

Article

Communication and Personality: Mother-Daughter Relationship in Yejide Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Ibiene Evelyn Iboroma

Department of English Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria; iibiene@yahoo.com

Abstract

Communication in the parent-child relationship plays a vital role in nurturing the physical, emotional, and social development of the child. It fuels their bond and provides support for the child especially the adolescent child which determines his/her future personality. Framed on Communication Patterns Theory, the paper explores the mother-daughter relationship in Yejide Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* which has scarcely been done. The aim is to show if the communication style adopted by mothers in their relationship with their adolescent daughters influences their future personality. The paper demonstrates that the poor style of communication adopted by Bisoye (*Daughters...*) and Pauline (*The Bluest Eye*) in their relationship with their adolescent daughters, Moraye and Pecola respectively, influence the development of their personalities. Both of them slide into severe depression with a concomitant low self-esteem. The paper concludes that ineffective communication in mother-daughter relationships is one of the major causes of depression in adolescent girls. Given the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship in the development of the personality of adolescent girls, the paper recommends that mothers should adopt open and frequent communication with their daughters creating a climate where the girl child experiences warmth and intimacy which is a boost to self-esteem.

Keywords: Communication, personality, mother-daughter relationship, family communication patterns theory

Introduction

Communication in the parent-child relationship plays a vital role in nurturing the physical, emotional, and social development of the child. It fuels their bond and provides support for the child, especially the adolescent child, which determines his/her future personality. Kshipra Moghe and Anagha Lavalekar posit that "the parental communication style creates an impact on various aspects related to development in their adolescent children" (4). Communication is therefore a fundamental aspect of family structure that cannot be ignored when discussing parent-child relationships. It is a very important building block in constructing a harmonious parent-child relationship. Leonid M. Popov and Ruth A. Ilesanmi confirm this:

Communication is the engine of social relationships and a necessity for all relationships. It involves listening, availability, understanding, mutual respect, and emotion..., it makes the interaction between parents and children strong and effective, and it contributes significantly to creating understanding and mutual acceptance between parents and children. (255)

Kristin Zolten submits:



Good communication skills will benefit children for their entire lives. Children begin to form ideas and beliefs about themselves based on how their parents communicate with them. When parents communicate effectively with their children, they are showing them respect. Children then begin to feel that they are heard and understood by their parents, which is a boost to self-esteem. On the other hand, communication between parents and children that is ineffective or negative can lead children to believe that they are unimportant, unheard, or misunderstood. Such children may also come to see their parents as unhelpful and untrustworthy. (1)

The aforementioned is also applicable to a mother-daughter relationship which is the focus of this study.

This study also reviewed scholarly critiques of Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path* and Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. However, only a few were examined because of space limitations beginning with Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path*. Shamaila Dodhy highlights the intrusive thoughts Morayo, the protagonist of the novel, experiences as a result of sexual abuse and concludes that "for Morayo who is a trauma survivor, intrusive memories of traumatic experiences come at unexpected and unwanted times..." (102). Shamaila Dodhy in another paper evaluates the sociopolitical design of Nigerian society in Yejide Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path* and submits that "Kilanko, by protesting through the episode of elections, becomes the spokesperson of the masses that are passing pitiable lives because of few greedy people" (96). Ifeyinwa Ogbazi and Uche Chinwe Amah highlight the traumatic effects of rape on the female victim in *Daughters Who Walk This Path*. They outline the devastating effect of rape on Morenike and Moraye and conclude that "rape still exists in the very structures of society as part of men's social and structural power over women" (52).

Abdullah Al Mamun and Sadia Siddika explore various components of narrative techniques and their impact on the plot construction and characterization in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. They submit that "the use of Black colloquial discourse, retrospective narrative twisting punctuation, and normal syntactic structure ... endowed the novel a special advantage with regards to presenting the scenario and all these affect the process of characterization" (45). Neelam Bhardwaj discusses the life of African-American women as victims of racial prejudice both at the family and the community levels. The paper concludes that they were much neglected and exploited by the men and women of white skin against the black-skinned people in that great country" (103). Dar et al. examine racial discrimination suffered by coloured people in a predominantly multicultural post-colonial white America and conclude that "Toni Morrison through her writing makes blacks understand that black identity is not inferior to white in any way." (944). Magda Szolc analyses white constructions of the black body and its devastating effect on the mother-daughter relationship in *The Bluest Eye*. She asserts that the myth of whiteness results "in the distorted and biased perception of people of colour and internalised racism among them" (40).

Family Communication Patterns Theory is used as a tool for the exploration of mother-daughter relationships in the two novels under study which has scarcely

been done in previous scholarship. The aim is to show if the communication style of mothers influences the personality of their adolescent daughters.

Theoretical Framework

Family Communication Patterns Theory postulated by Ascan F Koerner and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick focuses on parent-child communication. It posits that there are two primary communication dimensions namely conversation orientation and conformity orientation. They define conversation orientation as “the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction about a wide array of topics” (54). Associated with this dimension is the belief that “open and frequent communication is essential to an enjoyable and rewarding family life” (55). Parents holding this belief see frequent communication with their children as a rewarding avenue to educate and socialize them (55). Conformity orientation, according to Koerner and Fitzpatrick, refers to “the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs” (55). Parents in families where this dimension is practised “make the decisions for the family and children are expected to act according to their parents' wishes...” (56).

Koerner and Fitzpatrick argue further that these two communication dimensions interact consistently with each other creating four family types that are qualitatively different: “consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire” (56). The laissez-faire type is considered for this research. Members of the laissez-faire family “do not engage much in conversation with one another and therefore tend to avoid conflict” (59). They are usually emotionally divorced from one another as a result. The offshoot is that children in a laissez-faire family do not know the value of family conversation. They are prone to making their own decisions without parental guidance. Hurst et al. aver that Family Communication Patterns Theory “provides a guiding theoretical framework to better understand parent-child communication” (4). Accordingly, this framework is used to explore the mother-daughter communication pattern and its effect on the personality of the girl child in Kilanko’s *Daughters Who Walk This Path* and Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*.

Analysis

Daughters Who Walk This Path

In this novel, the relationship between Bisoye and her daughter, Morayo, is analysed. Morayo, the protagonist of the novel, falls in love with one of her classmates, Kachi, at age twelve. She longs to share her secrets with her mother and approaches her accordingly. The following conversation takes place:

Morayo: ‘Mummy?’

Mummy: ‘Yes, Morayo. What is it?’

Morayo: ‘Em...I have been feeling...funny’.

Mummy: ‘Are you feeling sick?’

Morayo: 'No, Ma. I am not feeling sick. In Biology class, our teacher talked about our bodies change during puberty and how we start having new feelings about boys...'

Mummy: 'Morayo, what kind of nonsense talk is this?' ... Listen. Your job right now is to focus on your books and behave like a well-brought-up child you are. Have you heard me?'

Morayo: 'Yes Mummy' (54).

What a mother! Morayo left the room disappointed: "I should have known better than to ask her anything" (54). This statement speaks volumes. It shows that Bisoye is not warm and affectionate towards her daughter. Otherwise, she would have thanked her first and foremost for the courage to share her feelings with her and then seize the opportunity to teach her a little bit of sex education; to educate her on the danger of her feelings and how to bring them under control. However, the door of communication between mother and daughter closes permanently at this juncture. Hurst et al. have this to say:

Families play an important role in the development of adolescents' sexual decision-making. For example, parents can help impact their adolescents' sexual decisions directly by communicating about sexual topics or indirectly by conveying values, providing a supportive home environment, and through their secure attachment. (4)

Bisoye fails to give her daughter the secure attachment she desires. Meanwhile, she lives with her nephew, Tayo (hereafter referred to as Bros T), a very bad boy who spies on Auntie Adunni, their nanny, when she takes a bath and she is aware of it. Yet, she is not apprehensive and skeptical enough to give her daughter good counsel concerning her relationship with the opposite sex. Meanwhile, Bros T usually pulls Morayo and her younger sister, Eniayo, onto his lap when they sit in the sitting room. Morayo muses: "during this time, it suddenly felt strange when Bros T pulled me onto his lap. Some days, he would sneak up behind me and hug me tightly, laughing as if we were playing a game. But it was starting to feel like a game whose rules I did not understand" (55). This is a true confession. Her mother fails to teach her the rules of this game. Bisoye is presumptuous and naive: "Mummy never said anything when Bros T pulled Eniayo or me onto his lap, but one evening, Daddy walked in and saw Bros T playing with us. He stopped suddenly and looked strangely at me. "Morayo, are you not too old for this kind of behaviour? Get off Tayo's lap now" (55).

Morayo continues her relationship with Kachi: "Kachi and I had almost kissed several times, and sometimes I thought about taking his hand and pushing it under my blouse. I longed to feel his warm bare hand against my skin...I did not care about what mummy said. I did not want that feeling to stop" (57). One day, Bros T saw Morayo walking home from school with Kachi and one other boy. He reported her to her mother saying "Morayo was even laughing when one of the boys put his arm around her shoulder" (62). Without hearing from her daughter, she warns: "Morayo, I have told you. A woman who has no shame will lie and steal. A woman who is a thief and a liar will sleep around with different men." (62). Even at this

point, Bisoye does not see the need to hold a conversation with her daughter concerning what she intimates to her about her feelings for the opposite sex. She rather forecasts evil in her future. The relationship between Morayo and Bros T got strained after this incident. However, under the pretext of making it up with her, Bros T entered Moraye's room one night without knocking and met her naked. He is not embarrassed at her nakedness. He rather demands a hug from her after rendering an apology to her for reporting her to her mother. She naively succumbs and he pulls her down to his lap, his rough palm caressing the side of her breast through the short sleeves of her nightgown (64). Eniayo bolts into the room at this juncture which saves her. Moraye ponders: "had Bros T meant to touch me? Was it an accident?" (64). She could not report this incident to her mother for want of intimacy between them. She ruminates: "I thought about Mummy's face when she found out I had walked home with boys. What exactly would I say now? She would think that I was just trying to get Bros T into trouble" (64). So, she says nothing about it to anyone.

Bisoye stupidly left Moraye in the care of Bros T and travelled to Ilorin with Eniayo. Bros T brought his wayward friends, Jimi and Niran, to the house who requested to sleep with Moraye as he has been doing with their sisters. He eventually chased them out of the house after one of them asked: "or Tayo, is it that you want her for yourself?" (72). As predicted, Bros T finds his way to Morayo's bed to rape her. "Initially, she thought she was being attacked by robbers when she woke with "a large coarse hand across her mouth" (72). She is shocked: "I froze. Then, angry and betrayed, I sank my teeth deep into his palm, determined to bite out a chunk of flesh" (73). He clamps his hand around her throat and warns: "Stop this nonsense or I will break your little neck. It is time a real man makes you a woman before one of your little boyfriends tries and spoils you for good" (73). He warns again as she continues to give him a fight: "Stop this nonsense or I will call Jimi and Niran to come. I am sure they will be very happy to join us. Is that what you want?" (74). He eventually had his way: "I felt a pain deep, deep inside me" (74) after which "he staggered out of the room" (74).

When Moraye's parents return from Ilorin the next day, Bros T moves close to her and warns: "Listen, if you say anything to Aunty Bisoye, you will be responsible for what happens to Eniayo" (79). Intimidated by this threat, Moraye succumbs to his sexual overtures without reporting him to her parents: "He did it to me again and again. He even started calling me to his room during the afternoon..." (80). On one of such afternoons, she refused to go when he called her. Her mother scolds her: "Morayo! What kind of behaviour is that? Go to Tayo's room right now and see what he wants" (81). Bros T raped her again that day saying "So you think you can escape from me?" (80) Moraye confesses: "that day, I felt a deep anger towards Mummy start to bubble inside of me" (81). She ruminates: "during these months, I kept waiting for Mummy to notice something different about me. A different way of walking. A new scent. Had she not said that she could smell a boy's touch on me?" (80). What an irony!

When Morayo experiences her first menstrual flow, her mother for the first time gives her motherly advice but in the wrong way: "Morayo, listen carefully. This is very important. You must not let any boy at school touch you. If they do, you will

get pregnant. Do you understand?" Moraye nods: "Yes Ma". She adds: "please my daughter, don't bring disgrace to our family's name" (81). Hear Moraye: "I almost burst out into bitter laughter. I wanted to tell her she did not have to worry about the boys at school" (81). Bisoye ridiculously feeds her daughter with a lot of misinformation relating to sex.

The sexual relationship between Bros T and Moraye drags on painfully until on a fateful day, Moraye catches him standing behind her little sister, Eniayo, in the kitchen "rubbing his body against her back" (87). Moraye "recognised that look on his face" (86). Shocked, the porcelain plate dropped from her hand and shattered into pieces all over the floor" (86). Bros T quickly escaped through the back door. Her mother hurries into the kitchen scolding: "Your daydreaming is just getting worse and worse. What are you always thinking of?" (87). Sadly, Bisoye fails to enquire about her daughter's daydreaming by having a tête-à-tête with her. However, for fear that her younger sister may soon be molested by Bros T, Moraye breaks the silence that evening while the whole family is seated at the dining table: "Bros T has been coming to my room at night" (87). Everybody is shocked:

Daddy's face hardened; Mummy gasped. A puzzled look clouded Eniayo's face...Mummy's eyes filled with tears...Daddy's spoonful of rice and beans hung halfway to his mouth ...While his face gave nothing away, his trembling hands told a different story. He was a man fighting hard for composure. (87)

Then he orders Morayo and her sister to go to their rooms. Bros T lies prostrate, face flat on the floor while "Mummy was kneeling beside Daddy's feet, tugging at his trousers, silently pleading for her nephew" (88). Unbelievable! That her nephew has committed incest with her daughter is not alarming to Bisoye. Moraye is shocked at her mother's conduct: "in that moment, my anger towards Mummy reignited. She should have been worried about me! She should have been coming after me...I kept staring at the door. I waited for Mummy. I was sure she would come and look for me" (88-89). She longs for friendship and intimacy from her mother so she can narrate her pains to her but Bisoye makes herself unavailable.

Depressed, Moraye begins to live a double life: "At school, I pasted a happy smile on my face and pretended that everything was okay ...At home, I could not get away from the unmasked questions in my parents' eyes as they lingered on my face. I no longer slept well at night" (93-94). Overwhelmed with guilt, her mind plays these questions:

Why did you not say something the first time?

Why did you let it go on for so long?

Why did you let this happen to you?

Even when I turned away from their gaze, I could not escape the shame that followed me around like a bad smell. I found the truth hard even to admit to myself...could that explain Mummy and Daddy's unbroken silence? (94)

Dodhy avers that "her traumatic state of mind cannot be understood by anyone. The past haunts her. She remains so lost in her intrusive thoughts..." (101). In this

state of mind, Bisoye requests that Moraye accompany her to a memorial party. She declines under the pretext of developing a headache. Bisoye sighs and returns to her daughter's room some minutes later "with a bottle of Panadol Extra and a cup of water" (99). She is not passionate at all about her daughter's well-being. Moraye contemplates suicide after the parents leave the house for the occasion. "These thoughts have been haunting her for a while" (99). So, "seeing the medicine bottle on the table, I suddenly wondered what it would feel like to empty the entire bottle into my mouth" (99). She eventually empties "half the bottle of Panadol Extra" into her mouth" (100). No sooner had she put the tablets in her mouth than she heard a bang on the gate: "Frantic, I ran to the bathroom and spat the chewed-up tablets into the toilet bowl" (100) and hurried out to open the gate for Auntie Morenike. Morayo's attempted suicide corroborates Van der Kolk's submission that "histories of childhood physical and sexual abuse, as well as parental neglect and separations, are strongly correlated with a variety of self-destructive behavior in adulthood, including suicide attempts ..." (quoted in Dodhy 100). Auntie Morenike wants to use the toilet and is shocked upon seeing the tablets in the bowl. She passionately interrogates her niece and she opens up: "Auntie Morenike, Bros T...He raped me...He did not just "touch me." He did not just lift my skirts. I said it again: He raped me" (101). Auntie Morenike immediately gathers her into her arms. Sobbing, she continues "Auntie, nobody understands how much it hurts" (101). Both of them held each other and "cried softly. When we both had no tears left, we sat on the settee and talked about what had happened" (102). Auntie Morenike did what Bisoye failed to do. Saying it out to someone brings some form of relief to Moraye.

Morenike intimates to Bisoye about the attempted suicide of Moraye. "She could feel Auntie Bisoye's body trembling through her cotton iro and buba" (108). Wringing her hands together, she mutters: "How could I have been eating and drinking when my house is on fire?" (108). Bisoye moves on with her life oblivious to the fact that her daughter has come down with depression as a consequence of her silence over her rape incident. Even after she got this information, Bisoye failed to initiate any conversation with her daughter. She confesses to Morenike: "Any time I try to speak to her about ...Tayo...The words get stuck in my throat" (109). Moraye confirms this: "There were days when it seemed as if Mummy wanted to talk to me about it. She would pause, look at me awkwardly and take a breath -but then she would look away and the moment would pass" (180). But why? There was an instance when she met Moraye while watching the Nollywood home video. She joined her and "when a sex scene came on, the atmosphere in the room became charged...I could feel Mummy's eyes boring into the side of my head" (181). Moraye was excited in anticipation: "Finally! Here was the moment I had been longing for. Surely, she would say something now" (181). Bisoye eventually attempts to break the silence. She says to her daughter: "There is something I wanted to talk to you about..." (181). Then she says: "em...I just remembered something I need to go and do. I will talk to you later. She stood up from the settee and left the room" (181). One does not understand what the problem is with this woman. One wonders if that 'something' she needs to do is more important than the psychological wreck of her daughter. It only shows that there is a big communication gap between mother and daughter, an index of Bisoye's parenting style.

Moraye returned home late from the market on a fateful day with her clothes soaked with urine because she narrowly escaped death only to fall into the arms of an angry mother who queries: “Morayo! Where have you been?” (189). She clicks her tongue and orders her “Oya, hurry. Go and put a pot of water on the stove so that I can quickly make the amala. The soup is already bubbling” (189). She is too wrapped up in her wifely roles to notice her daughter’s traumatic look. Moraye “thought of sharing the events of the evening with my mother. But seeing her rush obliviously back into the kitchen, I kept my mouth shut. What difference would it make?” (189). Obviously, Moraye has begun to have some doubts about her mother’s affection and trustworthiness. This recalls Hala Ewaidat’s submission that “when the daughter loses her admiration for her mother, and the mother is tired of mothering, the bonds of intimacy between the two are broken” (327). Moraye bemoans her situation: “Standing by the sink to fill the darkened pot with water, I smelt the urine and felt the dampness between my thighs. Carrying the pot of water to the stove, my teardrops fell, one by one, into the pot” (189). Poor child!

Moraye gains admission into the University of Lagos to read Economics. Her parents send her forth with joy, oblivious of her traumatic state. They are happily fulfilling their obligation of training her without caring about her emotional makeup; not even a word of advice especially from her mother. Ewaidat observes that “mother-daughter relationship is not valued on a material scale but through the sharing of endearments and advice (331). Moraye’s parents’ parenting style resonates with Marco Del Giudice and Jay Belsky’s ‘investment dynamics’ of parenting style which describes the biological function of parental care: “to provide food, protection, shelter ...” (65), devoid of the ‘affective dynamics’ which describes “the emotional, communicative, and affiliative processes that take place between parents and children...” (66). Moraye too is happy leaving home: “I could not wait to escape my parents’ awkward silences and make new friends” (193). Her reaction corroborates Curran and Allen’s observation that in “high conformity families, children were more likely to withdraw during conflict” (3). She actually makes new friends but in a disgraceful manner fulfilling her mother’s evil prediction that she will “sleep around with different men” (62). She actually sleeps around with different men. Her mother’s lack of involvement in her life erodes her self-esteem. Hear her:

In Lagos, my relationships with men fluctuated between feast and famine. During my feasting seasons, I chose the men I wanted. If a boy at the library smiled at me, I smiled back and we would leave together. Saturday mornings often found me in strange beds after a night of clubbing in town...I did not care about putting up the preferred facade of modesty... The irony was that when I lost interest in men during my famine seasons, it only intensified the chase. The fact that I did not need their sweet words or attention drove them crazy... (200)

Moraye’s sexual looseness becomes so horrible that her name appears regularly in *Sensations*, the campus gossip magazine. In one of them, “they even posted a buyer beware caption above her name” (201). One of the midnights she returned to her hostel after her sexual escapades, the hall porter in answer to her greeting accosted her: “Miss Night Rider, bad morning to you...Yeye ashawo girl. Na book your papa

and mama send you come university come read. Na so so man you go dey follow...With this your waka waka, you fit get PhD for Man-ological Sciences" (215). This is the offshoot of Bisoye's negligence of her motherly duties towards her daughter. Moraye confesses upon graduation from the university: "despite my deliberate self-destructive acts, I had made it through" (241). The history of her sexual abuse coupled with her mother's lack of care and support is strongly correlated to her self-destructive acts.

The Bluest Eye

The hegemony of White culture shapes the vision of the coloured women in this novel. They subscribe to the white standard of beauty and develop in themselves self-loathing which results in identity fragmentation. Pauline and her daughter, Pecola, are good examples. Both of them are obsessed with the myth of white superiority. Their blind fascination with whiteness makes them feel dowdy and ugly:

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realize that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people." They had looked at themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement..." Yes," they had said. "You are right." (39)

Accordingly, Pauline describes her daughter thus: *But I knowed she was ugly. Head was full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly*" (126). Pecola's physical looks remind Pauline of her ugliness and this makes her hold her daughter in disdain. Her obsession with whiteness makes her make Jean Harlow, an American actress, her role model: *"there I was, five months pregnant trying to look like Jean Harlow, and a front tooth gone. Everything went then. Look like I just didn't care no more after that. I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to being ugly"* (123). Having failed in her attempt to mimic the looks of White women, Pauline finds solace in the acceptance she receives from the Fishers, her White employers. "All the meaningfulness of her life was in her work" (128). She strives to build a good reputation with them: "power, praise, and luxury were hers in this household. They even gave her what she had never had – a nickname, Polly... We could never find anybody like Polly... Really, she is the ideal servant" (128). With the Fishers "she found beauty, order, cleanliness, and praise...Pauline kept this order, this beauty, for herself, a private world, and never introduced it ...to her children" (128). Rather, into daughter, Pecola, "she beat a fear of growing up, fear of other people, fear of life" (128). Pauline's devotion to her fictitious life further estranges her from her daughter. The offshoot is a big communication gap between mother and daughter.

Having internalised her ugliness, Pecola spends "long hours... looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike" (45). Besides, in Pecola's community, "adults, older girls, shop[s], magazines, newspapers, window signs – all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (20). Pecola decides to conform to this ideal by

craving blue eyes so she can receive acceptance from her parents and the community at large. She believes that blue eyes will make her beautiful and this will change her parents' attitude towards her: "Cholly will be different, and Mrs Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes" (46). Consequently, "Pecola prays for pretty blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed... if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different" (46). Pecola like her mother has role models, Shirley Temple, a white child actress who has blue eyes, and Mary Jane. She believes that drinking milk from a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup would give her Shirley's fair skin and blue eyes. She also believes that to eat Mary Jane's candy "is somehow to the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane" (50). Somewhat discouraged that she is not getting the blue eyes as expected, she prays: "Please, God,' she whispered into the pan of her hand. 'Please make me disappear" (45).

Desperate "to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes" (174), Pecola consults with Soaphead Church, a man who claims to be a man of God, believing that he can give her blue eyes. She requests "blue eyes, new blue eyes...Like she was buying shoes" (180). Soaphead takes advantage of her naivety by making her believe that she is now in possession of blue eyes: "I gave her those blue eyes she wanted" (181-182). Her situation of loneliness and abandonment by her mother largely contributes to her vulnerability. Szolc argues that Pecola's "situation exemplifies how whiteness and the conviction of its superiority influence the self-esteem of the black body" (40)

Cholly, Pecola's father, is an alcoholic. His wife, Pauline holds "Cholly as a model of sin" (126). Pauline knows this much about her husband and does nothing to protect her children, especially Pecola from him. He returns home one day and finds Pecola washing dishes in the kitchen. He lusts after her and rapes her right there: "So when the child regained consciousness, she was lying on the kitchen floor under a heavy guilt, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her" (162). Pauline is indifferent to her husband's incestuous act. Her looming gaze is of course void of compassion. She could not cuddle her daughter close in sympathy neither did she confront her husband with his abominable act. She abandons her daughter in her traumatised state. Her cold indifference and cruelty towards her daughter in this most appalling situation are unimaginable. Her attitude contrasts largely with that of Ngone wa Thiandum in Sembène's *Véhi Ciosane* who commits suicide when her husband commits incest with their daughter. Ibiene Evelyn Iboroma argues elsewhere that "Ngone wa Thiandum's disappointment with her husband's stinking immorality directs her choice of death over life" (4). Pauline makes light of this horrific sin because there is no emotional bond between her and her daughter. In short, she is complicit in it because she says she "avenged herself on Cholly by forcing him to indulge in all the weaknesses she despised" (126). It is not surprising then that Pauline takes no action to protect her daughter from her abusive husband. In consequence, Pecola suffers multiple rapes from her father which results in pregnancy. Pauline's disdain for Pecola's looks and her lack of affection for this innocent little girl eventually drive her into insanity: "The damage done was total. She spent her days, her

tendrils, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear... (204). In Szolc's words:

Since Pecola internalises the myths of black inferiority and worthlessness, her desire is to possess blue eyes, which—in her view—will save her from despair. Nevertheless, her search for acceptance and maternal love leads the girl to delusional insanity and the conviction that the blue eyes she desires are finally in her possession. (40)

Comparative Analysis

Both novels delineate the image of a mother who is emotionally divorced from her daughter. Bisoye and Pauline lack maternal instincts. This is vividly expressed in Bisoye and Pauline's lack of support and care when their daughters, Moraye and Pecola respectively, are sexually abused. Bisoye is more concerned with the fate of her nephew, the perpetrator of the crime than the effect it will have on her daughter's psyche. She pleads with her husband to forgive him. Moraye disappointed, complains: "She should have been worried about me! She should have been coming after me" (88). Bisoye's reaction to her daughter's rape contrasts sharply with Mama Ibeji's reaction to her daughter, Morenike's rape incident in the same novel. Mama Ibeji confronts Chief Komolafe, the perpetrator, saying: "By the time I am done with you, the whole of Ibadan will know that you are a shameless old man who cannot be trusted around a goat" (121). Then she "wiped the tears off her daughter's face and wrapped her arms around her. Rocking Morenike back and forth, she kept whispering in her ear, "I know, my child. It is not your fault. Your mother knows it is not your fault. And I am so, so sorry" (123). This is the kind of affection and understanding Moraye expects from her mother. Bisoye abandons her daughter in her time of great need and the consequences are overwhelming as earlier stated in this study. Again, Bisoye demonstrates a lack of affection for her daughter when she comes back from the market traumatised, having narrowly escaped death. A caring and loving mother would be inquisitive to know the cause of her daughter's traumatic look especially with her dress soaked with urine. She rather scolds her for coming late and orders her to go to the kitchen to work to the chagrin of Moraye. Bisoye's lack of involvement in her daughter's life and well-being is alarming.

In the vein of Bisoye, Pauline does not have the compassion to offer help to her daughter when she is sexually abused by her own father. In fact, it could be argued that Pauline sees her daughter's rape as an answer to her prayer: "If Cholly had stopped drinking, she would have never forgiven Jesus. She needed Cholly's sins desperately. The lower he sank, the wilder and more irresponsible he became, the more splendid she and her task became" (42). Pauline's lack of maternal instinct and compassion is also captured when Pecola mistakenly touched a hot pan of berry cobbler which tilted and burnt her legs. Her reflex action to this incident is to slap Pecola several times and abuse her for soiling the floor: "Crazy fool...my floor, mess...my floor...Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries..." (109). She orders her to get out of the house: "...get on out of here, so I can get this mess cleaned up" (109). On the same instance, she ran to succour the Fishers' daughter who was crying because the pie in her hand fell and soiled her clothes:

"Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don't cry no more. Polly will change it" (109). These two mothers, Pauline and Bisoye, demonstrate cruelty in their relationship with their daughters which shakes their children's values. Their conduct gives credence to Fouad's observation:

Fouad considers motherhood as an excess of compassion that does not stop or diminish with age, it increases to bestow a mother with sacredness. ... cruelty in a mother shakes her children's values because they see evil emerging from where goodness is supposed to spring. She believes that when values are shaken a mother's throne is permanently threatened, and she can never restore it (quoted in Ewaidat 326).

This is the case with Pecola. Her mother's throne is not only threatened but dethroned. Consequently, she calls her Mrs Breedlove instead of Mummy: "Pecola called her mother Mrs. Breedlove" (108). Their frosty relationship resonates with Ewaidat's argument that "silence between mother and daughter deprives both parties of a common emotional language, rendering them virtual strangers" (328).

Bisoye and Pauline's non-caring attitude and lack of respect for their children contribute largely to the wretchedness and misery of their daughters' existence. Moraye and Pecola internalise their pains and withdraw into depression. Disconnected from self, Moraye engages in a suicide attempt and thereafter chooses to prostitute herself. Dodhy states that "Morayo starts torturing herself by developing reckless attitude as she goes from one man to another...The pain of trauma is still there, though much time has elapsed" (101). Pecola on her part, believes in a lie that she has now obtained blue eyes and eventually comes down with insanity. This recalls Julie Cwikel submission that "the mother-daughter relationship is embedded in a rich cultural and social context and is critical for maintaining the identity and mental health over women's adult lives" (1). Bisoye and Pauline's failure to be active managers of their daughters' social environment engenders their daughters' low self-esteem. This finding is consistent with Kshipra and Lavalekar's argument that "mothers may adopt certain styles which influence certain vital personality factors in daughters" (11).

Not only that, Bisoye and Pauline do not spend quality time with their daughters. Bisoye spends most of her time in her tailoring shop. She also makes herself unavailable when she comes back home. Moraye complains: "Mummy locked herself up in the room for hours...I would sit in the sitting room by myself..." (170). Pauline spends quality time with the Fishers to the neglect of her daughter: "soon she stopped trying to keep her own house. ...more and more she neglected her house, her children, her man - they were like the afterthoughts one has just before sleep..." (127). Anita Gibbs asserts that "parents could not over emphasise the time needed to develop bonds with their children: as one dad put it 'hugs, kisses and holding hands ... lots and lots of times but you can't do it too many times with these kids ... they were craving it'" (45). Sadly, Moraye and Pecola crave this warmth and responsiveness from their mothers but are denied it. Nyamekye et al. have this to say:

Parenting can be described in terms of two general dimensions. The first is the degree of warmth and responsiveness towards children. Parents who are often warm and affectionate respond to the emotional needs and spend considerable time with their children. On the other hand, there are parents who are relatively uninvolved with their children and sometimes even hostile towards them. These parents seem to focus on their own needs and interests rather than on those of their children. (107-108)

Sadly, Bisoye and Pauline's parenting style fits into the second dimension. They are physically present but emotionally absent in their relationship with their daughters.

Conclusion

Evidently, the ineffective communication pattern adopted by Bisoye and Pauline in their relationship with their daughters, Moraye and Pecola respectively is largely associated with the characteristics that manifest in the development of their personality as this study has demonstrated. This aligns with Moghe and Lavalekar's assertion:

Since any relationship is based on strong and effective communication, it can be said that the kind of communication style the parents use while interacting with their child may influence certain characteristics, which might show up noticeably in their personality (4).

Joseph Bradley on his part argues that "despite the copious amounts of research that has been done searching for the cause(s) of depression in adolescents, a major cause of depression in young adolescent females may come from negative mother-daughter relationships..." (3). The findings of this study corroborate this argument. The paper asserts that one of the major causes of depression in adolescent females is a flawed mother-daughter relationship. Thus, given the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship in the development of the personality of young adolescent females, the paper recommends that mothers should adopt open and frequent communication with their daughters creating a climate where the girl child experiences warmth and intimacy which is a boost to self-esteem.

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