

Consequences of ominous signs in selected Igbo novels

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ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
Keywords: <i>Ominous signs, the Igbo novel, culture, and semiotic theory.</i> ©2025 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International 	<i>The study focuses on ominous signs in selected Igbo novels. The objective of the study was to analyse consequences of ominous signs on the major characters in the selected Igbo novels. The research design used was descriptive survey. Document observation of texts related to the subject matter was used to retrieve the primary data was sourced through the internet and other sources. Expert purposive sampling technique was used to select two Igbo novels as sample for the study. The semiotic theory of Ferdinand De Saussure and communicative theory of S. F. Scudder are used to analyse the data. This study revealed that ominous signs exhibit deep meanings and attest the main characters in the novels. The study concluded that literary artists apparently use the consequences in their works with a view to documenting and preserving the Igbo cultural values for posterity.</i>

1. Introduction

The Literature is a product of creativity. It is one of the greatest creative tools used by man to mirror his society. It is necessary for the growth and development of moral behaviour. It first and foremost exists in the oral form before its written form emerged (Finnegan, 1977). The origin of Igbo oral literature is not known, but its written form started in 1933 with Pita Nwana's *Omenụkọ* as the first Igbo novel. Literary artists are part of the society which they use their art forms to mirror and as such, the novel is a branch of literature that projects the socio-cultural and religious aspects of society. Ominous signs thus, become the socio-cultural aspects of society mirrored by the novel. Ominous signs can be positive or negative. The positive ominous sign indicate that something positive will happen while the negative signs indicate that something unpleasant is about to happen. Ominous sign are explored in both oral and written forms of literature. Authors of some Igbo novels use some ominous signs to form themes in their writings. In this research work, the ominous sign is the subject matter being considered from written perspectives.

Human society, both in the past and in the present, is made up of social, political, economic and religious components. Different people of the world have different worldviews. A worldview refers to how people perceive and explain the world around them, the way things are or the way things change in their environment. It reflects people's basic assumptions and perceptions of life and the universe which give meaning and value to their lives. A people's worldview stands for their source of explanations for the ways things are in the universe including their mental conception about illness, death and misfortunes and the way human afflictions and problems can be solved (Obidiebube, 2022).

Culture is an aspect of worldview. It is the totality of the people's way of life. The ominous sign is one of the cultural beliefs of the Igbo people. Omen is one of the ways through which people's basic assumption and perceptions of life and universe are reflected.

Ominous signs are signs suggesting that something sinister is likely to happen. With the advent of civilisation, technology, Christianity and the evolution of the world as a global village, ominous signs are increasingly regarded as superstitious beliefs by some people. There is a need to document and preserve ominous signs as part of Igbo culture. A literary artist is part of his or her society and he or she knows his or her society, its pace, pulse, dreams and realities (Obidiebube,

2011), the cultural signs of his place and time in history and embodies them in his literary work. This study focuses on the consequences of ominous signs on the major characters in *Emecheta* and *O di egwu*.

2. Literature review

This section reviews some of the theories relevant to the study, ominous signs, Igbo novel and culture. The contributions of different scholars towards this study are reviewed both theoretical and empirically, summary of the literature review and theoretical framework.

2.1 Conceptual review

A conceptual review in any research is essentially significant because a review of necessary concepts helps researchers to unpack their thoughts in relation to the research topics.

2.1.1 Ominous signs

According to Onukawa (2017:100), “ominous signs act as messages or information and are conveyed from one person to another, one community to another and one region to another.” The object forms for the transmission of these signs could be either animate or inanimate. For Onukawa (2017:110), animals such as birds, owls, pythons, dogs and plants such as iroko and kola nut could be considered as animate examples of ominous signs whereas elements such as rainbows, rocks, and thunder could be considered as inanimate examples of ominous signs. She adds that in some situations, dreams could act as a channel of transmitting ominous information and messages to a person or community. Illustrating further from the Igbo cosmology, Onukawa (2018:101) avers that sometimes, people receive their messages which are purely ominous signs through divination. In such cases, the person may dash his or her foot against a rock, or may experience the owl hooting on top of his or her roof. Not left out in this example is the general message from the early morning cock crow.

From the above, it is crystal clear that the concept of the ominous sign is clearly defined in the Igbo culture. However, these signs could vary from one place to another according to the culture of that particular community but the sense it gives remains unchanged. There are some communities in Igbo land where ominous signs are used to communicate the public offenders who violate abominations of such communities and how the impending calamities would befall them. Often, they face the consequences alone or with the community. When the ominous signs preceding unpleasant and calamitous events or circumstances are experienced by the victim(s), it is said that they precede disastrous or ill-fated events whereas when experienced by person(s) that are not victim(s) of the occurred disastrous event such as the community or the immediate family, it is seen as post ill-fated events which all *replete* the Igbo existence (Chinweuba, 2021; Adibe, 2008). In this study, ominous signs are signs suggesting or indicating of something unpleasant or misfortune that is likely to occur.

2.1.2 The Igbo novel

Literature refers to the artistic or imaginative oral or written works in prose or verse. Every culture has its literature. Onyekawu (2001) defines Igbo literature as a body of literary works comprising prose, poetry, drama expressed or written purely in the Igbo language. The definition of the novel has been controversial and elusive. Some scholars like Mbah and Mbah (2007:268) define the novel as “any narrative fiction of book length, typically representing character and actions with some degree of realism”. However, there is no general agreement about what a book is as different writers define a book using different parameters.

The Igbo novel, according to Ugonna (1979) and Nwadike (1995), is a literary work written in the Igbo language which addresses itself to the issues of Igbo philosophy and worldview. According to Ugonna (1979:30), “it is only those texts of Igbo novels, poem or drama written or at

least translated in the Igbo languages are regarded as Igbo novels”. The first Igbo novel emerged in 1933 with the publication of Pita Nwana’s *Omenụkọ*. Through *Omenụkọ*, Pita Nwana did not only project the Igbo culture but also promoted the Igbo religion. Numerous Igbo novels have been written by different Igbo scholars. For the purpose of this study, the Igbo novel is a literary work written in the Igbo language by an Igbo authors for the Igbo people.

In summarising the definition of Igbo novel, Ikeokwu (2005:390) notes that the basic considerations are, “language meaning and its variety, traditionality as well as volume and length.”

2.1.3 Culture

Abakare (2009), says that culture is the way of life, shared and learned behaviour of a people. It includes everything one thinks, does and has as a member of a society. It includes the idea, values, beliefs, literature, religion and philosophy of the people. It also includes the rules by which people guide their behaviours and material objects that are found among them. Culture presupposes the existence of a human society and provides the necessary skills for making society work. Culture exists in society only because society is like a stream; it flows from generation to generation. In his view, Chinagorom (2012), opines that culture is a people’s way of life. The Igbo language is part of culture which is communicated through the language of the community. This informs the statement that language is imbedded in culture and culture is transmitted through language. This means that the sum total of culture is contained in language. The Igbo language is a special language for special people. Culture is a product of a rational being like man. Man is therefore the maker or creator of culture. It is that pattern of behaviour and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create and share. It is that which helps people to distinguish one group of human beings from others and distinguish humans from animals. In his own contribution, Amaegwu (2013) defines culture as the human capacity to express in symbols, for oneself and for others. It refers to the reactions and relations of individuals and human groups with their environment and their interaction with it. In this study, culture means the ideas, custom and way of life of a particular people or society.

2.2 Theoretical studies

This section reviews some relevant theories in literature, especially with regard to the present study. Some of these theories are: Semiotic theory and communicative theory. These theories are detailed below.

2.2.1 Semiotic theory

Several scholars in the past have added a lot to the field of semiotics which has been very useful to different audiences e.g. Ferdinand de Saussure (1913) as well as the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1914), Elam (1980), Barthes (1969) Chandler (2002), Umberto Eco (1976) among others. The subject of semiotics owes a great deal to the pioneering works of the American philosopher. The idea of semiotics emerges from Saussure’s study of linguistics. Saussure’s idea is to introduce a science that discovers the true nature of language systems in what he refers to as semiology. He argues that to see the true nature of language system, one must first consider systems of the same kind. He further posits that rites, custom and tradition can be perceived as signs that communicate and as such, a new perspective of language is created.

Igbeaku (2020:156), citing Peirce (1985), notes that the word ‘semiotics’ derives its origin from a Greek word ‘*semeion*’ signifying ‘signs,’ which means something that stands for something else. There are three connected terms, according to Peirce (1985) which are both irreducible and minimal constitutive elements in the study of semiotics, namely: signs, objects and interpretant. As a matter of choice, Peirce refers to the study as ‘semiotics’, whereas Saussure prefers the use of ‘semiology’. However, there is no room for confusion as both words mean the ‘study of signs’ where signs consist of things which determine other things (its interpretant).

Boiles (1982), remarks that in the study of the use of signs in the language of sciences where semiotics has the properties of science itself, it (semiotics) supplies the relevant signs and principles for undertaking such studies on the subject of signs. Interestingly, unlike linguistics, semiotics studies the non-linguistic sign systems. In the linguistic view of semiotics, semiotics achieves its primary goals in its study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness, analogy, allegory, meronymy, metonymy, metaphor, symbolism, paradox, signification, and communication. All these areas are considered for semiotic interpretation to give the concept (semiotics) its best perceptible meaning. As such, when an individual interprets a sign or symbol, semiotics has taken place. This is because, as Igbeaku (2020:158) puts it, “words do not necessarily have meaning on their own, the meaning is primarily derived from the signs.”

2.2.2 Communicative theory

Communicative theory was propounded by S. F. Scudder in the year 1980. It states that all living beings existing on the planet communicate although the way of communication is different. Animals communicate through sounds and several movements to indicate that they are hungry or unhealthy or need medical attention. A mother would never understand that her child is hungry until the child cries. Crying is again a form through which the child communicates that he or she is hungry and needs food. The same applies when he or she is injured, where he or she uses crying again as a tool to communicate his or her pain and need for urgent medical attention. Hence, the universal law of communication theory says that all living beings whether they are plants, animals, human beings communicate through sound, speech, body movement, gestures or in the best possible way to make others aware of their thoughts, feelings, problems, happiness or any other information. This theory is relevant to this study because ominous sign is a communicative process through sign.

2.3 Empirical studies

Here, the empirical studies are reviewed in relation to the present research to create the gap to be closed by the present study.

Eze (2010), looks at “The Ominous in Igbo Drama”. The objective of the study is to show that these signs are presented in various forms in different cultures and field of studies. The researcher adopts the mythological approach in her work. The findings of the study reveal that in Igbo culture, there are myths, not mere superstitions which people respect and revere. They are in various forms in different cultures of the world. Like Eze’s study, the present study is focused on ominous signs in Igbo literature, but it differs in its focus on selected Igbo novels.

Okafor (2014), studies “The ominous, prophetic and ritualistic phenomena: Predominant motifs in selected works of Igbo contemporary playwright”. The objective of the study is to show the uniqueness of these writers which people tend to overlook while reading such works. The study adopts the theory of myth propounded by Emile Durkheim. The findings of the study reveal that authors make use of these phenomena in their works to explore the culture and traditions of the Igbo people which form the common motif of their plays. Igbo cultures are not mere superstition, they are myths in Igbo which they respect and reverence. They are in various forms in different cultures of the world. She concludes that omens, prophecies and rituals are so prominent in the life of both traditional and modern Igbo man that the authors became interested in projecting them for the documentation and preservation of these Igbo core values for posterity. Okafor’s study is related to the present work in its focus on ominous signs. However, while Okafor focuses on the ominous, prophetic and ritualistic, the present study is on ominous signs in selected Igbo novels.

Onukawa (2017), studies “The ominous as a medium of communication in traditional Igbo society”. The objective of her study is to investigate the ominous signs and events, and to show that it is a mystical traditional medium of communication in Igbo culture. The findings of her study reveal that, ominous sign is a traditional medium of communication between the mystics and human beings

and ominous messages are transmitted through animate and inanimate elements. Also, the messages of ominous signs and events are revealed by the oracle through divination. The study recommends that the work will supply future researchers adequate data on the ominous signs in Igbo culture and also assist them in comparing mystical experiences and practices in various climates and cultures of the world. Both studies are associated with omens but while Onukawa focuses on ominous communication, the present study is on ominous signs in Igbo novels.

2.4 Summary of the literature review

Some key concepts of this study were reviewed. Some empirical studies and theoretical studies related to the present study were also reviewed. The literature so far reviewed, show that previous scholars like Eze (2010), Okafor (2014), and Onukawa, (2017) study ominous signs focusing their attention on different perspectives from that of the present study. The previous studies are related to the present study in the sense that the present study has to do with ominous signs, but they differ from it because none of the scholars has carried out a research on ominous signs in the selected Igbo novels. Therefore, this research should be authorized to go on.

2.5 Theoretical framework

In this study, ominous signs in Igbo society require effective combination of theories to provide solid foundation for their analyses. Having reviewed various theories that are related to the topic of the study, semiotic and communicative theories are adopted as theoretical framework for the study. When something has the ability to convey a particular meaning or sense, it shows that it is capable of interpreting a sign which can be considered as either being significant or signifying something to the receiver. This is made possible if the object or item has the ability of being interpreted, given its inherent meaning and sense. In the interpretation of semiotics, Chandler (2002) remarks that signs, seen as the object of study for semioticians, can be in the form of words, sounds, images, objects and gestures.

The semiotic theory is one of the major theoretical instruments used in analysing and accounting for signs and symbols in linguistic and literary studies. The semiotic theory points to such use of signs and symbols as media for the transmission of a form or the transference of habits embodied in the object to any interpreter, so as to constrain the interpreter's behaviour. Semiotic theory primarily accounts for the production, transmission and interpretation of signs of different kinds used in literatures and expressions. Therefore, the semiotic theory is suitable for the study.

Secondly, communicative theory is another theory for ominous sign. Communicative theory states that every living organism communicates another living organism of his kind through a unique method. The theory fits into the study because human beings communicate each other with the help of different words, letters, humans, symbols, pictures or gestures.

The semiotic and communicative theories are used to press the point that ominous signs exhibit deep meaning that facilitate understanding of the message of the work across cultures. Both theories are related to this work since it deals with signs and symbols in the Igbo novel. In ominous signs, signs and dreams are part of it. Its relation to literature that needs consideration, is the fact that in literary works, some Igbo authors portray human signs and symbols in their expressions of ideas, thoughts and feelings. These signs in Igbo culture are part of human nature.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

The research design that was used in this research study is descriptive survey. Descriptive survey according to Nworgu (2015) is concerned with the collection and description of data from a given population in a systematic way. The design is appropriate for the study since it is concerned with collection, description and interpretation of data.

3.2 Sample and sampling technique

The sample for this study was made up of two Igbo novels selected purposively from the Igbo novel written from 2002 to 2007. Expert sampling as one of the purposive sampling technique is more appropriate for the study. Expert sampling is a form of purposive sampling used when research requires one to capture knowledge rooted in a particular form of expertise (Patton, 2002). This will enable the researcher to collect information about ominous signs in selected Igbo novels as well as facts and points relevant to the study.

3.3 Method of data collection

The primary data for the study was collected through document observation or intent reading of novels related to the topic under study for the retrieval of relevant data or corpus for the analysis. Secondary data was sourced from electronically-stored materials and from other literary materials like journals, research papers, seminar papers and relevant conference papers.

3.4 Method of data analysis

The relevant data retrieved from the selected novels was analysed to validate what the authors have written in their novels. Semiotic and communicative theories were used as theoretical framework. Both theories believe that one can use sign to communicate in a unique method. The theories were relevant to the study as the study is on ominous signs in selected Igbo novels.

4.0 Data presentation and analysis

Preamble

In this section, characters associated with ominous signs in the texts are discussed. The characters are the agents who act out the incidents in a literary work. They are vehicles by which the author conveys to his audience, his view of the world. Character is the name given by the author while the idiosyncratic behaviour refers to characterisation (Okanume, 2019).

4.1 Characters in J.U.T. Nzeakọ's *Emecheta*

4.1.1 Emecheta

Emecheta is one of the characters in this novel called *Emecheta*. He is from Asa Town. He is a huge man and very handsome. He is fair in complexion. He did a lot of evil things when he was alive. Emecheta married two wives Isiona and Ojiugo. Emecheta suggests one who does not forget. This manifested in Emecheta's character as a wicked man that makes people not to forget his mischievous behaviour. His people hated him because of his wickedness. He killed Orianu his widow friend because of money given to her in the past, and a poor boy called Anachuna with charm, because of land dispute. As a greedy man, he commits all sorts of atrocities in his community. His people hate him for that and because of his selfish ambition, Emecheta dies a shameful death, thus;

Emecheta bụ dike, nke ndị mmadụ na-atụ
 ụjọ mgbe mbụ wee buru onye udele na-aga
 ileta ma ọ nwụọla. Mgbe ọ nwuru, ọ dighi
 onye maara, ọ dighi onye liri ozu ya, ma
 akwaghị ya akwa (96-97).

Emecheta who is a hero feared by everybody
 in the past, is now what the vulture is going
 to eat when he dies. When he died nobody
 knew, no one buried him, and no funeral was
 conducted for him (96-97).

4.1.2. Anachuna

Anachuna is the first child of Ikoro. His father died when he was only four years old. His mother that is alive is a mad woman. His only brother is also a mad man. This is the beginning of his suffering. Anachuna is the person that Emecheta took his father's land because he has nobody to

speak for him. Anachuna, one of the characters in the novel stumbled over the door step one early morning as he was going out, thus:

In the Igbo society, people kill others because of land dispute. For example, in Anambra State, communities like Aguleri and Umueri killed themselves because of land dispute. The same dispute occurred between Abagana and Ukpo, Ogidi, Nkpor, Onitsha, Obosi, Enugwu-ukwu, Nawfia etc. All these people killed themselves because of land dispute. The same kind of dispute occurred between Naboth and Ahab in the Bible.

4.2 Characters in C. Okeke's *Ọ dị egwu*

4.2.1 Ajoanụ

Ajoanụ is a native of Ụmụọka and his wife is Ọjugo. The marriage is blessed with a son called Isikotebu. Ajoanụ is well known in the five villages in Ụmụọka. His people respected him because he is a good wrestler. He wrestled with Azueruala from Eziana Town and won. As a traditional practice, it is an abomination in Ụmụọka for a wrestler to sleep with a woman after a wrestling contest, without first performing the cleansing ritual. This cleansing ritual is performed by the wrestler with the help of a cleansing priest. Ajoanụ, the great wrestler of Ụmụọka breaks this rule by sleeping with a woman after a successful wrestling contest. His wife reminds him of the cleansing ritual but he does not listen to her rather forced her to sleep with him. He violated the law of the land and “Amadiọha” punished him severely. The gods punished him with a mischievous baby boy, who came out from the womb with upper dentition. The birth of this boy led to the downfall of Ajoanụ, thus;

A hapurū m mmanya m niile gbalawa, ma tutu m ruo ụlọ, nwunye m amụlariji nnwa. Ọ mụrụ otu ọmarịcha nnwa nwoke na-enwu ka ya. Ma ihe gbagwojuru onye ọbụla anya bụ na nwata a puru eze were ọta ụwa. Nwatakiri a mụrụ ọhụrụ di etu a, werezie obi gi tlee ihe o nwere ike ime. N'ihia ya, anyi loghachiri azu, gaa na nke Ezemmuo ozọ ima ma anyi a ga-enweta enyemaka site n'aka ya. Eze mmuo gwara anyi na enyemaka adighi, na naani otu ihe nwere ike idaju iwe Amadioha bu ma anyi e gburu nwa ahụ. Agwara m Ezemmuo na nke ahụ agaghị ekwe omume wee kpọrọ nwunye m lotawa n'ihia na o teela anyi chọwara nwa nwoke (19-20)

I left all my palm wine and ran home but before I could get home my wife had given birth to a child. She has given birth to a handsome baby boy who was of the same complexion with her. But what confused everybody was that this child came out with a set of teeth. Imagine what a new baby who was born with such a feature can do in future. It was because of that we went back to the chief priest again to see if we could get help from him. The chief priest told us that there was no help, that the only thing that could calm down the wrath of Amadioha was for us to kill the child. I told the Chief Priest that it was impossible and I left with my wife because we have been looking for a male child over a long period. (19-20).

Ajoanụ rejected what the Chief priest tells him because this is the only male child they have. He goes ahead and names the child Isikotebu. The child grows up and becomes an evil child. The last thing he does that led to his death is unmasking a very special masquerade of ‘Amadioha’ call ‘Odogwuanyamme’. In view of the anger of ‘Amadioha’, Ajoanụ reports these signs to his friend, thus:

Ọ bụ mgbe chi ụbọchị nke anọ foputere ka m jiri mara na arụsị abughị nwanne mmadu. Ọ bughị ihe e ji egwu egwu. ‘Amadiqha’ bụ ezinaulọ m ka o jiri bido ihe o mere ndị Ụmụọka. Mgbe chi ụbọchị nke anọ boro, elu ụlọ m adizighi ya ‘Amadiqha’ buuru eluulọ m buga ebe mmadu na-amaghị. Site n’ụbọchị ahu ruo taa, o nweghi onye huru elu ụlọ ahu anya. Ewu m Isikotebu zuforo n’ohi nwuchapuru, okuko niile anyi nwere nwuchapuru (88-89).

It was after the dawn of the fourth day that I became aware that an oracle is not anybody’s relation. It is not something that you can toy with. It is my family that Amadiqha started with what it did to Ụmụọka. On the dawn of the fourth day, the roof of my house was no more there, ‘Amadiqha’ carried it to an unknown place. From that day till date nobody saw the roof of that house. My remaining goats after Isikotebu had stolen others died. All our fowls died (88-89).

In this case, *Amadiqha* does not punish the family alone but the entire Ụmụọka.

4.2.2 Isikotebu

Isikotebu is a native of Ụmụọka. He is the only son of Ajoanu, the great wrestler. Her mother is Ojugo. He is very unfortunate with the circumstances surrounding him during his birth. He is born with a set of teeth in his mouth. This sign shows that he will be a mischievous child. At the tender age, he starts manifesting himself on what he will be in future. As his mother breastfed him, he bites her at the nipple. If his mother makes soup and leaves, he will turn to an animal and drank all the soup in the pot. At the middle of the night, he will sneak out and turn to an animal and go to their farm land near their house and destroy their crops.

As an adult, Isikotebu shows that he is a devilish child. He performs all his evil act because his parents can no longer control his behaviour. The one that lead to his death is fighting Amadiqha’s masquerade called Odogwuanyammee. After three days of the incidence, the whole community turned upside down with many ominous signs that were beyond their imaginations, thus;

Ojugo no n’ugbo anyi na-arụ oru, ukwa di ebe ahu dara, tigbuo eke Idemili. Ka o gbalatara n’ulo, o huru na ewu anyi no n’ogburu muo nwaa. O tiri mkpu na-akpagharị Ụmụọka niile. Mgbe chi echi boro, a nuru n’anu a na-amaghị ebe ha si, biara ku akwu n’elu oji di be Emeka nwanne m nwoke (76).

Ojugo was in our farm land working when the breadfruit that was there fell and killed Idemili python. As she ran to the house, she saw that our goat which was in tether gave birth. She shouted as she moved around Ụmụọka. When the next day broke, they heard that swarm of bees nobody knows where it came from, came and swarm at the top of iroko (oji) of my brother Emeka (76).

Ụmụọka community appealed to the Chief priest to go and seek help from ‘Amadiqha’ because they were confused. Chief priest tells them that *Amadiqha* did not say anything yet.

Amadiqha later opens up and says that its annoyance is that the community sits and glances at the person that beats its masquerade and brags with it, and the community did not do anything to him. That its annoyance will stop if only they will get the person that is concerned, and bring him to the shrine, and kill him and use his blood to cleanse the land. If not, after three days, whatever they see, they should take, thus:

A kpúurú Isikotebu gawa n'okwuarúsi Amadiõha. Ndí obodo niile nusoro Ezeafójuru na ndí okenye ole na ole ndí fódurú site n'íwe Amadiõha. Agaghí m echefu akwa Isikotebu kwara oge ha tinyere ya mma n'olu. Ọ bú eziokwu na e gburu Isikotebu, Ụmụọka dikwa mma (93-94).

They dragged Isikotebu to the 'Amadiõha' shrine. All the community followed Ezeafójuru and a few of the remaining elders because of the wrath of 'Amadiõha'. I will not forget Isikotebu's cry when they were cutting his throat. It is true they have killed him, and the land of Ụmụọka is good (93-94).

Isikotebu's blood is used to cleanse the land of Ụmụọka and the anger of *Amadiõha*.

5.1 Summary of findings

This study has critically examined the consequences of ominous signs in selected Igbo novels using semiotic and communicative theories from the perspective of the stated objectives that guided the study, examine the consequences of ominous signs on the main characters in the selected Igbo novels. The findings of this study are different from the findings of other related works reviewed in this research.

Nzeakọ (2002) showcased the shameful death in *Emecheta*. Emecheta is a wicked man and has no remorse for his evil act. Emecheta killed his widow friend Orianụ, because of money issues. He killed Anachuna an orphan because he has nobody to speak for him. Emecheta killed him because of a land dispute. The issues about land require nothing but the truth. But at times, people out of greed lay claims on the land that does not belong to them. Emecheta was ostracized from his community because of his atrocity. Some of his family members disassociated from him. Emecheta has been disgraced.

Okeke (2007) showcased the cutting of upper teeth at birth (ipu eze elu) in *Ọ dī egwu*. Ajoanu is a well known wrestler in Umuoka. He knows it is an abomination in Ụmụọka for a wrestler to sleep with a woman immediately he comes back from a wrestling contest without first performing the cleansing ritual with Ezemmuo, the Chief Priest. Ajoanu, the great wrestler of Umuoka breaks this law by sleeping with a woman as soon as he comes back from a successful wrestling contest. But his wife reminded him about that, but he pushed it out. In Ụmụọka, what Ajoanu did is an abomination. The gods punished him with a very mischievous baby boy, who came out from the womb with cutting of upper teeth at birth (ipu eze elu). This was the cause of Ajoanu's downfall. To worsen the situation, Ajoanu named the child Isikotebu and his name reflected his actions. He is full of mischief and commits a lot of abominable acts such as raping, fighting, theft etc. The worst and the last he did was to unmask a very special masquerade of Amadiõha called Odogwuanyammee. Amadiõha dealt with the entire Ụmụoka not only Ajoanu. Isikotebu was later killed and his blood cleansed the land that he polluted. Ajoanu created the problem in his house and all the entire community. Therefore, he deserved such punishment from the gods. He defiled the law of the land therefore Amadiõha must punish him. Being the greatest wrestler in Umuoka does not mean that he is above the law.

In *Emecheta*, Emecheta died a shameful death because of innocent souls that he killed. He killed his widow friend, Orianụ because of a money dispute. He killed Anachuna because of a land dispute. The land belonged to his poor orphan, Anachuna. He killed his last wife Ọjugo because of family issue. Emecheta visited many diviners because things were turning upside down for him, but they told him the plain truth that the gods were angry with him.

The theoretical frameworks for this study were very adequate and fit properly into the study. The semiotic and communicative theories were used. The semiotic and communicative theories are one of the major theoretical instruments used in analysing and accounting for signs and symbols, in linguistic and literary studies while communicative theory states that every organism communicate

in a unique method through signs and symbols and gestures. The consequences of ominous signs in selected Igbo novels have been properly examined in this study.

The semiotic theory points to such use of signs and symbols as media for the transmission of a form or the transference of habits embodied in the object to any interpretation, so as to contain the interpreters' behaviours. Semiotic theory primarily accounts for the production, transmission and interpretation of signs of different kinds used in literature and expressions. In this study, the consequences of ominous signs on the main characters in the selected novels have been identified, highlighted and discussed.

5.2 Conclusion

The Igbo author knows his or her society and does not write anyhow. There are meanings about life or dominating ideas which the author wants his/her readers to deduce from his or her work. The authors of the selected Igbo novels are very knowledgeable about their society. In their novels, they create these characters for the readers to evaluate with them. The semiotic and communicative theories as used in this study have clearly revealed that the consequences of ominous signs exhibit deep meaning and help one to understand the message of creative works across cultures. Igbo culture has valuable insights to offer about the ultimate reality. It remains alive and can never die. The authors of the selected novels showed that the consequences of ominous signs have deep meaning and transcend messages which help people to avoid some mishap in their lives if heeded to. The study concludes that artists apparently use the consequences of ominous signs in their works with a view to documenting and preserving the Igbo cultural values for posterity.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that, the study on the consequences of ominous signs (in selected Igbo novels) be carried out in other genres of literature like drama and poetry. Also, other researchers can look at other aspects of the consequences of ominous signs. The consequences of ominous signs are prominent in the lives of both traditional and modern Igbo man. The authors were interested in projecting them for the preservation of these Igbo core values. This research recommends a deep and critical study of traditional practices, instead of condemning the traditional practices imbedded in them. Finally, the government should establish commissions and centres for cultural studies to facilitate the documentation of different ethno-cultural values. Through these means, our traditional values including the moral values about culture would be preserved and improved.

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