

## HEROISM AND COWARDICE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S NOVEL *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*: THE PORTRAYAL OF THE OPPRESSED'S ATTITUDE

By

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper tries to show how in his last novel, Anthills of the Savannah, Chinua Achebe reveals himself both politically and socially as a writer committed to the cause of the oppressed, whom he depicts either as heroes or cowards. Heroes, on the one hand, are few in number and overcome fear as they strive to face injustice. On the other hand, the majority of the population is composed of cowards, who naively tolerate or even praise the oppressors. As a result, the vicious circle of oppression continues despite the change of political regimes.*

**Keywords:** *heroism, cowardice, hero, coward, commitment, portrayal, oppression, oppressor, oppressed, attitude, vicious circle.*

### RÉSUMÉ

*Cet article essaie de démontrer comment dans son dernier roman intitulé Les Termitières de la Savane, Chinua Achebe se révèle comme un écrivain politiquement et socialement engagé à la cause des opprimés, qu'il décrit soit comme des héros ou comme des lâches. Les héros, d'une part sont en petit nombre et dominent la peur en luttant contre l'injustice. D'autre part, il y a la majorité de la population qui est composée de lâches qui, naïvement tolèrent, voire louent les oppresseurs. En conséquence, le cercle vicieux d'oppression continue malgré le changement des régimes politiques.*

**Mots-clés:** *héroïsme, lâcheté, héros, lâche, engagement, description, oppression, oppresseur, opprimé, attitude, cercle vicieux.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Chinua Achebe is among the greatest Anglophone African writers who is famous for not only his works, but also more particularly for the themes covered in these works. One of such works, which is the last one, is his novel *Anthills of the Savannah*. This paper sets out to investigate into this novel with a view to showing how Chinua Achebe reveals himself both politically and

socially as a writer committed to the cause of the oppressed. The latter are depicted on a double light either as heroes or as cowards. If in the former vein heroes are depicted as few in number and struggling to overcome fear as they strive to face injustice, in the latter, the cowards constitute the majority of the population who naively tolerate or even praise the oppressors. Finally, Achebe concludes by highlighting the endless vicious circle of oppression despite the change of political regimes. The hypothesis of this study is that the characters' education background and feeling of fear or courage influence their attitude towards oppression.

Apart from the methodological framework, the paper will discuss oppression in general before pointing out how it is depicted in the novel and which roles are played by different characters throughout the plot of the novel under study.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding data collection, this paper is a documentary research given that the data are drawn from the novel: *Anthills of the Savannah*. It can also be viewed as a content analysis as it exclusively and intrinsically explores the above work.

As to data analysis, six literary approaches, viz. sociological, Marxist, psychological, discourse-comprehension, pragmatic, and feminist have been qualitatively triangulated for the analysis of the novel under study.

Discourse-comprehension is an eclectic approach. It combines discourse analysis and the comprehension approaches. On the one hand, the discourse analysis takes into account the four traditional angles (the world/society, the author, the reader and the work itself) or orientations (mimetic, expressive, affective and objective), which have been considered by critics in the course of time (Adams 1971, quoted in Ngwaba 2017). On the other hand, the comprehension approach helps account for comprehension factors such as time, effort on task, personal effort, familiarity with the text and background knowledge (Ngwaba 2012:19).

The sociological approach asserts that the existence of a literary creation has the determined social situations (Buhendwa 2020); and the Marxist approach which is its variant, focuses on the mode of thinking of dominant social classes and political systems (Wales 2001:244)

The pragmatic approach maintains that all texts are incomplete in themselves by the fact that they do not formally contain all the elements that are needed for their comprehension (Ngwaba 2019:58). Another assumption underlying this approach is the idea that background knowledge is essential in interpreting texts (Leech and Short 1981:259).

The psychological approach relies on the psychological motivations of the characters or of the authors themselves (Fard 2016:334).

The rationale behind the formalist approach is the idea that all message is carried through a channel which is semiotic signs: language, paralanguage, etc. which constitute so that meanings are in these forms, not outside (Ngwaba 2019:57).

The feminist approach tends to treat women matters exclusively from the point of view of women, not from that of men, and disregarding any social norms and beliefs that tended to keep women under men's domination or power just for the sake of women's interest (Ikupasa 2019:24).

### **3. OPPRESSION IN ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH**

#### **3.1. Stating the Plot**

The story takes place in Kangan, a West African country where Sam, a career soldier and dictator, has been put in power after a popularly supported coup d'état against a civilian regime. He resorts for support to Chris Oriko and Ikem Osodi, his childhood friends who were educated in England along with himself. He appoints Chris Commissioner for Information and Ikem the Editor of the *National Gazette*, a public and nationwide newspaper. Ikem is from Abazon, one of the four provinces of Kangan.

Urged by the lust for power, Sam organizes a referendum to serve as President-for-life. But during the propagandist, Ikem does not write anything in the newspaper in support of the referendum, which causes the population of Abazon to become reluctant regarding the referendum. And they decide not to vote for Sam to become a President-for-life. Although the referendum fails in Abazon, Sam wins the vote because three provinces out of four have voted in his favor. But he is not totally satisfied because he wished to win the referendum in each province for his legitimacy. To punish the population of Abazon, Sam imposes a drought in their province because they did not like nor vote for him to become President-for-life. He holds a cabinet meeting and reveals his intention to cancel a trip to Abazon. And Ikem, a native of Abazon in the government's attempts to make him change the mind fail.

Professor Okong is Chris and Ikem's former friends. When Sam becomes a President in Kangan, Chris proposes his name to Sam who appoints him as Commissioner for Home Affairs. Despite all this, he comes and meets with Sam to warn him about Ikem and Chris. He tells him to be watchful about Ikem because he is from Abazon. He thinks that Ikem can organize and support a revolt against the regime with the help of other Abazonians. But Sam pretends to reject Professor Okong's ideas saying that it is not true. When Professor Okong leaves, he calls the Attorney General to check Professor Okong's

accusations about Chris and Ikem. The Attorney General believes that Chris and Ikem would not respect His Excellency because all of them were educated in the same school in Great Britain. To avoid getting into the same trouble, he wishes that Sam recruited people who attended local schools rather than British prestigious schools.

Chris is disappointed by His Excellency's refusal to receive the Abazon delegation. He phones Ikem asking him to mention this incident in the *National Gazette*. But Ikem refuses because it is his name rather than Chris's name that will appear in the newspaper. Chris tells Ikem that it is the Commissioner for Information's constitutional right to decide on what should be mentioned in the *National Gazette*. In spite of this, Ikem remains categorical as he thinks that Chris's position will put him in an unsafe position. So, Chris rang off and instructs his secretary not to receive any call from Ikem.

Beatrice Okoh, Chris' girlfriend works as the Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. She is the only person with first-class honors in English. On a Thursday afternoon, Sam calls to invite her to a small private dinner. Though she will decide to go after asking for Chris' permission, she gets angry at first because Sam orders her to come to his dinner on Saturday without considering her availability. On Saturday morning, a soldier is sent to pick her up and take her to the Abichi Lake, where the dinner will be held. On their arrival, Beatrice is welcomed by His Excellency who introduces and praises her before his guests. Sam's comments on Beatrice charm the attention of many people, including Lou, an American journalist who has come to Bassa, the capital city of Kangan, to see if all the bad news they hear about women is true. After he unsuccessfully tries to court Beatrice, Sam asks the soldier to escort her home. Once back, Beatrice first gets angry with Chris, his boyfriend, whom she blames of knowing Sam's bad intentions but allowed her to go to the party though. After their dispute is settled, she asks him to warn Ikem about his negative reactions against Sam's regime.

One afternoon, Ikem drives to the Presidential Palace. He accidentally comes across the Chief of Abazon delegation and his group with whom they decide to exchange courtesies at the Harmony Hotel, where the group is lodged and plan a later meeting. In this meeting, it is revealed that the Abazonians did not like nor vote for Sam to serve as President-for-life. Actually, Ikem neither held any speech nor wrote anything in the *National Gazette* in support of the referendum. Unfortunately, this meeting between Ikem and the Abazon delegation was perceived by Sam's intelligence service as a plot against the established government. So, Sam instructs Chris to suspend Ikem from the *National Gazette* but Chris refuses and decides to resign in his position as the Commissioner for Information, but Sam rejects his resignation. To appear as a leader who does things constitutionally, Sam

decides to awake the Board of Directors of Kangan Newspapers Corporation to suspend Ikem. On his side, Ikem starts delivering speeches explaining the causes of his suspension from *The National Gazette* and criticizing the social, economic and political situations in the country. Chris and Beatrice ask Ikem to downplay tensions for a moment but the latter refuses because he thinks that he ought to answer people's questions on his suspension. Ikem's speeches and his last meeting with the Abazon delegation cause Ikem to be arrested one night by the State Research Council, Sam's secret police and be killed days later. The six members of the Abazon delegation are also arrested by the State Research council.

All these incidents: Ikem's murder, the members of the Abazon delegation's arrest and Mad Medico's deportation awake Chris's awareness. As the news of Ikem's death was being held secret, Chris decides to carry an interview with the BBC correspondent in Bassa, the capital of Kangan. He denounces publically Ikem's extra-judiciary assassination. This interview causes him searched by the police and Sam's intelligence service. It also caused the BBC correspondent in Bassa to be deported by the State Research Council. So, he goes to Abazon into hiding with Braimoh, the driver and Emmanuel, the President of the Student Union who was deeply inspired by Ikem. To get out of the control of the police, Chris decides to travel by bus because it attracts less attention than the taxi, and uses a false identity. His choice of Abazon is due to the fact that it is the province of Ikem and Aina, Braimoh's wife. On their way to Abazon, Emmanuel meets another student, Adamma, and forms a romantic connection with her. Suddenly, they learn that another coup d'Etat has taken place, led by Chief of the Staff. While people are celebrating Sam's end of regime and deportation, Chris notices that a police sergeant harasses Adamma to rape her. As he runs to intervene the police sergeant shoots and kills him. This causes Beatrice to mourn her fiancé's death, before organizing the naming ceremony of Ikem and Elewa's baby.

Chart 1 below presents the synopsis of the population of interest by feeling and education as extricated from the novel under investigation.

**Chart 1. Synopsis of the Population of Interest by feeling and education**

N°	Title of the work	Author	N°	Characters' Attitude	Feeling	Education
1	<i>Anthills of the Savannah</i>	Chinua Achebe	1	Sam	Fear	Educated
			2	Chris Oriko	Courage	Educated
			3	Ikem Osodi	Courage	Educated
			4	Beatrice Okoh	Courage	Educated
			5	John Kent	Courage	Educated
			6	Dick	Courage	Educated
			7	Professor Okong	Fear	Educated
			8	Johnson Ossai	Fear	Educated
			9	Police officer 1	Fear	Uneducated
			10	Police officer 2	Fear	Uneducated
			11	Police officer 3	Fear	Uneducated
			12	Soldier	Fear	Uneducated
			13	Elewa	Fear	Uneducated
			14	Agatha	Fear	Uneducated
			15	Obete	Courage	Educated
			16	6 Members of Ab. Del.	Fear	Uneducated
			17	Braimoh	Courage	Uneducated
			18	Chairman	Courage	Educated
			19	The BBC correspondent	Courage	Educated
			20	Aina	Courage	Uneducated
			21	A school girl	Fear	Educated
Tot.	1			T=26=100%	F=16=61.5% C=10=38.4%	E=12=46.1% B=14=53.8%

The table above can be explained as follows:

T: Total number of characters: 26 (i.e. 100%)

Fearful characters =16=61.5%

Courageous characters =10=38.4%

E = Educated characters=12=46.1%

B = Uneducated characters=14=53.8%

The chart above shows a total of 26 characters that are victims of oppression spotted in the novel *Anthills of the Savannah*, classified according to their feeling (courage or fear) and education background (educated or not). As it can be seen, 16 characters that is 61.5% are fearful and 10, that is 38.4% are courageous. Considering the characters' education background, 12 characters that is 46.1% are educated while 14 that is 53.8% are uneducated.

### 3.2. Forms of Oppression in Chinua Achebe *Anthills of the Savannah*

According to Hornby (2010) oppression is defined as the act of treating somebody in a cruel and unfair way<sup>1</sup>; an oppressor as “a person or a group of people that treats somebody in a cruel and unfair way” and the oppressed as “people who are treated in a cruel or unfair way”.

Young (2004:2) distinguishes five faces or types of oppression: violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism. In this novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, the forms of oppression pointed out are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.

First, exploiting someone means to take unfair advantage of them. It is to use another person's vulnerability for one's own benefit<sup>1</sup>. In this novel, oppression through exploitation includes oppression of the leaders towards the downtrodden such as workers, peasants and students.

Second, marginalization is the form of oppression according to which a person or group of people are less able to access services or opportunities. It is also sometimes known as social exclusion<sup>2</sup>. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, oppression through marginalization could be seen through the deprivation of water to the people of Abazon and those from other territories. Moreover, the baby-girls born after other girls, unmarried women who spend much time to university speaking up for their rights are also marginalized.

Third, powerlessness could be defined as a person's inhibition to develop one's capacities, lacks of decision-making power, and is exposed to disrespectful treatment because of the lowered status (Young 2004). In this novel, poor people of Kangan, most women, the population of Abazon, and the drivers of Kangan are powerless.

Finally yet importantly, violence is the fact that a person is victim of random, unprovoked attacks on himself/herself or their property (Young 2004). In this work, violence could be seen by the police officer against Chris Oriko and the school girl, Ikem's brutal death and assassination, the members of the Abazon delegation's arrest, Sam and Colonel Ossai's deaths in a dehumanizing way.

### 3.3. The Oppressed Characters' Attitude towards Oppression

In this novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, oppressed characters present either a heroic or coward attitude towards oppression. On the one hand, Hornby (2010) defines a hero as “a person who is admired for their courage, outstanding

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<sup>1</sup> What is exploitation downloaded at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/exploitation> accessed 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> What is marginalization downloaded at <https://inclusio.io/glossary/marginalization> accessed 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

achievements, or noble qualities". As for heroes, they can be martial (bound to protect others from danger), civil (non-duty bound) or social (Good Samaritan) (Franco et al., 2011). On the other, a coward is defined as a person who lacks courage in facing danger, difficulty, opposition, pain, etc.; a timid or easily intimidated<sup>3</sup>.

Characters with a heroic attitude include Ikem Osodi, Chris Oriko, the chairman, Emmanuel Obete, Beatrice Okoh, John Kent, Dick, the BBC correspondent in Bassa, Braimoh and Aina.

Ikem Osodi, John Kent and Dick are all accused of plotting against the State security. While John Kent and Dick are arrested and expelled to Great Britain, Ikem is unfairly banned from the *National Gazette*, the government-run newspaper before he is arrested and assassinated. The following extract reads:

(...) the State Research Council has uncovered a plot by unpatriotic elements in Kangan working in concert with certain foreign adventurers to destabilize the lawful government of this country. This dastardly plot was master-minded by Mr. Ikem Osodi until recently Editor of the government-owned *National Gazette*. (...) In the early hours of this morning a team of security officers effected the arrest of Mr. Osodi (...) In the scuffle that ensued between Mr. Osodi and his guards in the moving vehicle Mr. Osodi was fatally wounded by gunshot (Achebe 1987:101).

Ikem Osodi, John Kent and Dick have a heroic attitude because they try to oppose and resist Sam's dictatorship.

As oppressed, Chris Oriko and Emmanuel Obete are forced to go into hiding, deprived of the freedom of speech and movement; as the following extract reads:

'Why have you come to me?' Chris asked him, (...). 'For protection,' said Emmanuel who was revealing a new side of himself as a clown of sorts. Chris and his host looked at each other and laughed. 'Do your people have a proverb about a man looking for something inside the bag of a man looking for something?' Emmanuel laughed in his turn and said no they didn't ... but wait ... they did have something that resembled it: about digging a new hole to get sand to fill an old one. 'He is something else,' said Chris to his friend. And he did not trouble the young man again about his reasons. Emmanuel was also a fugitive wanted by the police (Achebe 1987 :115).

Chris' trouble heightens when he carries out an interview in which he courageously declares that the government is responsible of Ikem's death. Besides, he heroically dies of a gunshot as he tries to rescue a schoolgirl who is

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<sup>3</sup> Definition of coward downloaded at <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/coward> accessed 15<sup>th</sup> October 2023.



about to be raped by a police officer. As for Emmanuel Obete, he has become Ikem's great admirer given that he witnessed the latter's heroic courage during different lectures held at the University of Bassa. Since he is not satisfied with students' tough learning conditions, he decides to support Ikem in his revolutionary fight. He succeeds in inciting students to revolt, which is the government to close the university. Thus, while Emmanuel Obete and all the students are victims of education deprivation, besides their bad learning conditions; the chairman, a Professor in the University of Bassa and his other colleagues are victims of deprivation of their rights to work, speech and other social advantages.

Similarly, Beatrice is victim of acts of vandalism by the police officers and soldiers of the security service sent to her apartment to find Chris. The extract reads:

In Elewa's room the soldier detailed there was looking through papers and books on the table when Beatrice trailing the officer came in again. 'Are you looking for books too?' 'Everything,' replied the officer on behalf of the soldier. 'My people have a saying which my father used often. A man whose horse is missing will look everywhere even in the roof.' He searched everywhere for his missing horse for about an hour, apologized for disturbing Beatrice's sleep, saluted and left (Achebe 1987:107).

Chris's heroic attitude could be justified first his courage to contradict a bloody leader by revealing his version of Ikem's death. Second, by his heroic death caused by his bravery to face a policeman who was about to rape a school girl. As for the Chairman, Emmanuel Obete and Beatrice Okoh, their heroic attitude could be explained by their courage to openly side with Chris and Ikem. Similarly, the BBC correspondent acts heroically by fearlessly offering an interview to Chris in order to reveal the true version of Ikem's death.

Braimoh and Aina respectively husband and wife. Their involvement in the acts of oppression is due to the fact that they are uneducated. Their heroic attitude could be explained by their courageous decision to offer Chris hospitality in Aina's family in Abazon, which is a high risk-taking attempt which could lead to sad consequences if discovered by Sam's secret service.

Characters with a coward attitude include Sam, Johnson Ossai, Elewa, Agatha, Professor Okong, the six members of the Abazon delegation, a school girl, and the three police officers, the soldier from the Presidential Palace.

Cowards accept naively conditions under which they are put. But the bearing of firearms allows military and police officers of the low ranks to take advantages over civilians. In order to palliate their miserable salaries, these officers resort to immoral practices like corruption by means of intimidation and arbitrary arrest. They are cowards as they attack innocent whose means of self-defense are more limited than theirs.

As oppressed, Sam and Johnson Ossai are villains and are treated as such. To begin with, Sam is shamefully killed after being kidnapped and tortured in another coup d'état led by the Chief of Staff. The following extract reads:

Even the gullible people of Kangan, famous for dancing in the streets at every change of government, were asking where this loyal officer was hiding in the first twenty-four hours after his Commander was kidnapped from the Palace by 'unknown persons', tortured, shot in the head and buried under one foot of soil in the bush (Achebe 1987:130).

As for Colonel Johnson Ossai, he is deported to an unknown destination after the overthrow of Sam's regime; as the following extract highlights:

Colonel Ossai was last seen going in to see the Head of State and has not been sighted ever since. You remember Idi Amin? Well, according to unconfirmed reports he used to strangle and behead his rivals for women and put their head in the fridge as a kind of trophy. So perhaps Colonel Ossai is in the cooler, somewhere (Achebe 1987:132).<sup>1</sup>

Sam's cowardly attitude towards oppression is due to his lack of a military as well as civilian support. This explains the population's joy as the news of the overthrow of Sam's government is spread.

And now there was no longer any doubt. Beer bottles could be seen in nearly all hands and the dancing--for no other name seemed better for this activity--was constantly accompanied by the throwing of the head backwards and the emptying of bottles direct into gullets without touching the lips. The bus pulled up to the side. Some of the crowd were rushing towards it like a tipsy welcoming-party. But the pulling up of the bus and the sudden explosion inside it, like a hand-grenade thrown from the crowd, of the word COUP! came on top of each other (Achebe 1987:125-126).

The quote above implies that Sam's death is perceived by the population as a sort of poetic justice. In fact, poetic justice can be understood as an acceptable coincidence, a kind of thing that we wish would happen, such as when a man is punished in a way that is appropriate with the story (Ngwaba 2018). Simply put, Sam ruled the country so badly that the population expected his downfall. Both Sam and Johnson Ossai are cowards towards oppression because they unresistingly die in another military coup.

Despite his support to Sam, Professor Okong is victim of Sam's frequent change of mood; as the following extract reads:

He began to move again although three-quarters of his mind stayed on the crushing manner of his dismissal and particularly on the fact that His Excellency had called him mister. He stopped walking again. 'I am in disgrace,' he said aloud. 'God, I am in disgrace. What did I do wrong?' (Achebe 1987:12)

He is considered as a coward because he lacks courage to react against Sam's whenever the latter ridicules him. Besides, he is more concerned with accusing Ikem and Chris to Sam in the latter's absence.

The three police officers are victims of oppression given their poor education background and poor salary. They are also often manipulated or intimidated by their chiefs. As for the soldier from the Presidential Palace, he is also a victim of oppression given his poor education background. They are cowards they attack innocent whose means of self-defense are more limited than theirs. They resort to their firearms to take advantages over civilians through immoral practices like corruption, intimidation and arbitrary arrest.

Elewa, Ikem's girlfriend is a victim of oppression because of her illiteracy and lack of job, the cause of which she depends on Beatrice, after Ikem's death. Agatha is a victim of oppression because of her illiteracy and her financial dependence on Beatrice Okoh. They are cowards because they naively accept conditions under which they are put.

The six members of Abazon undergo the oppressive measures such as poor education, deprivation of water in Abazon. Moreover, they are accused and arrested because of organizing an illegal march. The following extract reads:

Yes, in another development, according to this smug newscaster (...) six leaders from Abazon who were involved in a recent illegal march on the Presidential Palace without police permit as required by decree had been arrested (Achebe 1987:91).

They are cowards because they naively think that Sam can change his position and provide water in Kangan.

The chairman who is a university Professor also undergoes oppression. By closing the University of Bassa, he is deprived of his rights of work, speech and other social advantages. The BBC correspondent in Bassa is a victim of expulsion. Braimoh and Aina are victims of financial and educational poverty and the school girl is victim of sexual violence. Her coward attitude could be due to her fear of the gun, which is did not do anything to resist the policeman.

The following checklist contains the oppressed characters' names, sexes, education background and attitude towards oppression.

Chart 2. Synopsis of the Oppressed Characters' Attitude

N°	Title of the work	N°	Oppressed Characters' Attitude		Sex	Feeling	Education
			Heroic	Cowardly			
1	<i>Anthills of the Savannah</i>	1		Sam	M	Fear	Educated
		2	Chris Oriko		M	Courage	Educated
		3	Ikem Osodi		M	Courage	Educated
		4	Beatrice Okoh		F	Courage	Educated
		5	John Kent		M	Courage	Educated
		6	Dick		M	Courage	Educated
		7		Professor Okong	M	Fear	Educated
		8		Johnson Ossai	M	Fear	Educated
		9		Police officer 1	M	Fear	Uneducated
		10		Police officer 2	M	Fear	Uneducated
		11		Police officer 3	M	Fear	Uneducated
		12		Soldier	M	Fear	Uneducated
		13		Elewa	F	Fear	Uneducated
		14		Agatha	F	Fear	Uneducated
		15	Obete		M	Courage	Educated
		16		6 Members of Ab. Del.	M	Fear	Uneducated
		17	Braimoh		M	Courage	Uneducated
		18	Chairman		M	Courage	Educated
		19	The BBC correspondent		M	Courage	Educated
		20	Aina		F	Courage	Uneducated
		21		A school girl	F	Courage	Educated
Tot	1		T=26=100%, C=16=61,5%	H=10=38,4%,	M=21=80,7% F=5=19,2%	F=16=61,5% C=10=38,4%	E=12=46,1% B=14=53,8%

The abbreviations used in this table are worth commenting on for the sake of clarity:

T: Total number of characters: 26 (i.e. 100%)

H: characters with a heroic attitude=10=38.4%

C=characters with a cowardly attitude=16=61.5%

M=Male characters =21=80.7%

F=Female characters =5=19.2%

Fearful characters =16=61.5%

Courageous characters =10=38.4%

E=Educated characters=12=46.1%

B=Uneducated characters=14=53.8%

The chart above shows a total of 26 characters that are victims of oppression spotted in the novel *Anthills of the Savannah*, classified according to their attitude (heroic or coward), sex (male or female), feeling (courage or fear) and education background (educated or not). As it can be seen, 10 that is 38.4% characters have a heroic attitude and 16 that is 61.5% have a cowardly attitude. As far as their sex is concerned, 21 characters that is 80.7% are male and 5 that is 19.2% are female. Regarding their feeling, as it can be seen, 16 characters that is 61.5% are fearful and 10, that is 38.4% are courageous. Considering the characters' education background, 12 characters that is 46.1% are educated while 16 that is 53.8% are uneducated.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This article dealt essentially with reading, understanding, analyzing, interpreting and appreciating this work with regard to the oppressed and their attitude towards oppression. It targeted some essential features focusing on the oppressed characters and on the variables of interest to account for the following: (1) the courageous characters' attitude towards oppression, (2) the fearful characters' attitude towards oppression,, (3) the educated characters attitude towards oppression and (4) the uneducated characters' attitude towards oppression. For the sake of consistency, I considered Young's typology of oppression according to which there are five types of faces of oppression: violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism (Young 2004:2).

Achebe's novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* is about Sam's lust for power that urges him to organize a referendum in order to become President-for-life in Kangan, a fictional West African country. The vote being boycotted in Abazon, one of the four provinces of Kangan, Sam becomes angry with its population. As a punishment, he deprives the Abazonians of water. Even later, he refuses to receive their delegation in Bassa, the capital city and becomes hostile towards Ikem, a native of Abazon in the government, whom he orders his arrest and assassination. For having denounced the government as responsible of Ikem's death, Chris Oriko is pursued by Sam's secret service, which forced to go into hiding.

The oppressed characters include Sam, Ikem Osodi, Chris Oriko, the chairman, Emmanuel Obete, Beatrice Okoh, John Kent, Dick, the BBC correspondent in Bassa, Braimoh, Aina, Johnson Ossai, Elewa, Agatha, Professor Okong, the six members of the Abazon delegation, a school girl, and the three police officers, the soldier from the Presidential Palace.

In sum, the results prove that twenty-six characters that are victims of oppression have been spotted in the novel *Anthills of the Savannah*. Among

which, 10 characters that is 38.4% characters have a heroic attitude and 16 that is 61.5% have a cowardly attitude. These results confirm that there is still much to do in order to awake people's consciousness in the struggle against oppression.

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