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Manifestations of Social Injustice in Nigeria: A Literary Portrayal of Obinna Udenwe's Satans and Shaitans

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Abstract

This research seeks to examine the manifestations of social injustice in Nigeria, a portrayal of Obinna Udenwe's Satans and Shaitans. Adopting Marxist Theory, the study exposed the unjust practices in politics, including political discrimination, unequal representation, and unjust election administration. The study also revealed the implications and effects of political injustice by the rich, who see corruption

as a means of wealth accumulation, resources, and power, where leadership failures manifest as mismanagement, nepotism, political conspiracies, and suppression of dissent, eroding societal well-being through the abuse of power, fostering fear, insecurity, and disillusionment among citizens.

Keywords: Environment, Security, Injustice, Disintegration, Politics

1. Introduction

Social and political injustice remains a defining feature of the Nigerian experience. As Ladipo (1995) observes, Nigerians navigate fractured identities shaped by ethnicity, religion, and class, often at the expense of authentic self-expression and self-actualization. This condition is rooted in a long-standing failure of the Nigerian state to uphold its social contract, namely, the obligation to provide an enabling environment for citizens' well-being. Achebe (1988) [1] similarly argues that this sustained deprivation forces Nigerians into subhuman conditions, generating cycles of frustration, conflict, and internalized oppression. Social justice, historically associated with resistance to marginalization, is grounded in principles of human rights, equity, and the fair distribution of societal resources. Classical and modern thinkers from Plato to Rawls, Sen, and the United Nations converge on the idea that justice ensures the harmonious functioning of social, political, and economic institutions. Where these institutions are captured by elites and used for private gain, citizens face "unfreedoms" ranging from poverty and exclusion to political repression.

In Nigeria, the absence of coherent founding principles and a weak sense of republicanism has undermined the pursuit of liberty, equality, and justice. According to Akinola (2019), Nigeria's colonial origins and repeated military interventions left the country without shared national ideals capable of unifying its diverse identities. This vacuum enables unjust laws, discriminatory practices, human rights violations, and routine abuse of power from police brutality and judicial impunity to legislative overreach and selective enforcement of state authority. The broad public support for the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act exemplifies how oppressed groups can internalize and reproduce injustice. From a Marxian perspective, the Nigerian state exhibits entrenched class and power asymmetries reinforced through corruption, unfair elections, impunity, and violent conflict. Amnesty International reports widespread abuses: prolonged pre-trial detentions, torture, death-row overcrowding, environmental devastation in the Niger Delta, and impunity for both state and non-state actors. Boko Haram's violent insurgency, itself rooted in structural poverty and political marginalization, further exposes the fragility of Nigeria's justice system and the failures of state accountability.

The impacts of social injustice manifest in deep ethnic cleavages, economic disparities, and weakened national loyalty. Nigeria's diverse groups, unevenly distributed across regions and unequal in access to resources, increasingly prioritize ethnic allegiances over national identity. Oguejiofor (2012) [5] highlights how inequitable resource allocation, structural imbalance, and historical grievances fuel mistrust, political instability, and the rise of ethnic militias. These dynamics have prevented the

emergence of a cohesive social order capable of fostering meaningful development.

Finally, governance emphasizes that democratic institutions executive, the legislature, the judiciary, and the civil service exist to serve the public good. Yet in Nigeria, governance is undermined by politicization, corruption, weak rule of law, and systemic inefficiency. Effective governance requires transparency, accountability, and respect for fundamental rights; these remain largely unmet. As the UN and related frameworks (MDGs and SDGs) highlight, progress in security, poverty reduction, gender equality, and political participation remains essential for advancing **social justice**. This study, therefore, examines how socio-political injustices manifest in Nigeria, particularly through the actions and failures of bad leadership. In what ways can the various forms of political injustice present in society be identified and exposed? the impact of corruption on society, its consequences disproportionately affect the population, and how the abuse of power and use of social manipulation influence societal well-being and public trust?

2. Research Method and Instrument

2.1 Research Method

We employed Satans and Shaitans by Obinna Udenwe, (<https://archive.org/details/satansshaitans0000uden>), a novel that vividly portrays social hierarchy, political corruption, religious exploitation, and terrorism in Nigeria, by analysing key characters such as Chief Amechi, Sheikh Seko,

Evangelist Chris Chuba, Simon, Donaldo, Adeline, and other minor figures whose actions illustrate class and power dynamics.

2.2. Instrument

We employed the Marxist literary criticism analytical framework, such as:

- (1) Coding Scheme: Text was analysed for the following thematic categories:
 - (a) Class Domination: Control of economic, political, and social resources
 - (b) Religious Ideology: Use of religion to justify oppression or consolidate power
 - (c) Violence & Terrorism: Acts performed to preserve elite dominance
 - (d) Political Manipulation: Corruption, conspiracies, and state capture
 - (e) Validation: Coding scheme informed by classical Marxist theorists (Marx, Engels, Althusser) and Nigerian political history literature (Nwolise, 1993-2005)^[3].

3. Results

In light of Marxist theory, patterns in the novel were evaluated for representation of class struggle, systemic injustice, and ideological control. Events in the novel were also compared with historical political and religious phenomena in Nigeria to contextualize findings Table 1.

Question	Finding	Textual Examples
How do socio-political injustices manifest in Nigeria, particularly through leadership failures?	Leadership failures manifest as mismanagement, nepotism, political conspiracies, and suppression of dissent, which directly harm ordinary citizens, where violence, terror, and intimidation are used to enforce elite dominance and maintain control over political and economic resources.	Chief Amechi fired competent workers to favor loyal subordinates (Udenwe, 135-136). Manipulation of cabinet appointments and government posts to secure elite control (Udenwe, 71-72). The assassination of individuals who threaten elite interests (Simon killing targets as instructed by elites, Udenwe, 8-131).
In what ways can the various forms of political injustice present in society be identified and exposed?	Political injustice can be revealed through patterns of corruption, abuse of power, and systemic violence within the text, by illustrating how elites manipulate institutions, laws, and religion to serve personal interests.	Assassinations and terror operations targeting dissenters and government officials (Udenwe, 128-152). Religious leaders like Sheikh Seko and Evangelist Chuba using religion as a cover for political agendas (Udenwe, 15, 122). Strategic elimination of rivals to maintain political dominance (Udenwe, 71-72).
What is the impact of corruption on society, and how do its consequences disproportionately affect the masses?	Corruption is portrayed as a systemic problem that enriches elites while impoverishing the masses, where the ordinary citizens are victimized through unemployment, violence, and exclusion from economic opportunities. It also weakens governance, security, and national development, thereby exacerbating inequality and public vulnerability.	Recruitment of jobless youth for violent operations under false religious pretenses (Udenwe, 57, 116-118). Misappropriation of resources and manipulation of political offices by elites (Udenwe, 71-72). Mass casualties caused by terrorism orchestrated by political-religious elites (Udenwe, 128-211).
How does the abuse of power and use of social manipulation influence societal well-being and public trust?	Abuse of power erodes societal well-being by fostering fear, insecurity, and disillusionment among citizens. Social manipulation, especially through religion and ideology, undermines public trust in leaders and institutions. The novel illustrates that when power is concentrated among corrupt elites, social cohesion breaks down and national productivity suffers.	Religious indoctrination to justify violent acts (Sheikh Seko preaching jihad, Udenwe, 57, 116-118). Deceptive leadership and manipulation of followers for personal gain (Evangelist Chuba's actions, Udenwe, 122). Citizens' rights and safety were repeatedly violated, leading to demoralization and mistrust (attacks on government facilities and public figures, Udenwe, 128-211, 257-258).

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that socio-political injustices in Nigeria are largely a consequence of elite misrule and systemic corruption. Leadership failures, exemplified by characters like Chief Amechi, manifest as oppression, selective justice, and violent control. The text portrays governance as self-serving rather than public-serving, highlighting the real-world implications of weak political accountability. Political injustice can be identified through patterns of coordinated violence, religious exploitation, and institutional manipulation. Literature, as in *Satans and Shaitans*, functions as a critical lens to expose these practices by showing the underlying class dynamics and mechanisms through which elites consolidate power.

Corruption disproportionately affects the masses by exacerbating poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and vulnerability to exploitation. The novel highlights how elite corruption reshapes societal structures, undermining governance and public institutions. Citizens are forced into complicity or victimization, illustrating the systemic nature of injustice. The abuse of power undermines societal well-being by generating fear, insecurity, and institutional distrust. Leaders manipulate social and religious narratives to legitimize harmful policies, reducing public trust in governance. The novel demonstrates that ideological manipulation, when combined with violent enforcement, perpetuates inequality and destabilizes society. The novel also highlights the interplay between political, religious, and social structures in perpetuating inequality, demonstrating how literature mirrors socio-political realities, revealing structural mechanisms of injustice, and providing a framework for analyzing governance, corruption, and public manipulation in contemporary Nigerian society.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research encompasses the unveiling of secrets that lurk within a society, using the novel "Satan and Shaitan. This research focuses on the ingrained corruption in Nigerian politics and several factors that led to the manifestation of social and political injustice, which have contributed to the destabilization and reign of terrorists in the society. Udenwe has a finger firmly pressed on the pulse of Nigeria's current challenges giving the book ample opportunity for relevance at a time, which is also preoccupied with drastic emphases on the issues of power abuse with several examples on the political and religious leader that uses their status for societal manipulation, in other to cheat and ruin the life of the masses, without considering the effect on the society. This research has tried to lay serious emphasis on the effect of political injustices and their severe implications on the masses, with several examples from the primary text, also using Nigeria as a yardstick for her cruel current situation, and some assumed reasons that could cloud her situation. The author points out a society that is controlled by leaders with selfish instincts that eventually contributed to the terror that looms over the society. The research also points out several challenges of the Nigerian society with issues like injustice, corruption, terrorism, and how it is linked to the bad leadership and selfish political and religious leaders as it being portrayed in the novel.

6. References

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