

THE INFLUENCES OF GENDER INEQUALITY TOWARD SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN THE NOVEL *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS* BY KHALED HOSSEINI

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>This research studies of the influences of gender inequality toward self-actualization in the novel <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> by Khaled Hosseini. The Objectives of the studies are 1) to describe the type of gender inequality depicted in the Novel <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> and 2) to elaborate the influence of gender inequality toward Self-Actualization in the novel <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>. There are two theories used in this study which are Gender Inequality by Mansour Fasih and Humanistic Psychology by Abraham Maslow. The methodology used by the researcher is qualitative research. This study analyzes data collected from quotes and narratives to find types of gender inequality that can affect a person's self-development, especially in achieving self-actualization. The analysis of this research focuses on the concept of gender inequality and self-actualization. The data collected from the material object of this research provides an overview of the forms of gender inequality that must be experienced by female characters in the novel. Through this research it was found that gender inequality can negatively affect self-actualization achievement. There are some evidences and proofs of type of gender inequality depicted on the novel such as Women Subordination, violence, women stereotyping, and marginalization.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Gender Inequality, Self-Actualization, Influence.</i></p>	<p><i>Received:</i> May 11, 2024</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> Jun 11, 2024</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> July 13, 2024</p>

INTRODUCTION

Women believe that their transcendency is being immanence because they tend to internalize themselves as “the other”. This belief has clouding women’s judgment to the standard of achievement one deserves to have because they think they are mere subordinate gender in a “patriarchal” version of world. The issues are caused by a culture and customs that believe women do not have the quality to be an equal match to men. Furthermore, a perception of women being “the other” creates oppression toward women by men. In other

words, women are considered as subordinate gender that has no power to decide their existence.

Gender is defined as socially constructed norms and ideologies which determine the behavior and actions of men and women (World Development Report in Kangas), and on the other hand, Inequality refers to the phenomenon of unequal and/or unjust distribution of resources and opportunities among members of a given society (Sin Yee Koh, 2020). Therefore, Gender Inequality is a form of unjust or unequal distribution of resources as an outcome of a social system that oppresses certain gender and causes disadvantages.

Gender Inequality could negatively influence the development of women which could disrupt the process in achieving Self- Actualization. Self- Actualization is the peak of Maslow's Pyramid of needs which as Maslow (1943) says "we shall call people who are satisfied with these needs, basically satisfied people, and it is from these that we may expect the fullest (and healthiest) creativity" In other words one should satisfy the basic needs before reaching Self – Actualization. Basic needs consist of 4 (four) levels which are Physiological needs, safety needs, love or belonging needs, and esteem needs, and those 4 (four) needs (Physiological needs, safety needs, love or belonging needs, and esteem needs) are related to one another.

The relation between those needs is that one must fulfill a certain level of needs before moving on to the other needs, then the achievement creates an urge, drive or desire to satisfy the higher level of needs. On the contrary, if the lower level of needs is thwarted, it could interfere with achieving Self-Actualization. As Maslow stated (1943:23) "Danger to these is reacted to almost as if it were a direct danger to the basic needs themselves." One of the factors that possibly contribute in thwarting the process is Gender Inequality, thus it is influential towards Self -Actualization.

The issue of gender inequality is depicted in the object of this research which is a novel "A Thousand splendid Suns" by Khaled Hossein. The setting and the plot of the story were most likely become the cause of gender inequality that depict in the story. The setting took place in Afghanistan, and it happened during post-World War II through the cold war, the fall of the Russian Fleet, and the fall of the Afghan army until the rise of Afghan Muja-hideen. The characters and narrative perspective that describes the characters in the story and how the characters develop, besides that by using psychology theory the characters in the story can also be analyzed. In this research, the researcher examines how gender inequality which gives birth to women's subordination can affect the psychological development of the characters in the story so that it has an impact on the self-actualization process.

Through the research, the researcher also would like to voicing the downside of gender inequality. The researcher elaborates the interwind negative link between gender inequality, and Self-Actualization to help the reader to be aware of the issue of gender inequality in society. The researcher also wants to enhance the research reader's knowledge about the important in fulfilling needs in order to reach self- actualization. In order to elaborate on those subjects, the researcher used Feminism and psychology theories: Self-Actualization Theory, also well known as Humanistic Psychology Theory by Abraham Maslow.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Inequality By Mansour Faqih

Gender inequality arises because of gender differences and the tendency of society to be unable to distinguish between gender inequality and gender gaps. "gender gap are defined here as the observed difference between man and women" (Shang, 2022:6) while gender inequality is "a matter of fairness and concerning the wellbeing of women" (Shang, 2022:6)

according to Fakih (1996:7) "to understand the concept of gender we must first distinguish sex and gender". Gender is a difference between the 2 sexes that are determined biologically, while gender is a trait that exists in men or women that is constructed by culture or society.

Gender inequality is a product of a system that is formed, socialized and strengthened socially and hereditary According to Fakih (1996: 12): "*Perbedaan gender sesungguhnya tidak menjadi masalah selama tidak melahirkan ketidakadilan gender. Namun, yang menjadi persoalan, ternyata perbedaan gender telah melahirkan berbagai ketidakadilan, baik bagi kaum laki-laki dan terutama kaum perempuan*" Gender differences are actually not a problem as long as they do not cause gender injustice. However, the problem is that gender differences have caused to various injustices, both for men and especially for women. (Trans)

Gender Inequality is never just about males versus female because the unjust inequality created by gender differences influence whether men or women. On the other hand, gender inequality causes subordination of women that affects interpersonal relationships in one's self.

To understand how gender inequality is one of the roots of the problem in the object of this research is to know the forms of injustice that are manifested by gender inequality, namely the marginalization of women, women's subordination, stereotyped women, violence and workload.

Women's Marginalization

Marginalization of women namely the process of marginalization experienced by women due to gender inequality which can result in these groups experiencing poverty. The example of marginalization is women receive lower salaries than men, due to the notion that women are additional breadwinners. The impact of marginalization is that women's work motivation can decrease, causing anxiety and stress in the workplace and the lack of women's participation in the public sphere and the tendency of women to be exploited as cheap labor.

Women's Subordination

Subordination is a view that considers one gender is not more important than the other gender. Gender subordination causes injustice to one particular gender and women are a gender that tends to be subordinated because women are considered to be more emotional while men are considered to be more rational so they are more worthy to be a leader.

Women's Stereotyping

In general, stereotypes are labeling or marking certain groups and unfortunately stereotypes are always detrimental and cause injustice. one type of stereotype is from a gender perspective which leads to injustice to certain genders, especially women. For example, women who dress up are considered to attract the opposite sex, so every time there is a case of violence or sexual harassment, women are blamed based on this stereotype.

Violence

Violence is an attack or invasion of a person's physical, mental, psychological integrity (Mansour Fakhri, 1996). one type of violence is violence against women based on gender injustice or known as gender-related violence. There are many types of violence that can be categorized as gender violence, namely marital rape, beatings and physical attacks, torture that leads to genitals, prostitution, pornography, and forced sterilization, molestation, and sexual and emotional harassment.

Workload

The distribution of the workload between women and men is often unequal. In many cases, the notion that women are nurturing and diligent means that all household chores are the responsibility of women alone. this resulted in many women having to work hard and for a long time, especially if women also had to work due to economic conditions as a result women had to do multiple jobs. This is due to the existence of gender bias in society which gives birth to gender inequality

Humanistic Psychology By Abraham Maslow

Humanistic Psychology according to Maslow is “psychology that pays more attention to human problems, is more creative, focuses on problems, not just the method, and deeply observes an individual, not the mere behavior, studying an individual that has the freedom to make choices, and also studying an individual as a unique personality (Giorgi in Abdul Rahman, 2018)”.

Abraham Maslow's Theory departs with the belief that humans are motivated not just by one part but by the whole of themselves. The Trademark of Maslow's Theory is the hierarchy of needs where to reach the peak of the pyramid of needs, humans must fulfill the basic needs first, such as physiological needs, safety needs, love, and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization.

Psychological Needs

Psychological needs are the basic needs on the hierarchy of needs. According to Abraham Maslow (1953) “the physiological need: the needs that are usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives”. Example of psychological needs is food, water, warmth, rest, oxygen, etcetera; after psychological needs are satisfied, then humans will be motivated to go on next level of the hierarchy of needs.

Safety Needs

Safety needs are the need to be physically and mentally secure; examples of safety needs are security, stability, dependency, protection, freedom from fear, anxiety, chaos, et-cetera. Safety needs are the needs that have to be fulfilled to create healthy and fortunate humans. A good and safe environment give humans space to develop their creativity, interest, and talent to become actualized people. Therefore, when humans do not have to worry about their safety, they are safe plenty of times to do other valuable things than hiding and being scared all the time.

Love/Belonging Need

Love and belonging needs in every human being is a motivation to be loved and belong to a relationship such as friendship, romantic relationship, and the need to have offspring.

Esteem Need

Every human being needs to be stable and have a high evaluation of themselves, self-respect, self-esteem, and esteem from others. According to Maslow (1953) “satisfaction with self-esteem, and need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world”. Gratifying the esteem need will build confidence and strong characteristic and it will help the person to accomplish self-actualization. Therefore, esteem need is the second highest need in the hierarchy of needs.

self-actualization

Self-Actualization or the need for self-actualization is the highest level of needs in human development. It is because even though all of the needs are fulfilled, one cannot fully satisfied until one do what one is fitted for as Maslow (1953) states “... what a man can be, he must be. The need we may call self-actualization”. Individuals who succeed in actualizing themselves are people who have better personalities and have the ability to be more functional in a social environment. any characteristics of self-actualized individual are more efficient perception of reality, acceptance of self, others, and nature, spontaneity, simplicity and naturalness, problem centering, the needs of privacy, autonomy, continued freshness of appreciation, the peak experience, *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, profound interpersonal relations, the democratic character structure, discrimination between means and ends, philosophical sense of humor, creativeness, resistance to enculturation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research of this study is a qualitative method that involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data. This method is usually used to analyze humanities and social science. The qualitative method allows the researcher to deliver the topic of study on broad way. It gives the researcher a broad angle in choosing topics of interest because the other method is more constrained by some aspects; the inability to establish necessary research conditions, difficulty drawing an adequate sample of respondents, and a sufficiently high

response rate. Furthermore, qualitative research has become acceptable in many academic and professional fields because it is an attractive and fruitful research method. On the other hand, the researcher also uses descriptive writing to analyze data, and analyzing data in this study uses collecting, processing, and explaining the interpretation procedures. In this study, the researcher use 2 (two) types of data research which are primary and secondary data. The primary data of this study are the Novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, Motivation and Personality by Abraham Maslow, and the Theory of Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow. This study collects secondary data from several sources, such as journals, articles, and e-books.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Type of Gender Inequality

1. Women Marginalization

In the storyline marginalization is depicted through Taliban Regulation that forbid women to have a job as mentioned in the excerpt below:

“We get mothers like you all the time--all the time--mothers who come here who can't feed their children because the **Taliban won't let them go out and make a living.**” (Hosseini, 2007, 311)

Excerpt 1 clearly portray the kind of marginalization that has to be faced by women in the Afghanistan (the setting of the story). The bold sentence on the first excerpts is the proof that there is a force or specific law that forbid women in doing something or taking job just because they are women.

2. Women Subordination

The type of women subordination such as the assumption of women that tend to be subordinate because women considerate to be more emotional than men, physically considered weaker than men, thus women considered not as important as men. These assumption causes inequality treatment towards particular gender, especially women.

“When they informed him that he had **a new daughter** Nana said, Jalil had shrugged, kept brushing his horse's mane, and stayed in Takht-e-Safar another two weeks.” (Hosseini, 2007, 12)

From the excerpt above it can be seen that women are considered less important than men because when a father is informed that he has a daughter he does not even bother and proceeding whatever he is doing, it will not be the same if the baby is boy.

3. Women's Stereotyping

Women stereotyping is generally is about labeling or marking certain groups or person that can possibly cause injustice. Women stereotyping is about unobjective perspective

towards women that tend to be misunderstood and misjudged by a particular appearance, for instance women who are wearing revealing dresses tend to be labeled as seductive, flirtatious, or even prostitutes.

Yes, **modern** Afghan women married to **modern** Afghan men who did not mind that their wives walked among strangers with makeup on their faces and nothing on their heads. (Hosseini, 2007, 74)

Based on the excerpt above it can be seen that women tend to be misjudged through an unobjective perspective because women who are wearing revealing dresses are labeled as having improper behavior. This misjudgment can lead to unequal treatment and disrespect towards women. Furthermore, women who are labeled as bad women tend to be treated disrespectfully or harassed because most men consider “The action” as an act of seduction. Therefore, usually when women are attacked, insulted, harassed or even raped, people—even the victim tend to blame herself because of this stereotyping.

4. Violence

There are types of violence against women or gender-related violence, for instance: mental rape, beatings, physical attack, prostitution, pornography, and sexual and emotional harassment. The female characters must endure several kinds of violence that unfortunately affect women's way of life, productivity, and rights as human beings.

Rasheed raised the belt again and this time came at Mariam. **Rasheed raised the belt again and this time came at Mariam.** (Hosseini, 2007, 235)

In the excerpt it shows how Rasheed is beating his wives – Mariam and Laila using a belt or any other equipment that can do harm to them both. Rasheed's action towards his wives is classified as beating.

5. Workload

The distribution of women's and men's workload is often unequal because there is a notion that women are nurturing and diligent. This kind of assumption then burdens women with daily household chores which are considered to be women's obligations while men are not required to do them. Workload does not show much when compared to the other type of gender inequality.

She pictured herself living there, in Kabul, at the other end of that unimaginable distance, living in a stranger's house where she would have to concede to his moods and his issued demands. She would have to **clean after this man**, Rasheed, **cook for him**, **wash his clothes**. And there would be **other chores as well—Nana had told her what husbands did to their wives**. It was the thought of these intimacies in particular, which she imagined as painful acts of perversity, that filled her with dread and made her break out in a sweat. (Hosseini, 2007, 48 -49)

In the excerpt above it can be seen that the type of workload a wife has to do is obligatory.

The Influence of Gender Inequality towards Self-Actualization

Gender inequality capable in influencing the process of achieving self – actualization. In order to achieving self – actualization, one has to fulfilled the other basic needs or the lower part of the pyramid of needs. One cannot truly be content if one of the basic needs are obstructed or neglected. In this section the researcher explains the negative influence gender inequality possess towards the process of basic needs fulfillment and also elaborate the self-actualization of female characters would have had if the “obstructions” did not even exist.

1. The Influence of Women Marginalization

Compared to another type of gender inequality, women marginalization is not the most significantly influential towards self- actualization. It can be seen on the figure 4.1 that Marginalization only takes 3 %. In the figure 4.1.3 it also can be seen that women marginalization is not as influential as the other type of gender inequality, yet it still influences some of the basic needs in any possible way. Thus, in this section the researcher elaborates the result of its influences which are The Lack of Providing Physiological Need, Low Self-Esteem, Fearfulness, and Feeling Unworthy.

We get mothers like you all the time--all the time--mothers who come here who **can't feed their children** because the **Taliban won't let them go out and make a living**. (Hosseini, 2007, 311)

From the excerpt above it can be seen women are excluded and disconnect from source of power- in this case is source of education and works, then it causes women inequality treatment by having unequal opportunity to get job so they cannot provide for them and their children when it is needed. The phrase “...who come here who can't feed their children **because** the Taliban won't let them go out and make a living” the conjunction “because” on the sentence proof that the phrase on the left side of the conjunction happen after the action mention on the phrase at the right sight of the conjunction word.

2. The Influence of Women Subordination

The researcher find that women subordination become highest contributor in obstructing the fulfillment of women's need as human being. Women subordination contribute in influencing the physiological need, safety need, love/belonging need and esteem need and make detachment, low self- respect, unprotected. And unequal distribution of basic needs for women. it is portrayed in the novel from the excerpt below:

When they informed him that he had a **new daughter** Nana said, Jalil had shrugged, kept brushing his horse's mane, and stayed in Takht-e-Safar another two weeks. (Hosseini, 2007, 12)

From the excerpt above it can be seen that Jalil (the father) does not even bother when heard the news that he had a new daughter because daughter-a girl-is a subordinate gender that is believed as “the other” or less important than man. It is also because daughter is not as important as son, and having a daughter is a symbol of weakness. Therefore, this is what then disrupts the relationship between father and daughter which then makes the daughter not feel loved or detached with the relatives from different gender. This feeling is what then

makes the love/belonging need not fulfilled because the feeling of being detach or not belong to the environment where women should get respect, approval and recognition in order to achieve self-actualization.

3. The Influence of Women Stereotyping

Women Stereotyping is one of the types of gender inequality that can be found in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Women stereotyping influence the process of achieving self-actualization and creates low esteem from others, lack of opportunity, practical married, and defenseless women. it can be proven from this excerpt.

These women were—what was the word Rasheed had used? "**modern.**" Yes, modern Afghan women married to modern Afghan men who did not mind that their wives walked among strangers with makeup on their faces and nothing on their heads. (Hosseini, 2007, 74)

In the excerpt above it can be seen that women are an easy target to labeled and misjudge. This treatment leads to disrespect action towards women. thus women stereotyping influence esteem need and create low esteem from others.

4. The Influence of Violence

Violence is an attack or invasion of a person's physical, mental, psychological integrity. these types of actions that can affect the fulfillment of basic needs in the hierarchical pyramid. violence is the highest contributor affecting the achievement of basic needs. In this session the researcher elaborates some excerpts found in the novel "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*" by Khaled Hosseini to prove that violence has capability in influencing basic needs (physiological need, love/belonging need, safety need, and esteem need) and creates insecurity, abusive relationship, low evaluation of themselves, and the lack of comfort.

There was always something, some minor thing that would **infuriate him**, because **no matter what she did to please him**, no matter how thoroughly she submitted to his wants and demands, it wasn't enough. She could not give him his son back. His cheeks were quivering. "Now you know what your rice tastes like. **Now you know what you've given me in this marriage.** Bad food, and nothing else." (Hosseini, 2007, 98)

On the excerpt above it can be seen that violence or abusive environment can affect the way someone behavior towards other people. As we can see on the phrases "infuriate him" it can be interpreted that the husband is no longer affectionate to his wife and the term "no matter what she did to please him" it can be taken as evidence that abusive or violence can change one treatment to another. therefore, violence has the capability to influence the love/belonging needs since it has impact toward one's relationship situation.

5. The Influence of Workload

Workload does not significantly influence the process of self-actualization compare to another type of gender inequality yet it still influences the basic need in some way. There-

fore, the researcher explains about the excerpt found about the interwind link between workload and the disruption of basic needs such as the lack of rest time, feeling excluded, instability, and diffidence.

One night, Mariam was **a few minutes late with dinner**, and he started eating bread with radishes. Even after Mariam put the rice and the lamb and okra qurma in front of him, he wouldn't touch it. He said nothing, went on chewing the bread, his temples working, the vein on his forehead, **full and angry**. He went on chewing and staring ahead, and when Mariam spoke to him he looked at her without seeing her face and put another piece of bread into his mouth. (Hosseini, 2007, 48 -49)

From the excerpt above the first bold phrases "... a few minutes late with dinner" it can be interpreted as the lateness that Mariam did because she got some unpredictable circumstance in the story at that time, so she late to prepare dinner, and without any consideration the husband is angry to her and mentally abuse her by looked at her without seeing her face and just ignore her for the rest of the night. This kind of poor event could lead to instability in marriage which stability is one of the safety needs that must be fulfilled in order to reach self-actualization.

CONCLUSION

The Conclusion of this research is the type of gender inequality have capability to influence the process of women's self- actualization negatively. The type of gender inequality influences the basic needs in hierarchy of needs in order to achieve self -actualization in a negative way, so the process of the achievement is disrupted. The most dominant gender inequality towards basic needs that must be fulfilled in order to reach the peak of hierarchy of needs is Violence. Violence most influence safety needs and the researcher think that safety is the most crucial matter because one cannot be productive, creative in self developing if one does not feel safe. All 4 (four) basic needs are significant factor that must be fulfilled in order to reach self -actualization. Self-actualization is important for women because those .who can actualized themselves will have such a good personality like efficient perception of reality, acceptance of self, others, and nature, spontaneity, simplicity and naturalness, problem centering, the needs of privacy, autonomy, continued freshness of appreciation, the peak experience, *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, profound interpersonal relations, the democratic character structure, discrimination between means and ends, philosophical sense of humor, creativeness, resistance to enculturation.

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