critical text for understanding the psychosocial impacts of migration, contributing to the discourse on migration literature and the lived realities of the Nigerian diasporic experiences. Findings from the study offers valuable insights into the psychosocial dynamics of the Nigerian diaspora and underscores the profound impact of migration on identity, relationships, and personal growth. Also, the study enhances our understanding of how migrants navigate the challenges of cultural dislocation and social integration, highlighting the critical role of resilience and support systems in their psychosocial development.

Keywords: African Literature, Diaspora, Migration, Psychosocial Dimensions, Nigeria

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Available online: 21-04-2025

This is an open-access article.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24312/ucp-jll.03.01.433>

Introduction

The relationship between psychology and literature experiences is intricate and multi-dimensional, encompassing the emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of an individual's life. As Aras (2015) posits, there is a close relationship between psychology and literature because both fields use a variety of concepts, methods and approaches to address human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts, and reconciliations. Aras (2015, p. 251) further notes that author portrays life in accordance with his or her goals, viewpoints, beliefs, and values. This also helps readers understand the meaning of life and existence by opening doors to both invisible and unknown worlds. By increasing knowledge and understanding, literature thus undoubtedly helps individuals understand and reflect on who they are.

This shows that man and existence have always been fundamental elements in most literature. In other words, the relationship between psychology and literature cannot be overemphasised. Jung (1966), in his well-known work *Psychology and Literature*, also states that psychology, being the study of psychic processes, can be applied to the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all sciences and arts. He further described the work of art as the outcome of the artist's psychic process of creation and postulates (1966).

Historically, migration itself has become an important field of investigation in African literature as many Africans left their continent for greener pastures. Migration, often a significant and transformative event, profoundly impacts a person's psychological well-being and identity. On this note, Awoonor (1975, p. 4) states that among every African, there exist stories of migrations and legends of their movement in vast numbers across great expanses of land over long periods. This means that African history has been greatly influenced by migration. There are different reasons why people migrate. Oyewole (2024, p. 224) believes that the influx of Nigerians to the West is marked by missed opportunities, truncated development, frustrated hope and political sense. This manifests in poor socio-economic performance, causing suffering and unfulfilled expectations, conflicts, and political instability. With the recent reports, ignorance is one of the reasons for migration, especially in a milieu where "I want to travel out" has become the ambition of many Nigerians today, especially the youths with neither any profession nor career prospects. This is based on the assumption that once they cross the borders into Europe or America, all their problems will be solved. Also, Idika (2021, p. 181) is of the view that "Europe's influence on African Migration was caused not

only by colonies, which shaped the whole continent especially when thinking about the borders and 'territories' of the colonists but also by recruitment of guest workers after the first and the second world wars". It is, therefore, generally believed that Africa formed the largest percentage of world migrants.

While all the zones in Nigeria are involved in migration in one way or another, the Southeast is identified as the most migratory of the six geopolitical zones. This migratory trend supports the well-known saying in Africa that *for every four Africans you see, one (if not more) is from the Southeast*. Therefore, the central role the Southeast plays as the home of Nigerian migrants makes it an important zone in understanding migration dynamics in the country and in Africa (Nweke & Ogugua, 2021, p. 52). The choice of *Woes of Ikenga* as data for this study lies on this premise.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study

1. How does Ikenga's migration journey reflect the psychological impact of displacement and search for identity among African migrants in *Woes of Ikenga*?
2. In what ways does the novel portray the social challenges and cultural conflicts experienced by migrants in foreign countries?
3. How does *Woes of Ikenga* address the theme of the 'greener pasture' illusion and its psychological effects on individuals and communities?

Literature Review

Building upon the legacy of the pioneers of African literature, modern African authors have increasingly focused on the theme of migration in their fictional works. Over the past fifteen years, migration has emerged as a dominant motif, recurring throughout numerous literary texts. For instance, Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* explores the life of a Sudanese woman residing in Scotland. Similarly, Diawara's memoir *We Won't Budge: An African Exile in the World* examines the impact of assimilation on immigrants living in both France and the United States, drawing a comparative picture of migrant experiences in these two countries. Esi Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* centers on a Ghanaian immigrant in Canada striving for a better future. In *Grace Land* by Chris Abani, the narrative follows Elvis, a Lagos teenager grappling with poverty and violence. Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* shifts

between Entebbe, Kampala, and Los Angeles, portraying Christine's journey to and return from America, where she faces challenges reintegrating into Ugandan society.

Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007) tells of Sepha Stephanos, who escapes the Ethiopian Revolution to run a grocery store in a struggling Washington neighborhood. In *Harare North*, Brian Chikwava presents the story of an anonymous Zimbabwean immigrant in London, haunted by a troubled past. Osondu's *Voice of America: Stories* features characters maintaining ties with the United States, including a mother writing to her migrant son for financial support. Tahar Ben Jelloun's *A Palace in the Old Village* highlights the alienation of a Moroccan immigrant in Paris, who becomes estranged from his Westernized children. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her novels *Americanah*, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007 Orange Broadband Prize winner), and her short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*, presents migration—particularly female migration—as a central concern. Collectively, these works reflect the broader realities of migration in contemporary African societies, signaling the extent to which the subject permeates present-day African literary narratives.

A review of relevant scholarship on Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga* shows a remarkable milestone made by scholars who highlight the contributions of the text to migration and African literature. First, Fr. Ositadimma (2014), while commenting on the blurb of Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga*, describes the novel as “a new African fictional consommé, sweet like new wine as it were; but full of substance like an old one; having been brewed from an aged palm on a fertile African soil, yet by a sagacious tapper-son in diaspora” (blurb/back cover page). Fr. Ositadimma, in the above assertion, describes the sweetness of the novel as ‘a new win’ which was brewed from an aged palm (Africa) by the novelist (sagacious tapper-son in diaspora) who is an expatriate that penned down his experiences of living in a foreign country with a firsthand narration and ingenuity.

Ifejirika, in his Introduction note in *Woes of Ikenga*, posits that:

Among the outstanding messages in *Woes of Ikenga* is that the selfish, inhuman and poor leadership of African political, economic and religious "Rulers" is squarely responsible for the brain-drain and mass exodus of African Youths and intellectuals to Europe and other continents, where leaders are altruistic, humane and achievement inclined (2014, p. iv).

This assertion reveals that poor leadership in Nigeria (Africa) and the challenges it brings are the significant reasons these youths, under terrible experiences, die in transit in their quest for greener pastures in foreign lands.

Afuecheta (2014) in the blurb of *Woes of Ikenga*, points out that massive awareness among the Igbos at home and in the diaspora concerning the 'Greener Pasture' illusion is widespread. *Woes of Ikenga* presents a window-view to what life in Europe is like; it also presents a doorway to liberation for the victims of an "Idealistic Treasure Island" (blurb/back cover page). In agreement with this assertion, Chiemeka (2014), on the blurb/back cover of *Woes of Ikenga*, states that George tells a thought-provoking story of the struggle for survival and the illusive search for 'greener pastures' in a land that is said to be "flowing with milk and honey." Studies have also shown several works on migration, but it is worth knowing that few research has been carried out on *Woes of Ikenga*. There is however relatively limited, or no study around the psychological traumas that these migrant characters in the novel pass through in the process of creating their identity in their host lands. More so, the intricate connection of a racialised experience to mental illness with which most Nigerians in the West are evidently inundated has not received much scholarly studies. In view of the foregoing, this study investigates psychosocial dimensions of migration in Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga*.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilises Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development to examine the identity development of characters in Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga*. The psychoanalyst, Erikson, highlights the psychosocial stages in human development. Erikson's ideas are influenced by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud on his ideas about the structure and topography of personality. Whereas Freud's focus is on the conflict between *the id* and *the superego*, Erikson emphasis is on the influence of culture and society as well as conflicts that can exist inside *the ego*. Erikson claims that *the ego* grows as it effectively handles distinctly social problems. They entail developing interpersonal relationships, forging a sense of belonging in society and assisting younger generation in being ready for the future.

According to Erikson, identity is developed when people can evaluate their characteristics and compare them to the outlets for expression accessible in their surroundings. Nevertheless, role confusion results when the person

needs assistance to complete this developmental activity. It is important to note that Erikson defines a crisis as "a turning point, a key phase of enhanced susceptibility and heightened potential" in developmental psychology (1968, p. 96). On this note, Erikson asserts thus:

I shall present human growth from the point of view of the conflicts, inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity 'to do well' according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to him (1968, p. 91-92).

Erikson (1968, p. 92) emphasises the importance of sociocultural influences when he states that "The use of the phrase 'to do well' of course calls up the whole topic of cultural relativity". He was the first to show how the social world is a part of each person's psychological make-up. According to Erikson, human beings cannot be understood in isolation without connecting with his or her social environment. People and society, in his view, are intricately knit and dynamically related (1968, p. 114). This theme permeates all the Erikson's eight developmental stages, which is especially relevant to the fifth psychological stage that occurs during adolescence. Identity development is a fundamental aspect of emerging adulthood, and there is significant overlap with the Erikson-described social tasks of adolescence.

For this study, the fifth stage, "Ego Identification vs Role Confusion," of Erikson's Eight Different Stages of Psychosocial Development is employed to analyse the chosen literature. This stage is essential for this study because the identity crisis period occurs in the fifth stage as postulated by Erikson. Many personas and identities are explored by a person while in a crisis. Thus, the person either resolves the crisis at this stage for a solid identity after this period of development, or experiences identity confusion.

The relevance of Erikson's theory to this research must be considered as it reveals the various stages of identity development. It also reveals that failing to complete any of these stages results in a crisis in one's identity. One's identity changes when one leaves one's homeland region for another place. One must create a new identity to adapt to this new place ("a state of becoming"). There becomes not only a geographical displacement but also of cultural values.

Gap in Literature

Many scholars have written on migration experiences, but little attention is given to the psychological trauma migrants experience in navigating their identity in a racialised nation. More so, the novel, *Woes of Ikenga*, under discussion has not received much scholarly attention. This, thus, creates a gap in literature which envisage the essence of the current study.

Methodology

The study follows a content and context analysis approached of qualitative methodology in analysing the psychosocial development in the text under consideration. The study adopts primary and secondary sources of data with the Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga* (2014) serving as the main text under analysis. The secondary sources include books, journals, articles, documentaries and internet sources. For the purpose of data analysis, Erik Erikson's framework of Psychosocial development enables us to investigate the identity development of the characters in the novel. It enables us to reflect on the psychological impact of displacement and search for identity among African migrants in *Woes of Ikenga*. In this way, the inter/intra-personal struggles which portray the social challenges and cultural conflicts experienced by migrants in foreign countries are explored from psychosocial perspective.

Psychosocial analysis of *Woes of Ikenga*

Racial segregation has remained a significant problem affecting the Nigerian migrants as depicted in Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga*. Race is perceived differently from one nation to another. Although two individuals might share the same skin colour, their reactions to life situations are bound to differ due to significantly different historical and cultural influences from their countries. Some characters face racial discrimination due to their physical appearance and are classified as the 'other'. Thus, the diasporic protagonists in the selected novel are caught in conflicts between their native culture and a new, foreign one. Erikson's theory of identity development shows that temporal integration otherwise known as the synthesis of a person's past, present, and future selves, is a crucial indicator of good psychosocial functioning. Other researchers have used the term "self-continuity" to describe the individual's and society's capacity to develop a self-concept that reaches into the past and the future. This forms a coherent sense of self hinges that connects the person one has been to the person one is becoming. As shall be seen in the discussion, the characters in the selected text show how the ever-shifting historical and social context

in connecting the past to the future complex can serve as a significant barrier to constructing a healthy identity.

Race is seen as a significant challenge for these immigrants. Most of the characters in *Woes of Ikenga* experience racial segregation due to their physical appearance. Because of the loss of culture and dignity and the failure to attempt to regain them, Nigerian diasporic migrants in the text are caught between helplessly imitating the coloniser in an attempt at originality or returning to the roles that colonisation has imposed on the likes of them. Most of them often wear "white masks" to cope in their host countries, bending their own culture to be accepted by the coloniser and to be free of all taints of primitive native traits. This is seen as a friend of Ikenga did not waste time changing his African dress to fit into that of his host country the same day he arrived in Germany, as the author narrates:

Ikenga was now fully dressed in a European ensemble, and some who had seen him a few hours earlier when he walked into the Green Garden restaurant could barely recognise him. He was dressed in Mascot's oversize jeans and trousers suspended above his stomach with a leather belt and an extra-large t-shirt with the head of a late famous hip-hop icon boldly engraved on its front and back (2014, p. 111).

This is a typical example of wearing a white mask to gain acceptance in a host land. It can be said that this desire to attain whiteness is guided by real economic, cultural, and material disparities that constantly empower the white subject and degrade the black. In Ikenga's case, this urge to succeed and gain acceptance from his hosts remains unfulfilled as his effort to get a *kpali* in Germany through his marriage to Venessa, which later failed; he was highly devastated as the author narrates that:

... life in the white man's land was far from what he had bargained for. Indeed, his people would not throw their arms open to welcome him if he returned with only bags full of stories after many years in the white man's land. "No!" he shouted, "I have to end it all". For the first time in a long time, he wished he could lay hands on his father's double barrel to send dust to dust and ashes back to ashes ... (2014, p. 206).

Ogbonna in *Woes of Ikenga* on the other hand is a transcultural migrant who is not influenced by the memory of his homeland. Having failed in his dreams of making it in a big way in his host country, Ogbonna resigned to the fate his new foreign identity created for him and embraced the

culture of his host country. This led to the surrenderdness of his cultural identity to a supposedly superior of his host lands. This display of cultural surrenderedness reveals the level of his disconnection from his homeland and culture.

Also, Mr. Lasisi in *Woes of Ikenga* entered Europe, his dream continent, and sadly realised that the certificate he laboured to obtain in Africa and hoped to find work with was not recognised. He was also denied a work permit. Professor Freeman is another migrant who travelled to Germany to study but was faced with various challenges that resulted in his psychological trauma. After the disastrous breakup with his third wife, in his bid to acquire the so-called resident permit, loneliness always sent him out in search of anyone or a group to speak with. On one of his visits to the street, a comment from a young man concerning him "triggered a reaction from the nearly damaged neurons that transmitted signals to and fro the Professor's brain" (2014, p. 105). The street clan also argued that "Professor Freeman's problem was entirely poverty as his story was nothing to write home about after many years of schooling and working abroad". Mr. Lasisi and his wife stepped into the life of the Professors when they saw "the well-educated man heading towards the boundary of insanity.... Whatever was left of shame had vanished and a man's self-esteem had deserted him" (2014, p. 265). It was narrated that the young man had come to Europe in the good old days with a scholarship from his state government (in Nigeria) and had moved to Germany to pursue his PhD after a Jurist degree in Cyprus. His successful career had come crumbling at the centre of his life after his second bitter divorce, with all his five children from two marriages preferring to be with their European mothers. The first three from a Greek woman were already bearing the family name of their stepfather. His second wife left with the remaining two children as if it was not enough. The community bank played its own role as it also "stepped in to evict him from his bungalow apartment since he could no longer afford to continue with the agreed mortgage payment" (2014, p. 265).

As some of the migrants join the host in exploiting the blacks, Mr. Lasisi and his wife were exceptions as they had been great supports to the migrants. The narrator explains that Mr. Lasisi "had tried to establish a forum to support migrants of all races who find it difficult to cope with the physical and mental challenges that confronted them in their host country, the unending paper protocol from the authorities ... they had resorted to assisting individuals close to them with acute symptoms like dejection, depression, over-stay and psychological derailments" (2014, p. 264).

Dejection and psychological derailments are some of the traumatic experiences these characters encounter, which emanate from the racist ideologies of their host countries. These and more are the challenges blacks in the diaspora encounter in their bids to fulfill their dreams in their host countries. As Erikson (1963) notes, while the society contributes to the development of conscientiousness, parents and siblings influence the development of trust, autonomy and initiative. The migrants in our text are neglected by the leaders of their country (Nigerian Government), who are meant to protect them. Rather, it is revealed that these migrants are further victimised despite their migration to the West for greener pastures. These experiences show that Nigerians in the diaspora face multiple challenges regarding their cultural identity as they leave their country to the West for self-enhancement.

Whatever path these migrants choose, they explore the heights of extremism. Not all who choose to be liberators in their families end up achieving their goals. Some end up despondent at the other end of the extreme divide; others die trying. After Ikenga's childhood experiences of dire lack, he makes up his mind that obstacles must be cast aside to get to the other side where greener pastures lie. He is sure that the most challenging feat is getting there. He hopes that, once there, destiny will reward his resilience and quickly falls into place for him. Ikenga struggles to rise above his birth ranks. Whether he succeeds or not, it does not matter; what counts is that he dared even death to try, explores as many options as life thrust his way, and did not simply resign himself to fate. One cannot fault the young Ikenga for his 'Germany-mania'. After all, it is common knowledge in his village that Germany is the land where used cars are dumped on the road for whoever wants and when not claimed, it is believed that those same cars are disposed of as trash. Even if this sounds incredible, what else explains how his cousin Ogbonna, the headmaster's son, could afford to send a Mercedes Benz to his father within a few months of arriving in Germany? As Ikenga arrives in Germany, his father tells him through a telephone conversation that: "The ball is now in your court. All I know is that whoever steps into the white man's land is free from poverty" (2014, p. 123). This statement by Ikenga's father represents the general African belief that the Whiteman's land flows with milk and honey.

This furore begins as a tiny seed in Ikenga's young mind, then grows into the egregious conviction that the grass is undoubtedly the greenest in Germany and that his destiny is having a ball while waiting for him to come to claim it. He tries to explore other options, but after the bus episode in Nigeria, he is still determining If the gods still know how to fight for themselves and their faithful. Most of these migrants believe that, though

things are difficult, there would eventually be improvement. As they are already abroad, it is better for them to remain in their host land for a better time before they return home in a few years as a triumphant hero who has brought honour to his family name.

Another unique challenge these migrants face in their host countries is a clash of cultures, as seen in the selected novel. In *Woes of Ikenga*, an inevitable clash of culture is illustrated in Ikenga's marriage with Vanessa. Vanessa tells Ikenga, her husband, that she "feels like not to obey an African" (2014, p. 198). In this case, her disobedience to her husband was not because he was wrong but simply because he was an African. Ikenga laments that for the years he had been married to Vanessa, his German wife, she had not tested his food. Even when his wife later promised to allow their son to eat his father's food, she warned Ikenga not to "talk of visiting Umuofia". In her words "There are still a lot of diseases, violence and crime going on in that part of the world from what I see every day on television" (2014, p. 201). The couple had so many serious quarrels in the few years that they had lived together in the words of the author:

First, there had been a quarrel over amending the child's name, then circumcision, and Nne's invitation for *omugwor*. In his vicious quest to bestow an African identity on his first son, the boy was renamed Udeaja Heinrich Afamefuna. When he was rushed to the hospital a few days afterwards with some diarrhoea and symptoms of convulsion, his mother claimed that those native names may have played a part in her son's illness (2014, p. 196).

The cultural differences between the two partners were illustrated to be as far apart as their world as the two opposing cultures are "abruptly merged and are aggressively fighting for dominance" (2014, p. 201). In narrating the suffering Ikenga passes through at the hands of his German wife, the narrator adds that Ikenga:

The inherited cultural burden of caring for his aged parents and younger siblings followed him through his endless journey in search of a better life. That meant that the little income from Okazi Foods and Services had to be slashed to achieve these goals. At the same time, Vanessa carelessly spent whatever came into her account by the beginning of the month, knowing that another would come in the new month, as that was the system she was used to ever since she started taking care of herself (2014, p. 201).

All efforts to make the marriage work were fruitless as the two got together only to discover they were too different, just like their races, to be united. Ikenga struggles to perfectly unite with Vanessa leads to neurosis. This is in support of Fanon's theory of neurosis. This goes to show that this desire is guided by real economic, cultural, and material disparities that constantly empower the white subject and degrade the black. On this note, the neurotic condition manifests itself in the dream of the colonised to obtain the humanity granted to white subjects, but which aspiration clashes with the oppressed existence of the black body in a racist culture.

For Ikenga in *Woes of Ikenga*, movement away from his homeland fulfils his desire to leave behind a life of corruption, failure, *ofeke* and poverty for what he believes would be a life of comfort and fulfillment in Germany, but his hope clashes as he faces racial subjugation in his dreamland. These travelers often are not adequately prepared, just like most of the migrants in *Woes of Ikenga*, on the possible challenges they would face in their host land. The word 'host' signifies that these migrants are visitors. Jacques Derrida, in a 1999 Panel discussion at Sidney University, explains the significance of the term "host" as it pertains to the visitor. Here, Derrida delineates between the invited and uninvited guests and the role of the host in each situation. The host is described as the "Master of the house" while the guest is welcomed into the house "where the master remains master ... and the guest remains guest", the roles of master/guest remain intact with the shared knowledge that the visitor will soon be leaving. For the uninvited guest, the question of when and if the visitor will leave is unanswered. Thus, to maintain the position of the "Master of the house", the host must ask, "who are you? What are you coming for? Will you work with us? Do you have a passport? Do you have a visa" (2014, p. 13). These questions are what Ikenga and his migrant colleagues could not provide answers to (as they were not prepared) in their host country (Germany). They face, according to Ifejirika, "constant police surveillance and harassment which led to frustration, dejection, lawlessness, isolation, loss of identity, drug addiction and abused, emotion and psychological deterioration and degeneration" (2014, p. iv).

Since the migrants are guests, whether invited or uninvited must constantly answer the question(s) of the host; if they want to stay, they must maintain and follow the order of the house; maintaining their cultural identity becomes difficult if not impossible. These and more result in crises (conflict) in the lives of most diasporic characters in the selected text because of their inability to create a home/culture defined by a foreign land. This cultural conflict is often demonstrated through the migrant's language, clothing, food choice, and other external signifiers that the

migrants carry from their homeland. For most of these characters, their continued struggle to fit into the lives defined by their hosts results in a growing disillusionment with the host land.

After passing through horrible experiences to get to the "promised land" and being confronted with numerous challenges, most migrants get disappointed at the discovery that all that glitters is not gold. Mr. Lasisi in *Woes of Ikenga's* dream was shattered when he gets to his dream country for greener pastures to discover that the certificate he laboured for years was not recognised; his dream was shattered as the author asserts that:

Psychological pressure and depression had caught up with him a few years after he entered the country when he had sadly realised that the certificates he hoped to find work with were not recognised. He had been denied a work permit, and because he was too scared to engage in any criminal activity, his life had gradually deteriorated to a daily system of dressing up in a cowboy suit and taking long walks on the streets, talking and laughing to himself (2014, p. 103).

The certificate of the character above was not recognized merely because it was obtained from Africa. This experience leads Mr. Lasisi to a neurotic disorder because his dream for better life is utterly shattered.

For some of the characters in the text under study, a temporary visa is the only method of entering their dream countries legally. Once that visa expires, their status is no longer legal; this leads to the denial of their movement within and outside their host lands. For Ikenga and most travelers who could not obtain a visa, they fell into the hands of human traffickers and are faced with the horrible risks of travelling through deadly and dangerous seas, oceans and deserts to get to their dream countries. When they eventually get to the 'promised land', they are confronted with numerous racial challenges they never knew existed. All the attempts by Ikenga to understand his host country and acquire a residential permit to struggle for a better life and take care of his people at home were futile as his situation worsened as the day went by. As these thwarted dreams confront Ikenga due to the unhealthy immigration laws and their stipulations, the author narrated that his:

life was gradually becoming meaningless from all points of view, but he insisted on living since that was the only way to accomplish his endless goals. The gradual acceptance that he had let his people down and its psychological impact built up pressure in his whole

system. Letters in heavy German grammar and frightening colourful envelopes did not stop coming from different quarters. The supposed wife he had at home was bent on turning him into a lunatic (2014, p. 202).

The historical trauma Ikenga tries to escape with migration remains a part of him. Ikenga becomes a very different individual. Through his actions, one can believe he must have some antisocial personality disorder since he has no empathy. This characteristic view is reflected in multiple instances of the story. He looks pretty disconnected from the situation. We find him doing strange things because he doesn't care. Ikenga's self-imposed isolation had made him everything apart from a normal human being. Sometimes, he engages himself in lengthy conversations and laughter but maintains a worrying silence and irritating behaviour with his black brothers, and when out in the open, he sees every white man or woman as an undercover agent and a potential enemy. Because of multiple failures, Ikenga records in his bid for a better life in his host country a tough life; he develops what psychologists call a lack of achievement motivations. The author narrates that many people had differently diagnosed Ikenga and labelled a range of conditions on him, "with the most common being that he was possessed by *ajo-chi*, the evil spirit. Some choose to use English words like psychosis, melancholy and dispirited to qualify Ikenga's situation, and many others saw him as a victim of cultural burdens" (2014, p. 316). He looks pretty disconnected from the situation. We find him doing things, not necessarily for his gain, but to at least please others because he does not care.

Applying the notion of invited/uninvited visitors to this work, one could take borders as a proverbial door. These doors are locked and unlocked at the will of the master of the house. When these doors are locked, the travelling youths, according to Ifejirika, "take unimaginable risks by travelling through deadly and dangerous rivers, seas, oceans and deserts to get to their dream countries. In the process, many perish on high seas and deserts, their dead bodies nibbled clean by vultures, fishes and other wild animals" (2014, p. iii). Life as an economic migrant in the Western world is best understood by those who have lived it. Raymond Ubanese in *Woes of Ikenga* knows it all. His wife calls and writes a number of times to ignorantly blast him for abandoning them because of white women and explaining things to her made no sense since there is no way she would understand the situation. He wisely ignores her and searches further for his wellbeing. He believes that his wife would understand by the time he scales through the obstacles and returns to join her as an already-made man. A latter-day adage in Umuafor says that "he who refused to agree by

sunrise will do so by sunset". Wealth was the language that every Umuafor man understood and appreciated. The hunt for wealth knew no limitations or risks, and the incredible sense of creativity deposited in every Umuafor man and woman helped them turn adverse situations into success stories (2014, p. 260).

With disgusting stories flowing out of marriages between aliens and citizens, Ray in *Woes of Ikenga* decides to "wash his hands off the Super Mario game with his treasure hunt. The Foreign Office had lavished enormous resources trying to send him out of the country. They suddenly got tired and abandoned him to fend for himself with his "'no nation' status" (2014, p. 258).

Erikson takes a strong fundamental perspective throughout all his writing, as he examines how social, historical, and political contexts within a racialised society interact with individual development. Consequently, due to the incompetence of Nigerian leaders in fixing the nation, youths run to the West. They desire a slight touch of what it means to be wealthy, just be comfortable, to be better and to be reckoned with in society. Females are not left out, as Stella in the novel is also encouraged to go into prostitution so she can feed her seven siblings in Nigeria. However, the man, especially in the Igbo culture, is saddled with the enormous responsibility of being a man and manhood is mainly determined by wealth. The weight culture places on the man drives Ikenga to become less than the man he could have become. The search for a better life is the search of every man.

Everyone seeks wealth and at least desires some level of comfort. Ikenga wants this, just like everyone. He had known poverty, and, as culture puts it on the shoulders of every young man, Ikenga was to get his family out of the shackles of poverty. Ikenga leaves his village in Umuafor to go to Germany to meet his cousin, who lives there and is ironically believed to be studying medicine, whereas he is spending time in prison. Ikenga spends nearly a year moving from one country to another to land in Germany. More horrifying are the dangers he puts himself into by going through the deserts and sea, of which he almost loses his life by boarding an overloaded ship.

Ikenga begins to search for means by which he could obtain a resident's permit. However, first, he starts by seeking asylum and changes his name in his claim that he was from war-torn Sudan in exchange for his Nigerian identity. This results in total surrenderees of his culture, thereby disconnecting mentally from his root to live off the monthly allowance

given to asylum seekers. His friends do not help matters as most are also trying all crooked means to get the *kpali* residential permit. They sell drugs like Mascot (Ikenga's friend) or marry women who are citizens, only for most of them to be humiliated and kicked out of the marriage before they get the *Kpali*. Many who endured the heartbreak came out of the treasure hunt with a retarded thinking faculty and a coloured sticker known as *Aufenthalt* to celebrate. Those who broke off in the middle of the road lost whatever effort they might have made for the *Kpali* only to start afresh with another woman with no guarantee of success. Worse still, "there were many who landed in psychiatric hospitals along the line because the data processing unit of their brain was constantly loaded with thoughts and its super hardware simply packed up" (2014, p. 259). This is the plight of Ikenga when he marries Vanessa and even fathers a child with her, only for her to kick him out of the house before he lays his hands on a residential permit. Others, like Eze, who is briefly mentioned in the novel, get a minor pregnancy in their bid to secure a residential permit and are arrested. Mascot deals with drugs, and Uncle Ray, the cousin of Ikenga, opens a church to feed on the ignorance of other illegal immigrants after he also has been in prison and would not want to return home without a penny in his pocket. Ikenga spends twenty-two years in Germany, practically living as a vagabond, always running from the police and feeding from hand to mouth. The weight of responsibility and the love for his family keeps Ikenga struggling to make a living in Germany, but it fails. He had known what it meant to be poor. The hard conditions he faced in Umuafor pushes him to desire to succeed, even if it meant damning the consequences and getting outside the country. Even if it involved cheap labour, lies, humiliation and sexual escapades with foreign women, Ikenga wants to pay the price to be free from poverty. He finally breaks down mentally and returns home with just a handbag.

In *Woes of Ikenga*, Ikenga was highly exploited by Osagie, one of the African travelling agents in Libya who was paid to help Ikenga cross over from Benghazi to the Whiteman's land. The author described him and his colleagues thus:

Osagie and his extensive criminal syndicates, capable of packaging even chimpanzees with human travelling documents and seeing them through the ports of the bribe-stricken borders of the so-called third world countries, had not bothered to render Ikenga the services which Stella paid for" (2014, p. 90).

The above shows that many Africans take advantage of the horrible experiences their fellow Africans pass through in their bid to cross over to

the Whiteman's land to exploit them. Osagie uses the money sent to him by Stella to help Ikenga cross over to Germany for his personal interest without rendering the service he was paid for. The narrator earlier narrates in the text:

Osagie had secured an apartment in the area with his Libyan residential permit and the influence of his long-time friendship with a close confidant of the dictatorial regime. He took Ikenga in and lavished some Libyan Dinars on him with some of the money that Stella sent. Ikenga's last days in Benghazi were his first taste of paradise. Unknown to him, the money Osagie spent every evening in secret brothels on his excess drinking and shisha habits was actually money sent for his travel documents and air ticket (2014, p. 89).

These and more are the inhuman experiences some of these travelers pass through because of the distance between the human traffickers and some of their contract givers who channel money directly to them. These agents spend the money leaving these travelers to languish in the horrifying adventure by passing through over twenty-hour journey across the high sea to get to Italy.

Mr. Raymond Ubanese also exploits his fellow aliens through his church, 'RAY POWER MIRACLE FOUNTAIN'. Through the church, he feeds on these aliens' ignorance by assuring them God had brought them into the place and given them the land flowing with milk and honey. He urges them to bring money to the church for their breakthrough to rub off their little earning. As Ikenga was invited to the inauguration ceremony of the church, he wonders how:

People had not only soiled their names but also dared to involve the name of Chukwu, the Great Chukwu, the Great Being, in their quest for material wealth. Ray, whom he knew well, was about to become the latest "man of god" like countless others exploiting the business opportunity in a world where demand for all sorts of breakthroughs was increasing. His unofficial title of '*Maduro* of no nation' was about to be anointed and officially transformed to 'holy man of no nation' (2014, p. 269).

As a migrant who finds it very difficult to cope in his host country, Uncle Ray resorted to using fake prophecies to exploit his fellow migrants for the little they had acquired in their host land.

Seen from a global lens, there is no doubt that Nigerians migrate to the West as a result of the hardship and violence being experienced in their home country. They are being neglected by the Nigerian society, which is meant to protect them instead of victimised after moving to their host lands. The state of irregular migrants in Europe is nothing to write home about. Oan *et al.* "Slavery and Freedom as Identities in Tony Morison's *Beloved*", likens the state of the irregular migrants to that of the 19th-century enslaved Africans in the hands of American white plantation slaveholders (2019). They live like invisible people simply because they are afraid to be caught, so they rush towards poorly paid jobs.

The dread of being discovered drives them farther into hiding and compels them to choose low-paying, frequently dangerous, and possibly illegal employment, according to Maria Duckham's documentation. In terms of identification, it compels the people involved to reject their identity and cut themselves apart from their heritage. They must pretend to be someone else in order to exist, and every choice they make to forge their new identity is detrimental to their own self, therefore this is equivalent to psychological suicide (2014, p. 43).

This kind of surrenderedness of identity is what is equated to psychological suicide in the above assertion. As an illustration, Ikenga's causing, Mr. Raymon Ogonnia Ubanese, changes his name to Uncle Ray, which sounds more foreign than his real name. He did this just to be called what could be accepted and help him gain acceptance in his host country. He even proudly tells Ikenga, who had been searching for him with the name Ogonnia, "I forgot to tell you, Everyone calls me Uncle Ray here" (2014, p. 131).

Conclusion

In his diasporic space, Ndubisi has become transcultural but struggle to retain his cultural identity and contact with his homeland by having the settings, characters and events in the text woven around Nigeria. The deliberate acts of this writer smack of an attempt at providing a psychological cushion for himself in the face of alienation in his host country and a feeling of severance from his homeland. This also provides a psychological bond between him (the author) and his homeland.

Erikson presents human psychosocial and developmental stages as he explains the different interrelated phases that individuals experience throughout their lives. As Erikson notes, it is evident from the novel in question that the majority of the characters were denied many of the

psychosocial and developmental necessities of their native country, particularly throughout the most critical periods of their lives. Therefore, they could have been able to achieve actualization and cultivate a positive sense of self if the requirements had been satisfied at those points. Furthermore, these migrants' development is adversely affected by the trauma they bear as a result of the violence they encounter.

The demonstration of how racism, alongside stereotyping, economic exploitation and oppression, alienation, nostalgic feelings, etc., are experienced by African immigrants and their effects on their sense of identity have been analysed. There is no doubt that diasporic studies will shape the course of literature in years to come because migration discourses are still very much relevant (as the number of people leaving their homes in quest of better opportunities is rising quickly) and, thus, will provide more materials for African literature.

Positive or unpleasant diasporic experiences are possible. If living conditions in the host nations are stable and improved upon, migration experience will be successful for many Africans. However, due to the hard realities encountered frequently, it may come with unanticipated truths tinged with complete disappointment. Loneliness, culture shock and gaps, language obstacle, xenophobia, and racial and colour prejudice are some of these realities. As a result of these difficulties, some Africans are forced to migrate back to their countries of origin, a phenomenon known as return migration. Others, on the other hand, remain in their host lands because they are unable to confide in their families and must learn to deal with the hopelessness and broken dreams. Because African communities are so tightly interwoven, Nigerian community living and affiliation differs from how life is organized in other countries, particularly in the West.

According to the chosen novel, Nigerian migrants have identity crises and other difficulties as a result of this cultural conflict, Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga* provides a compelling narrative to explore Nigerian migration experiences through Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory. By focusing on key psychosocial stages, the analysis reveals the complex interplay of psychological and social factors that shape the migrant experience. The protagonist's journey underscores the profound impact of migration on identity, relationships, and personal growth, offering valuable insights into the psychosocial dynamics of the Nigerian diaspora. This study enhances our understanding of how migrants navigate the challenges of cultural dislocation and social integration, highlighting the critical role of resilience and support systems in their psychosocial development.

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