

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is the art of language. Literature is a language art that represents language, tradition, and human life through literary works. (Mahsyur, Fithratullah, Kasih, 2023). Literature can be defined as a work that has beauty in it derived from aspects of human life (Mustantifa & Nurmaily, 2022). Understanding humanity and the outside world is aided by studying literature. Literature reflects human existence since it portrays the issues and struggles that people face. Considering that people write (Endang Woro Kasih, 2018), the setting is additionally about human existence (Nindyarini Wirawan & Samanik, 2018). The subjects covered in scholarly writings are probably depictions of problems with human existence. The academic viewpoint simplifies the environment in which human experience is examined. According to (Cahyaningsih & Pranoto, 2021) As humans are social beings, they cannot survive in isolation from one another. One of the human activities during collaboration is a suitable correspondence (Mulyah & Aminatun, 2020; Sari & Oktaviani, 2021). Literary works that place fictional people in actual historical settings to provide historical perspectives and promote national identity are nothing new (Rasiah, Marhadi, Bilu, Ngestirosa, 2023). According to Wellek and Warren, "*literature is a representation of life*" (1977, p. 94) this statement clarifies how life is portrayed in literature. Since literature is produced by humans, the setting also pertains to human existence. It is possible to

interpret the issues addressed in literary works as reflections of issues that arise in everyday life. In addition to providing readers with entertainment, literature also teaches them how to deal with authority figures. Moral principles are also essential components of any literary work. Literature is a useful tool for researching the discourses of colonialism because it is widely believed to be an excellent vehicle for the author's viewpoints (Kasih, 2018). Furthermore, as seen by Adichie's writings, literature can serve as a vehicle for the communication of power. To sum up, literature is beautiful and offers a profound understanding of people and the world around them.

The novel *Americanah* is one of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works. The protagonist of the novel is Ifemelu, a female character. This Nigerian woman immigrated to America to further her studies. In this instance, Ifemelu learns how to navigate cultural, racial, and identity disparities while living abroad. Ifemelu looked for part-time work while she was in the US and submitted applications for a variety of jobs, including cashier, waitress, and bartender. Furthermore, in her educational setting, her classmates would whisper to her if they knew she did not comprehend them. Moreover, Ifemelu is seen as someone who has a profound understanding of the difficulties associated with black identity because of her prior knowledge of the difficulties encountered by Africans and African-Americans.

The problem of labor and exploitation, particularly as it relates to immigrant workers and people of color, is one of the main subjects touched upon in the book.

Ifemelu takes on a several low-skilled occupations to support herself throughout the novel, including babysitting, cleaning, and salon work. Ifemelu works hard, but these jobs are generally low paying and show little respect for one's work, therefore she finds it difficult to make ends meet. The novel emphasizes how important labor is as a key element of economic expansion. The contribution of labor is crucial for promoting economic development in an economy that gives priority to industries that require a lot of work. Though they have different meanings and consequences, gender exploitation and labor are both portrayed in the book as social issues. This study focuses on gender and labor exploitation as a result.

Parts of the inborn components are the characters (Afrianto, Sujatna, Darmayanti, Ariyani, 2021), yet additionally the setting and struggle (Nababan & Nurmaily, 2021). The rationale for selecting the narrative viewpoint is that a key element will support the justification of the superfluous element (Sari & Oktaviani, 2021; Aminatun, Ngadiso, Marmanto, 2019). By depicting Ifemelu's character, the story seems to explore the problems of work and gender exploitation. Even if the notions of labor and gender exploitation are related, they have different connotations when it comes to the dynamics of work and employment. First, labor refers to the activities or jobs that people perform to produce products or provide services. Conversely, exploitation occurs when someone takes advantage of or benefits excessively from the hard work and contributions of others. Karl Marx's (2012) states the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of

man through human labor (p.133). Karl Marx posits that individual human labor will persistently engage in active creation through their productive endeavors.

As an essential component of production, labor has substantial value in the context of capitalism. Entrepreneurs and capital owners use labor to produce things and services to turn a profit. As said by Marx (1867 [2012]), "*The directing motive, the end and aim of capitalist products is to extract the greatest possible surplus value and consequently to exploit labor to the maximum extent possible*" (p.178). The concept of labor refers to the group of individuals who provide physical and mental effort to perform work to produce goods and services. Akerlof and Yellen (1986) argue "*that employers may choose to pay wages above the market rate to increase worker motivation and productivity. Higher wages can reduce turnover, increase loyalty, and improve the quality of work*". As a result, wages, salaries, or other types of payment are used to pay workers for their labor and provide them with a means of subsisting. In general, labor is the result of human effort and contribution to economic activity; it is a necessary component of both the economy and society.

Marxists believe that labor practices and exploitation are strongly related. Marxist analysis classifies people as victims of exploitation when they work and experience different kinds of oppression and pressure in addition to obtaining pay that fall short of expectations. Labor exploitation, the lines separating it conceptually and empirically being fiercely disputed. This is related to the well-known dearth of trustworthy information about the nature and extent of the

problem, which in turn makes it worse (Feingold, 2010). Meanwhile, Goldman persisted in highlighting the fact that women were exploited not only in their personal lives but also in their workplaces: Considering many working girls and women, how much independence is gained if the confines and lack of freedom of the home are substituted for those of a factory, sweatshop, department store, or office. As a result, the tragedy of the contemporary woman was essentially a double-edged exploitation that could only be ended by social and political reform.

Goldman locates the economy of women's sexuality firmly within the means of production and the exploitation of surplus labour. Women are not only commodities themselves, but also producers of the next generation of exploitable labour, within the twin evils of capitalism and militarism (Goldman, 2014)

Due to the capitalist exploitation of women, Goldman also came to see that birth control allowed women to exercise their right to self-determination over when and how to have children, freeing future generations from being forced to serve as cogs in the larger system of capitalist exploitation.

Finally, this study employs Karl Marx's theory of labor and gender exploitation to identify social and economic themes in the novel *Americanah*. The book shows how gender norms and exploitation impact both societies at large and the lives of its individuals. Furthermore, Ifemelu, the protagonist of the book, who moved from Nigeria to the United States in search of a respectable career, reflects the working conditions and the application of the current economic system in the country because of the availability of cheap labor, particularly from immigrants. The intricate relationships between social, cultural, and economic elements that influence immigrant workers' experiences have been examined in the book. As a

result, the novel *Americanah* is narrowly focused for analysis using the social and economic Marxist lenses to determine how the social conditions in the novel are depicted. Thus, to elaborate more in line with Marxist theory, the researcher made a study entitled *Labor and Gender Exploitation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah Novel: Marxist Feminist Analysis*.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the explanation in the research background, the author formulates the following research questions:

How is labor and gender exploitation using Marxist feminist theories seen in the *Americanah* novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie?

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives of this study are as follows:

To describe labor and gender exploitation using Marxist feminist theories in the *Americanah* novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's.

1.4 Use of the Study

There are several benefits that can be obtained from conducting this research, namely:

1.4.1 Practice Use

This research aims to provide additional information and improve understanding of Labor and gender exploitation in the novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie through Marxist Feminist analysis approach.

1.4.2 Theoretical Use

This research aims to make a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Especially literary studies on Labor and Gender Exploitation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel *Americanah*: Marxist Feminist Analysis.

1.5 Scope of The Study

This research is specifically focusing on labor and gender exploitation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* as Marxist Feminist analysis. The researcher will analyze the social and economic issues pertaining to labor and gender exploitation in the *Americanah* novel, employing Karl Marx's Feminists Marxist theories.