

## Expressing the Wound: Insecurity and the Human Psyche in Selected Nigerian Novels

Oghenekaro Ilo

### Abstract

The study of insecurity in literature is mostly centred on emotional, psychological and physical insecurity. This paper foregrounds that physical insecurity, which involves acts of violence, is preceded by emotional and psychological insecurity. Basing its argument on the psychoanalytic literary theory, the paper draws illustrations from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958); Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006), and Cheluchi Onuobia's *The Son of the House* (2019), to show how writers have expressed the wounds of insecurity and state that intrinsic insecurity is mainly a by-product of the motif of fear, anxiety, lack of trust and unfulfilled dreams. When intrinsic insecurity is firmly established, it then breeds acts of violence which cause harm to the character involved and others in the society. These noticeable harms to others constitute what this paper refers to as physical insecurity. These can be injury as in the case of Kambili; crime, as in the case of Okonkwo and Beatrice; and, death in the case of Okonkwo, Eugene, Auntie Julie and Mama Nathan. The paper posits that the study of the link between emotional and psychological insecurity and physical insecurity is necessary in the course of finding solutions to the problems of insecurity in society.

**Keywords: Insecurity, Emotional, Psychological, Intrinsic, Physical**

### Introduction

Critics have studied insecurity as it affects the development of the human condition and society at large. In these studies (Sverke et al., 2002, p.243; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996, p.587; Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997, p.323), insecurity is treated extrinsically as it affects the human condition. For instance, while Sverke et al. (2002) see insecurity as "the subjectively experienced anticipation of a fundamental involuntary event ..." (p.243), Rosenblatt and Ruvio argue that it is "an overall concern about the future existence ..." (p.587). In the same vein, Hartley et al. (1991) explain insecurity as an external threat or "a discrepancy between the level of security a person experiences and the level he or she might prefer" (p.7). In all these definitions, insecurity is seen as a manifestation of an external threat to human existence or condition. Most times, the link between the insecurity of the psyche and the externalization of such in the overall insecurity scenario in society is overlooked. This is what this paper hopes to explore. This paper is a research into the border between emotional and psychological insecurity and physical insecurity and the manifestation of insecurity physically. As such, the paper argues that it is the insecurity of the human psyche that fuels physical insecurity in society.

In his article on the rise of insecurity in Nigeria as a result of social unrest, Pepple (2021) opines that there has been a shift in the source of the social insecurity from "individuals

to social structures – the larger economic, political, and social patterns of a society ...” (p.7). Pepple’s presentation is that sociologists have moved from studying the individual as the basis for understanding the cause of social insecurity to that of the social structures of society. In doing so, sociologists tend to proffer solutions to the larger society and thereby hope "to steer people away from unproductive scapegoating of individuals to an awareness of the need for social change” (p.9). Pepple’s views are understandable in terms of social construct in the path to proffering solutions to the problems of insecurity, it negates the individualistic approach to that of the group approach and has created a chasm in the intuitive understanding of insecurity. This is implied by his concluding statement that insecurity is a social problem and that "poverty of opportunities and lack of basic amenities to enhance the survival of an individual will remain its unseen sponsors" (20). In this vein, the limitation of Pepple's argument to the group approach follows the pattern of externalization of the issue of insecurity thereby neglecting the emotional and psychological changes and processes that combine to make an individual insecure leading to the manifestation of insecurity on a larger scale.

Nasiru Zubairu (2020) follows the same sociological trend when he refers to insecurity as the "lack of safety or the evidence of danger; lack of stability; disturbed; lack of protection and unsafe ..." (p.3). In Zubairu's view, insecurity, apart from the external threat to the safety of a person can also be manifested in "anything from childhood, disturbing situations, mistreatment, and individual fears" (p.4). Though in his subsequent discussions on the subject of insecurity, Zubairu does not dwell on the intrinsic manifestation of insecurity in the individual, his mention of "individual fears" is certainly close to the issue of emotional and psychological insecurity bedevilling characters in contemporary Nigerian literature. This is the crux of this paper; the relationship between emotional and psychological insecurity and physical insecurity deserves closer scrutiny. Illustrations are taken from Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2006) and Onuobia’s *The Son of the House* (2019) to argue that the emotional and psychological insecurity of the individual form the basis for the manifestation of the physical insecurity prevalent in the society. In this vein, the paper adopts the psychoanalytical theoretical framework to draw instances from the selected novels to show the link between emotional and psychological insecurity and the manifestation of physical insecurity in society.

## **Insecurity and the Human Situation in Selected Nigerian Novels**

Though this paper is not just about the causes of emotional and psychological insecurity, it is necessary to highlight some of the causes to understand the movement from emotional and psychological insecurity to physical insecurity. Most times, the fundamental processes that trigger emotional and psychological insecurity herein referred to as intrinsic insecurity are physical and biological. But this paper is not out to relate these biological processes. Instead, the paper details the impact of the biological processes on the behaviour or physiological make-up of the individual as it pushes them to physical actions that endanger themselves and other people in society. An instance of biological processes that lead to intrinsic insecurity is fear. Fear is a biological process of reacting unpleasantly to a danger or threat (Ohman 2000, p.574). Fear as an intrinsic process is usually triggered by an external situation that is dangerous or threatening. Fear is a biological process that can result in a flight to safety or a fight to conquer the dangerous. As such, it can be inferred that fear is a means of survival for an organism (Olsson 2007, p.1097). Delagran (2016) explains that “once we sense a potential danger, our body releases hormones that ... slow or shut down functions not needed for survival ... sharpen functions that might help us survive ... our heart rates increases, and blood flows to muscles ...” (p. 3). The story of Okonkwo in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* highlights the processes that Delagran mentions about fear and the movement from intrinsic insecurity to physical damage to himself and the society at large.

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* narrates the story of the protagonist, Okonkwo, the son of Unoka. The novel follows the growth of Okonkwo from a successful farmer to a tragic hero at a time when the Nigerian society is undergoing changes as a colonial society. The pressure from his failures and those from the colonial government combine to push Okonkwo into committing suicide. In revisiting the Okonkwo story, this paper hopes to draw an analogy from the events in Okonkwo's life to portray how fear can generate intrinsic insecurity and how when not checked this can push an individual into creating an insecure society. In the novel, Okonkwo witnesses several events that shape his emotional and psychological makeup and help to install a perpetual state of fear in his body. According to the narrator, Okonkwo's "whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness” (p.9). The fear felt by Okonkwo is more than the one posed by supernatural occurrences. Instead, in the words of the narrator, Okonkwo's fear "was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to

resemble his father" (pp.9,10). The reference to Okonkwo's father is to unravel the source of the perpetual fear that pushes Okonkwo in all his endeavours.

Unoka, Okonkwo's father is a gentleman who takes everything easy in life. He does not struggle to achieve the lofty ideas cherished by society. As a result of his idleness, he becomes a chronic debtor. When he died, Okonkwo "neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife" (13). The implication of the miserable life of Unoka on Okonkwo is that the latter becomes engrossed in hard work to erode the indelible legacy of poverty left by his father. But a more permanent mark Unoka's lifestyle left on Okonkwo is fear. Psychologically, Okonkwo associates everything his father stood for with failure. Therefore, Okonkwo becomes fearful of not being successful materially in life. This dread of failure is revealed when in a kindred meeting, Okonkwo responds to a man who contradicts him that "this meeting is for men" (p.19). The man in question, like Unoka his father, has not taken any title. In this exchange, it is the fear of failure that pushes Okonkwo to exhibit impatient and disdainful behaviour toward those he considers materially unsuccessful.

As seen earlier, the two paths that are created by intrinsic fear are either flight or fight. Okonkwo chooses the latter and the biological processes engendered by fear propels Okonkwo to succeed in his farming business. Fear makes "our heart rate increase, and blood flows to muscle ..." (Delagran, 2016, p.3). In the case of Okonkwo, the internal fear of failure pushes him to become a hard worker who is numb to dangers and failure. His only thought is how to conquer the fear of failure. Therefore, "during the planting season, Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow to until the chicken went to roost. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue" (p.10). In comparison, his wives and children "were not as strong, and so they suffered" (p.10). The comparison is to establish the fact that it is the factor of the internal fear in Okonkwo that is pushing blood into the muscle, thereby making him stronger than others. This is to enable him to fight the cause of the fear; it is this fight that enables Okonkwo to become successful as a farmer who started from scratch. However, despite his accomplishments through hard work, Okonkwo still nurses an intrinsic fear that is inadvertently manifested physically, then making him pose security threats to himself and society in general. The first manifestation of an emotionally and psychologically insecure Okonkwo creating physical insecurity in the society is in the killing of Ikemefuna.

Ikemefuna is to be sacrificed to the gods but as the time for his offering is delayed, Okonkwo becomes his foster father. After living with Okonkwo for three years, Ikemefuna has "become wholly absorbed into his new family" (p.37). In the words of the narrator, "the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced" that Ikemefuna should be sacrificed to the gods (p.40). As is the custom in Umuofia, the elders will take the ill-fated child outside of Umuofia and kill him there. In an apparent attempt to redeem Okonkwo from what he may have diagnosed as an inherent case of an emotional and psychologically insecure figure, Ogbuefi Ezeudu visits Okonkwo on the eve of the day for the sacrifice. According to Ezeudu, "that boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death ... he calls you father" (p.40). Despite this warning, Okonkwo goes ahead to kill Ikemefuna even when the boy cries out that "my father, they have killed me!" (43). In explaining the reason for the murderous reaction of Okonkwo, the narrator says that "dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak" (43). This event heralds the shift in the character of Okonkwo an intrinsic insecure person to a lethal person in the Umuofia society. The outcome of this transformation will be seen later.

As the African socio-political and economic situation becomes complex, so also, is the identification of characters who are emotional and psychologically insecure is going to be difficult. This complexity is manifested in the situation of Beatrice in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006). The story of Beatrice, Eugene Achike's wife and mother of the protagonist, Kambili, amplifies the idea that anxiety in a relationship also creates emotionally and psychologically insecure persons. *Purple Hibiscus* is the story of the transformation of the family of Eugene Achike from the hypocrisy of being religiously devoted to Catholicism to the adoption of the freedom of choice in religious devotion. Though this transformation is achieved on the altar of suffering, murder and imprisonment of the son, the idea of the story is to create a link between the emotional and psychological trauma resulting from the rejection of the pre-colonial African culture and the need to balance the emergent western ideologies with African traditions. The change in the lives of the people also coincides with the transformation from free speech to censorship in the national polity. The result is death for antagonists of the new military regime and exile for survivors. The academic brain drain symbolized by the immigration of Auntie Ifeoma to the United States adds to the dislocation in the country in general and the lives of the characters in particular. As for Beatrice, the imprisonment of her son, Jaja, instead of her, aggravates the depressed feelings that made her murder her husband.

The events surrounding the rise of the emotional and psychological insecurity of Beatrice can be traced to her anxiety over the stability of her relationship with her husband. Though, the narrator does not describe the personality of Beatrice like the narrator in *Things Fall Apart*, the little glimpses of the slide from an emotionally secure person to that of an emotionally and psychologically insecure person follow the trend of the weakening of her relationship with Eugene, her husband due to the inability of Beatrice to bear more children. One reason for the glide of Beatrice into an insecure person emotionally is the physical stress resulting from the incessant beatings she receives from her husband. As usual with the embedded narrative of the issues between Eugene and Beatrice by the narrator, the events surrounding these frequent fights are gleaned from the evidence of Kambili, the protagonist. According to Kambili in one such instance, she explains that she hears "swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door. I imagined the door had got stuck and Papa was trying to open it ... I was nineteen when the sounds stopped ... We stood at the landing and watched Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder like a jute sack of rice .... (41). Most times, these fights happened inside the room so the children do not know the cause. But he who hides the axe in the forest cannot hide the woods procured by the town. As such, the impact of the fights is that Beatrice always suffers miscarriages. The loss of her unborn baby as a result of the beating by her husband demoralizes Beatrice's trust in her relationship with her husband. As she grapples with this domestic onslaught from her husband, the extended family members of Eugene begin to add to Beatrice's depressed state.

In one of the rare moments where the reader hears the voice of Beatrice, she opens up to Aunty Ifeoma. In this instance, Eugene's nuclear family has travelled to Abba, their village, to celebrate the Christmas celebrations. Auntie Ifeoma is also there with her family for the annual ritual. In a moment of compassion for Beatrice who is already beginning to feel the pangs of emotional and psychological insecurity, Auntie Ifeoma calls Beatrice in a moment of distraction. In the discussion that ensues, Beatrice reveals one of the reasons she is anxious about her marriage with Eugene. Shockingly, Beatrice reveals that "Umunna will always say hurtful things ... Did our umunna not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his stature cannot have just two children? If people like you had not been on my side then ..." (83). Beatrice is suffering from anxiety about the well-being of her marriage and at the same time enduring domestic violence.

At another time, Beatrice narrates another incident that portrays the lack of security in her emotional and psychological makeup. This time, her children are in Enugu, at Auntie Ifeoma's place. Later, the children and Aunty Ifeoma are surprised to see Mama as she is fondly called by her kids, in Enugu. When asked the reason for the surprise visit, Beatrice answers that "I do not know if my head is correct ... I got back from the hospital today. The doctor told me to rest, but I took Eugene's money and asked Kelvin to take me to the park. I hired a taxi and came here." (p.253). This episode leaves a sore taste in the mouth of Ifeoma who probes further for the reason why Beatrice is hospitalized. In reply, Beatrice narrates that "you know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *nne?* Your father broke it on my belly ... My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was he could do to save it" (253). The twin ideas of anxiety about her marriage and that of domestic violence create a feeling of ambivalence in the mental psyche of Beatrice whether to love Eugene or leave him. Later the next day, Eugene calls that Beatrice and his children should come back home. One would have thought that after the near-death situation she survives, Beatrice will hesitate to go back to Eugene. But that is not to be as Beatrice resists Auntie Ifeoma's insistence that she stays a few more days. In stating her reason for returning to Eugene, Beatrice replies emphatically that "where will I go if I leave Eugene's house? ... Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even not to bother paying a bride price?" (355) Beatrice is in a binary situation. One side is fed up with the relationship but the other side is fearful of the consequence of the breakup of her marriage. The insecurity that will arise if she is thrown out of her marriage, for her, is greater than the emotional and psychological insecurity she is passing through in the relationship. In this state of intrinsic insecurity, Beatrice is ripe to resort to physical insecurity to resolve issues troubling her relationship.

The issue of intrinsic insecurity is not limited to Beatrice in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. Her husband Eugene Achike is also a victim of emotional and psychological insecurity. Apart from the family challenges, the burden of which he bears alone, there is also the thorny issue of religious devotion. As a devout catholic, Eugene tries to balance his new faith with his traditional past. In trying to negotiate the murky waters of combining his traditional roots with the Christian faith, Eugene is torn between loyalty to his faith and his family roots. The frequent friction with his sister, Auntie Ifeoma; the rejection of everything that has to do with traditionalism including the rejection of his father, and the excruciating impact of self-denial and the torture of the family

members to instil conformity become the impetuses that give rise to the intrinsic insecurity suffered by Eugene. As the head of the family, there is also the burden of balancing his personal views and ambition with the national interest. The new military regime believes in censorship of the media which conflicts with Eugene's idea of free speech. The resultant altercation with the military regime results in the murder of Ade Coker, the editor of the *Standard Newspaper*, owned by Eugene. These pressures leave Eugene with a dual personality. When he is outside, Eugene projects an image of a calm and philanthropic person but at home, he is vicious and savage. The result of the intrinsic insecurity in the behaviour of Eugene goes beyond the dual personality as he progresses toward using physical insecurity to solve most of his challenges.

If anxiety in a relationship can cause devastating levels of intrinsic insecurity, then unfulfilled dreams in a relationship are a purveyor of emotional and psychological insecurity which can quickly develop into physical insecurity. This is the situation that causes intrinsic insecurity in characters like Mama Nathan, Madam Julie and Eugene Obiechina in Onuobia's *The Son of the House* (2019). The novel details the life story of two women, Madam Julie Obiechina and Mrs Nwabulu Ifechi, who are kidnapped together and placed in a one-room apartment till their people pay the ransom to free them (Adofu & Alhassan 2018, p.101). It is during this confinement that both ladies shared their life stories. As the plot moves back and forth through the use of flashback and foreshadowing techniques, the narrator portrays the vicissitudes of life both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the narrator reflects on the saying that harm done to one affects all through the travails of Nwabulu from childhood to adolescence. The themes of youthful exuberance and teenage pregnancy are highlighted as some of the factors that limit girls from attaining their dreams. Horizontally, the story also depicts the relationship between the high and low socio-economic classes in the society where the story is set. As the poor grapples with poverty and want, so also do the rich fight with the problems of indulgence and lack of fulfilment. In the end, the downtrodden have risen to take their share through nefarious activities like armed robbery and kidnapping as reflected in the story of *The Son of the House*.

As it is, intrinsic insecurity is not discernible by seeing the physical features of a character. As such, a character can appear satisfied and physically fit but internally such a character can be suffering from intrinsic insecurity. Such is the case of Eugene Obiechina. Eugene is a successful businessman who is happily married with children. He has buildings all



over the country and his business acumen cuts across all the nooks and crannies of the country. In summing the activities of Eugene as a well-to-do person, Julie says that,

once he had given a man the keys to a car he had just alighted from because the man, a taxi driver, had lost his car when it was engulfed by fire and he had no money to pay hospital bills to secure the release of his wife, who had delivered by caesarean section, and his baby, both of whom were detained at the hospital until he could raise the money (p.171).

The extent of Eugene's wealth is captured in the compressed metaphor that "Orimili agwu agwu. The ocean never runs out of water" (p.172). Notwithstanding this enormous wealth, Eugene is not secure as something is troubling him emotionally and psychologically amidst the façade of security.

Though Eugene is married and his wife has two children for him, there is a challenge in Eugene's life. According to the narrator "Eugene's wife had suffered several miscarriages after their two children, both girls ..." (p.152). Thus, according to Julie, "Eugene spoke with deep regret about being unable to father a son ... Once he wondered aloud about the possibility of having a son with me ... Would I be able to give him a son?" (p.152) Without a son, Eugene is just living an unfulfilled life. The importance of the son in the life of Eugene is encapsulated in his yearning that "he, Eugene Obiechina, would give his sons not only the name of the great Obiechina, who had been warriors and great farmers and titled men since time immemorial; he would give them money too (p.151). In fact, Eugene wants to leave a legacy behind just as his late father did. But without a son, his dream is not going to materialise because the female children are not worth leaving a legacy behind for. This makes Eugene emotionally and psychologically troubled; he is intrinsically insecure. This unfulfilled dream is aggravated by the humiliation he suffers daily from his relatives. In the words of Julie, "I heard the pain in his voice when he said this ..." because whenever Eugene narrates the insolent words he hears from his relatives that he is not man enough to sire a male child, she feels that he is vulnerable or emotionally and psychologically insecure (p.152). If the unfulfilled dream of Eugene is making him insecure, then the inability of Julie, his wife, to get pregnant becomes a spur that activates Julie's intrinsic insecurity.

Julie is educated and works as a teacher in one of the secondary schools in the Enugu metropolis. Julie lives a middle-class life but she is not married. Though, according to

her, she "had not pinned for a man, though there were times when I'd longed for hands to brush across my breast or even to lift them, heavy as they were, and admire them lovingly" (p.130). It is in this state that she meets Eugene and they fall in love. However, there is a hindrance. Eugene has no son to keep his legacy. Therefore, there is instant pressure on Julie to get pregnant, give birth to a son and at the same time, win Eugene's heart and wealth. But as the relationship gets on, Julie's hope of getting pregnant for Eugene begins to fade. As Eugene is already married, it is therefore necessary that for Julie to be able to win Eugene's heart, she has to get pregnant with a boy child. According to Julie, the issue "had seemed beyond me ... desperate as I was to move to the planet of married people – to think of extending our quiet affair into an awkward polygamous marriage" is unthinkable (p.152). It is at this stage that Julie begins to suffer from intrinsic insecurity. But Julie is not going for fate to decide her future. Instead, she consciously plans to redeem her situation and in doing so, she unconsciously moves her intrinsic insecurity into a physical one by accepting to steal a male child which providence has thrust to her.

If Julie's situation is dire and pushing her to perpetrate acts of physical insecurity of stealing a male child, then the circumstances of Mama Nathan is incredibly ominous. With the use of the flashback technique, the narrator explains that Mama Nathan is a mother of just one son. The son, Nathan, is a truck driver. He is the only hope of the mother. In the culture where the story is set, a son is regarded as the child of the house. He marries and gives birth to children who will propagate the name of the family since it is taken that the girl-child will always bear the name of the husband's family, thus belonging there. As such, Mama Nathan, though having only one child, is satisfied that he is a boy. She is expectant of him marrying and siring children for her. But this is not to be as the only son dies in an auto accident. As she is a widow, the devastation the loss wrought on Mama Nathan is summed by the narrator that "the death of her son devastated her. For weeks it seemed that the entire village reverberated with the sound of her weeping and wailing, a heartbreaking sound" (91). From the security of having a son that will bring more children, Mama Nathan is now emotionally and psychologically insecure about her empty future. The choice she makes to redeem this prospect leads her directly to physical violence that portends danger to others in society.

### **Transforming the Motive**

As the paper has shown, situations in life have caused people who have hitherto been secure to become emotionally and psychologically insecure. The paper details the ways

characters like Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Beatrice and Eugene in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and Eugene, Julie and Mama Nathan in Onuobia's *The Son of the House*. The fall of these characters into emotional and psychologically insecurity is the first stage of the movement from intrinsic insecurity to physical insecurity. When the mind is insecure, then, plans are automatically engineered to secure one's position. For Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, he could not deactivate the energy flowing into his hands to avoid committing murder. He killed Ikemefuna because "he was afraid of being thought weak" (p.43). The subsequent exile which coincides with the establishment of the colonial government aggravates Okonkwo's emotional and psychological insecurity. In the end, Okonkwo kills a colonial government agent and, commits suicide thereafter. Apart from the death of the agent which is irreparable, a lot of damage befalls the community of Umuofia which "shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land" (p.147). This is the extent of damage to Okonkwo's movement from intrinsic insecurity to physical insecurity.

As subtle and covert as Eugene and Beatrice's intrinsic insecurities, the outcome is nonetheless, as physically traumatizing as that of Okonkwo. Like Okonkwo, Eugene's inability to combine his Christianity and traditional roots find vent in the unleashing of terror on his immediate family. Aside from other numerous acts of physical violence to his wife and children, this particular act of violence described by the narrator measures the extent to which Eugene has propelled from intrinsic insecurity to physical acts of insecurity. According to the narrator, the visit of Eugene's father, who is a traditionalist to the Nsukka home of Auntie Ifeoma where Eugene's children are holidaying so miffs Eugene that he asked Kambili to enter a bathtub. Then asking Kambili to "strive for perfection", Eugene "poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were experimenting... He was crying now, tears streaming down his face ... The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed" (p.201). Intrinsic insecurity has seared Eugene's conscience. He is "holding me with one wide hand, pouring the water carefully with the other" (p.201). It is this height of physical insecurity in the home that prompts Beatrice to join the bandwagon of moving from intrinsic insecurity to physical insecurity. In her words, "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" (p.294). Eugene, who until now abhors anything traditional, ironically dies from ingesting a traditional substance. The act of physical violence by Beatrice rubs on her family when Jaja, her son, takes responsibility for the murder

and is remanded in prison. The collapse of the family can therefore be explained as the aftermath of intrinsic insecurity developing into physical insecurity.

In Cheluchi Onuobia's *The Son of the House*, the impact of the movement from intrinsic insecurity to physical violence by the three characters follows the same trend. The outcome is always excruciating for those involved and others who are not even party to the situation. As for Eugene, the husband of Julie, he dies first among the trio. Intrinsic insecurity leads to depression when it is not vented out physically. As for Julie, her intrinsic insecurity leads her to steal a son to give to Eugene as the heir apparent. In the end, the realization that it is the child of Mrs Nwabulu Ifechi, her bosom friend who is kidnapped with her, that she has stolen leads to a cardiac arrest that ends her life. In the case of Mama Nathan, she took a four-month-old baby from the mother and runs to Enugu. Mama Nathan died in Enugu and the little child is stolen by Julie. Summing the way emotional and psychological insecurity lead to physical insecurity, Nwabulu remonstrates in a mode of stream of consciousness that "the callousness of these kidnapers made me angry. How could they keep an old woman in this state? They too were making choices like Mama Nathan had made, like Auntie Julie, hurting others because they could not have what they needed" (278). The physical insecurity caused by the trio's urge to secure them from intrinsic insecurity can better be imagined than described.

### **Conclusion**

The actions of the characters are used to illustrate the argument that physical insecurity is preceded by emotional and psychological insecurity which is intrinsically embedded. It is the venting of this energy to achieve a measure of security that most times, promotes insecurity. As the paper has established, acts of physical insecurity are often perpetuated by those who are emotionally and psychologically insecure. This conforms with Dan Brennan's (2020) words that "insecurity often bleeds over from one area of life into another" (6). Brennan's words sum up the argument of this paper that emotional and psychological insecurity breeds physical insecurity.

### **References**

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Adu, I. (2018). "Insecurity and Economic Development in Nigeria". *Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 9, No.18. pp 101-111.
- Adichie, C. (2006). *Purple Hibiscus*. Kachifo Ltd.

- Brennan, D. (2020). "Signs of Insecurity". *WebMD*. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/signs-insecurity...>
- Davy, J. A., Kinicki, A. J., & Scheck, C. E. (1991). Developing and testing a model of survivor responses to layoffs. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 38, pp.302-317.
- Delagran, L. (2016). Impact of fear and anxiety. *Taking charge of your health and well-being*. The University of Minnesota. <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/impact-fear-and-anxiety-...>
- Hartley, J., & Klandermans, B., & van Vuuren, T. (1991). *Job insecurity: Coping with jobs at risk*. Sage.
- Ohman, A. (2000). "Fear and Anxiety: Evolutionary, Cognitive, and Clinical Perspectives". In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.). *Handbook of Emotions*. (pp. 573-593). The Guilford Press. pp...
- Ohman, A. (2000). Fear and anxiety: Evolutionary, cognitive, and clinical perspectives. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.). *handbook of emotions*. (pp. 573-593). The Guilford Press.
- Olsson, A. P. (2007). Social learning of fear. *Nature Neuroscience*, 10(9), pp.1095-1102.
- Onuobia, C. (2019). *The Son of the House*. Parresia Publishers Ltd.
- Pepple, B. (2021). "The Issue of Insecurity in Nigeria." *The Guardian* 08 July 2021. Retrieved 18 February 2021. <http://guardian.ng/opinion/the-issue-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/>
- Rosenblatt, Z., & Ruvio, A. (1996). A test of a multidimensional model of job insecurity: The case of Israeli teachers. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 17, pp.587-605.
- Sverke, M., Katharina Naswall & Johnny Hellgren. (2006), "Job Insecurity: A Literature Review." SALTSA – *Joint Programme for Working Life Research in Europe*. The National Institute for Working Life and the Swedish Trade Unions in Cooperation.
- Sverke, M., Hellgren, J., & Naswall, K. (2002). No security: A meta-analysis and review of job insecurity and its consequences, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 7, pp.242-264.
- Voelz, J. (2017). *The Poetics of Insecurity*. Cambridge University Press
- Zubairu, N. (2020). "Rising Insecurity in Nigeria: Causes and Solution". *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, Vol. 19 (4). [www.infinitypress.com](http://www.infinitypress.com). Info