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## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CLASS TOWARD SOCIAL REJECTION IN NOVEL *OF MICE AND MEN* BY JOHN STEINBECK

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>The research uses novel Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck as an object of the research. This research uses Sociology of Literature approach with coverage Social Class by Karl Marx and Social Rejection by Leary and Chandrani Mukherjee. The theories are used in the research those theory Social class by Karl Marx is divided into theory of alienation, false consciousness, class struggle and theory Social Rejection by Chandari Mukherjee. The researcher used Descriptive Qualitative methods that is explaining descriptively based on this research using document analysis as a reference. The result of this research is finding three forms of social rejection, those are social environment or friendship rejection with 46 data, career or workplace rejection with 14 data, and intimate relationship rejection with 5 data. Then, the influence of social class toward social rejection shows the alienation toward social environment or friendship rejection with 24 data, alienation toward workplace and career rejection with 23 data, alienation toward intimate relationship rejection with 5 data. Overall, alienation as an influence of social class toward social rejection has the most excerpts in the three forms of social rejection, especially in form social environment or friendship rejection it is the most rejection.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Social Class, Social Rejection, Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck</p>	<p>Received: 22/09/2025</p> <p>Revised: 23/09/2025</p> <p>Accepted: 27/09/2025</p>

### INTRODUCTION

Social rejection can have a negative impact on a person. In fact, social rejection can lead to despair and darkness. In a person who is rejected by society, Increasing the risk of mental health problems that can affect a person's quality of life. According to DeWall & Bushman (2011), Two aspects make up a need to belong, first people in general desire regular, positive social interaction, Second, people want a stable framework of some relationship in which the the individuals share a mutual concern for each other.

from the statement above, there are two aspects in life belong, first people want a positive social interaction in a group or circle, second the people want a relationship in social life with the individuals and share a similar concern for both of people and individuals. Researcher uses Leary statement in this research.

From the Leary states, researcher understand the social rejection occurs when a person or group of people rejects the presence, behaviour, or mindset of a particular individual or group. This is generally due to incompatibility or inability to adapt to social norms, differences in religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other factors that distinguish the individual or group from the majority. The concept of social rejection is also complex, that includes actions ranging from ignoring the existence of another individual to removing them from a group or current relationship.

Social rejection does not occur in real life, but in literary works such as novel also occur a social rejection in the story of novel. One of example in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck was released in 1937 presenting several social rejection through characters in the novel. The characters face social rejection from many different characters in the story, such as facing rejection due to mental disability and often not taken seriously by others and often as subject of ridicule and bullying, rejecting by others due to age and often treated as a burden and being afraid of letting go from job. (Steinbeck. J, *Of Mice and Men*, 2023)

One of the causes of social rejection is the social class that exists in society. According to Abrams (1981), Social class is basically a classification in society based on differences in the economic, educational, and social status of individuals or groups. From the statement of Abrams researcher understands the term social class refers to a way of categorizing people within a society based on certain factors such as their economic standing, level of education, and overall social status. Essentially, it is a system for distinguishing between individuals or groups based on these various factors. In the journal of Marta, there is a perspective of Karl Marx. In literary works there is a social class phenomenon, such as in novel. Social class describes clearly in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. The characters in the novel are divided by social class. The ranch workers, like George and Lennie are at the bottom of the social ladder, they into working class and have little job security or stability. They are often looked down upon by the ranch owner and family, who are wealthier and more powerful. The owner of ranch and family into capitalist class. The only female character in the novel, Curley's wife, is also marginalized due to her gender and social status. She is often criticized and dismissed by the other characters, and her dreams and desires are never fully realized.

The reason why researcher uses topic *the influence social class toward social rejection* in this research, the social class and social rejection issues are still relevant and interesting subject to discuss until this time. This topic is being chosen because social class and social rejection remain relevant and interesting subjects of discussion even in the present time. This implies that there exists a continuing interest in studying the impact of social class on social rejection, given the social and economic disparities in society. From the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, researcher finds a social class in the novel is shown through characters like the boss, Curley, and his wife occupy positions of power and privilege. They are

the owners of the ranch and have a sense of superiority over the other workers. They display their wealth and status through their clothing, posture, and manners. On the other hand social rejection is explored in the novel through the character of Crooks, a black stable hand who is isolated from the other workers due to his race. He is not allowed to socialize or play card games with the other workers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Sociology of Literature**

Researcher uses sociology of literature as a sociology approach in this research. Sociology of literature is a approach based on social aspect in. according to Abrams (1981), states the social and environmental context of a given era greatly influences the form and content of literary works. Literature often reflects the cultural, social, and historical context of the society in which it was created. It can also play a role in shaping and influencing those systems and values. In turn, the reception and interpretation of literature by individuals and groups can be shaped by their own cultural, social, and historical context.

### **Social Class**

Researcher uses social class by karl marx to analyze an influence of social class then connecting the theories to the object by reading the social class theory. According to Marx (1972, p. 115), capitalist societies are characterized by an inherent conflict between the bourgeoisie is capitalist class, who own and control the means of production and the proletariat is working class, who sell their labor. After that researcher founds the bourgeoisie class and the proletariat class.

#### **1. Bourgeoisie class**

Usually knows as capitalist class, the bourgeoisie always controls the proletariat, Marx's claim that the bourgeoisie is driven to develop its products on a global scale by their constant need for growth effectively captures a fundamental reality. Everywhere it nestles, settles, and makes connections, it must. A cosmopolitan quality to production and consumption has been given upon all nations by the bourgeoisie through its exploitation of the global market (Marx, K et al., 2012, p. 193).

#### **2. Ploretariat Class**

This class takes a control under bourgeoisie, this class usually knowns as working class and moving by bourgeoisie class. The proletariat, or modern working class, developed a class of laborers who live only as long as they find work and who find work only as long as their labor increases capital. This class of laborers is developed in proportion to the bourgeoisie class, also known as the capital class (Marx, 1948, p. 18).

Karl Marx's theory primarily focuses on the class struggle between the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class). While Karl Marx didn't

directly to social rejection in the context of social class, but researcher can infer some connections with theory of Alienation, False Consciousness, and Class Struggle.

a. Alienation

Alienation is when workers in capitalist societies don't feel like they have any power, control, or fulfilment. This is because the means of production are privately owned and controlled. With the increase in machinery, technological advancements, and assembly lines where many people work on one product, there is a loss of meaning to individual workers (Marx, 1992).

b. False Consciousness

According to Marxist theory, a way of thinking that keeps people from realising the true nature of their social and economic circumstances is known as "false consciousness." It characterises a situation in which the working class, or proletariat, holds values or beliefs that are at odds with their own interests, frequently as a result of ideological manipulation by the bourgeoisie, the ruling class (Eyerman, R. 1981, p. 44).

c. Class Struggle

Marx defined class as constituted of people living under economic conditions that separated their mode of life, interests, and culture from other classes, and put them into hostile opposition to them. Hence, classes exist because of their relationship with the means of production. Marx had claimed that the history of all hitherto existing societies was the history of class struggles. (Yadav, N. Karl Marx-Class Struggle.)

## **Social Rejection**

Researcher uses theory Social rejection to analyze the object with theory and found the forms of social rejection there are firsts rejection in workplace or career rejection, second rejection in social environment or friendship, third intimate relationship rejection. Social rejection means that others have little desire to include you in their groups and relationships. Social rejection is a complicated concept that includes actions ranging from blatantly excluding someone from a group or relationship to actively ignoring their presence. According to Chandrani Mukherjee (2022), social rejection can show itself in many different ways, and it can affect everyone.

1. Career or Workplace Rejection

A job ensures a person's steady income. Additionally, it gives them a feeling of stability and financial security. Even if you has all the required abilities or desired qualifications for a particular job role, you might still experience some sort of rejection at times. Your only reality is that you simply don't get the job. (Mukherjee, Chandrani. 2022)

2. Social environment or Friendship Rejection

One of the most popular forms of social rejection is this. Stable relationships outside of the immediate family are built on friendship or social environment. In such situations, it is possible for a person to face outright rejection if they do not agree with the peer group's viewpoints. Others may exclude them because they are not their types or different. Individual differences, financial differences, and differences in values and opinions in life can all lead to social rejection in peer groups. (Mukherjee, Chandrani. 2022)

### 3. Intimate Relationship Rejection

This kind of rejection hurts and can occur when partners are not incompatible. One of the partners may try to distance themselves from the relationship if they feel they do not have many things in common or do not get along well. Social rejection occurs frequently in marital relationships. One partner may close doors to the other, resulting in rejection, if there are significant individual differences between the partners and lack of adjustment seems likely. If one of the partners is a mismatch or has a low compatibility score with the other partner, the potential romantic partners can take their places. (Mukherjee, Chandrani. 2022)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researcher uses descriptive qualitative research in analyzing novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck and analyzing with theory Social class by Karl Marx and Social rejection by Leary and Chandrani Mukherjee. In this research the data is taken from books, journals, internet, and novel *Of Mice and Men* edition 2023. According to Creswell (1994), the descriptive research approach collects data about the state of affairs as it is at the moment. The goal of the descriptive technique, according to Creswell (2012, p. 274), is to methodically find a thorough explanation and description of the study object. In this research uses theory social class by Karl Marx and social rejection by Leary and Chandrani Mukherjee to analyze novel *Of Mice and Men*. Because the research is described in words, sentences, and phrases, the researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method of research.

The most important part of research is data. There are many methods to gathering and analyzing data. The two main categories of data sources are primary and secondary data. Researcher uses every data with analyzed and interpreted to get information needed. Primary data that researcher uses from novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck edition 2023, and Secondary data gets from Journals, Books, Websites which related to research. Researcher elaborates the data collection with step by step. The procedures of data collection by researcher are as follows, the primary data is taken from novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. The first, researcher read directly and repeatedly novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, then researcher determined the relevant theories which related to solve the research questions.

Researcher analyses to collect the data and analyze the data with writing technique descriptive to give interpretation and answering problems, as follows : First, Read and interpreted the interactions between characters such as Lenny and Goerge interactions in and other

characters in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck for finding the data needed to produce the best possible research outcomes. Second, Organized the data into groups of social rejection throughout the novel, such as rejection to Lenny in social environment. The researcher separated a social rejection in the novel based on forms of social rejection. Third, The researcher marked and classified the data based on research questions, the first research question was classifying the forms of social rejection and the second was classifying a social class influence social rejection. Fourth, Marked every words and determined each finding that related to the social rejection and the social class which described in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Fifth, Understanding the data by analyzed the influence of social class toward social rejection in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, the researcher understood how social class and social rejection reacted in the novel, through the novel researcher knew the influence of social class toward social rejection.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Forms of social rejection**

Researcher is going to be explained the first research question in this part. The first research question is what are the forms of social rejection found in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Researcher uses a theory of forms of social rejection by Chandrani Mukherjee, there are three forms of social rejection, first is career or workplace rejection, second is social environment or friendship rejection, third is intimate relationship rejection.

#### **1. Career or Workplace Rejection (CWR)**

In this form of career or workplace rejection, there are fourteen excerpts that researcher find in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.

##### **Excerpt 1**

"Give stable buck hell?" He asked. "Sure. Ya see the stable buck's a nigger." "Nigger, huh?" "Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where. a horse kicked him. The boss gives him hell when he's mad. But the stable buck don't give a damn about that." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.22)

The quotation from the novel *Of Mice and Men* can be interpreted in the context of workplace or career rejection, where the stable buck represents someone who is facing rejection or discrimination in their workplace or career due to their race, gender, disability, or any other non-related factor. The first character's comment, "Give stable buck hell?", implies that they want to be mean to him because of this factor. The second character's response, though using a racial slur, highlights the stable buck's good qualities and resilience in the face of adversity. The stable buck, despite being a victim of discrimination and ill-treatment by the boss, doesn't give up, doesn't let it bother him and keeps on doing his job.

## 2. Social Environment or Friendship Rejection (SEFR)

In this form of rejection in social environment or friendship, there are thirty seven excerpts that researcher find in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.

### Excerpt 15

"God, you're a lot of trouble," said George. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.8)

The quote from the novel *Of Mice and Men* can be interpreted in the context of rejection in the social environment or friendship, particularly with regard to a strained relationship between two friends. George, in this text, expresses frustration and dissatisfaction with his friend Lennie, indicating that he would have an easier and better life if Lennie were not around. George feels that Lennie's presence burdens him and makes it difficult for him to achieve the things he wants in life, such as living independently or having a girlfriend. This text reflects the experience of frustration or resentment that some individuals may feel in relationships or friendships when they are not able to pursue their own aspirations because of the needs or challenges of others in the relationship.

## 3. Intimate relationship rejection (IRR)

In this form of intimate relationship rejection, there are thirty seven excerpts that researcher find in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.

### Excerpt 61

"The girl flared up. "Sure I gotta husban'. You all seen him. Swell guy, ain't he? Spends all his time sayin' what he's gonna he don't like, and he don't like nobody." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.88)

This quote from the novel *Of Mice and Men* portrays a moment where a woman is being rejected by a man in an intimate relationship. The woman indicates that she is married and implies that her husband is unpleasant and dislikes everyone. The tone of her response, particularly the phrase "Swell guy, ain't he?" suggests that she is disillusioned with her husband and possibly trapped in an unhappy relationship. This text demonstrates the pain associated with rejection, particularly in intimate relationships, and the sense of dissatisfaction that arises from being with someone who does not appreciate or value one's presence. It also hints that social relationships might not always be positive, and individuals could face rejection and exclusion, even in romantic or intimate relationships.

## **The influence of social class toward social rejection**

Researcher is going to explain the first research question in this part. The first research question is what are the forms of social rejection found in the novel *Of Mice and Men*

by John Steinbeck. Researcher uses theory of social class toward social rejection by Karl Marx, there are two classes in social class, first is bourgeoisie class, second is Proletariat class. There are the influences of social class, these are an alienation, a false consciousness, and class struggle.

1. Social class toward rejection in workplace or career rejection

In this part, social class is divided into two classes, there are bourgeoisie class and proletariat class, but the Influences of social class are alienation, false consciousness, class struggle, then the influences are linked with rejection in workplace or career rejection.

a. Alienation toward rejection in workplace or career rejection

In this part, researcher finds the data of alienation toward rejection in workplace or career rejection with three excerpts.

Excerpt 1

"Give stable buck hell?" He asked. "Sure. Ya see the stable buck's a nigger ." "Nigger, huh?" "Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where. a horse kicked him. The boss gives him hell when he's mad. But the stable buck don't give a damn about that." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.22)

This text is from the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. The characters in this story are discussing the stable buck, who is a black man that works in the stable. The quote "Give stable buck hell?" refers to the boss being angry with the stable buck and taking it out on him by giving him a hard time. The reason why the boss is able to do this is because the stable buck is not part of the bourgeoisie, or the wealthy upper class. The characters also mention that the stable buck has a crooked back because of a horse kick, which likely made it harder for him to find work elsewhere. This could be interpreted as an example of career rejection or discrimination in the workplace due to factors outside of one's control, like race or physical ability.

b. False Consciousness toward rejection in workplace or career rejection

In this part, researcher finds the data of False Consciousness toward rejection in workplace or career rejection with seven excerpts.

Excerpt 4

"Crooks said sharply, "You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got any right in here but me." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.77)

This quote from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck can be interpreted as an example of discrimination based on both race and class in the workplace. The character in question, Crooks, is a black man who works

as a stable buck on the ranch. He is confronting another character who has come into his living space, which is described as a small, uncomfortable shed attached to the barn. Crooks' sharp response to the other character suggests that he is used to being excluded and demanded to stay away from white workers. The significance of Crooks' statement is that it suggests that he has very little power or agency in this situation and is forced to assert his limited autonomy by drawing the line over his own living space. This indicates that he is subject to considerable discrimination and bias based on his race and job status, which has resulted in a lack of authority and control over the conditions of his own existence.

c. Class Struggle toward rejection in workplace or career rejection

In this part, reseracher finds the data of Class Struggle toward rejection in workplace or career rejection with four excepts.

Excerpt 11

“George said, "She's gonna make a mess. They's gonna be a bad mess about her. She's a jail bait all set on the trigger. That Curley got his work cut out for him. Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain't no place for a girl, specially like her." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.58)

This quote from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck touches on the subject of gender discrimination in the workplace or career rejection in the bourgeoisie class context. The character George is commenting on a young woman, Curley's wife, who has recently appeared on the ranch where he and Lennie work. He expresses concern that she will cause trouble, saying, "She's gonna make a mess. They's gonna be a bad mess about her." This suggests that he believes she will be a disruptive presence in the workplace, potentially causing conflict and upsetting the norms of the male-dominated ranch.

2. Social class toward rejection in social environment or friendship

In this part, social class is devided into two classes, there are bourgeoisie class and proletariat class, but the Influences of social class are alienation, false consciousness, class struggle, then the influances are connected with rejection in social environment or friendship.

a. Alienation class toward rejection in social environment or friendship

In this part, reseracher finds the data of bourgeoisie class toward rejection in Social environment or friendship with twenty four excerpts.

Excerpt 15

"God, you're a lot of trouble," said George. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.8)

This quote from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck demonstrates the complexities and challenges of friendship in a bourgeoisie class context. In the quote, George expresses his frustration with Lennie, who is portrayed as challenging to deal with due to his slower intellect. George's statement, "God, you're a lot of trouble," highlights how the strains of working-class life can impact personal relationships and lead to a lack of empathy or understanding. It also indicates that George feels limited by his friendship with Lennie, as it often requires him to put his own needs and desires on hold in order to care for Lennie. Furthermore, George's statement that he could "live so easy and maybe have a girl" emphasizes the potential trade-offs between individual desires and social interactions in the bourgeoisie class context.

b. False Consciousness toward rejection in social environment or friendship

In this part, researcher finds the data proletariat class toward rejection in Social environment or friendship twelve excerpts.

Excerpt 39

"And Lennie's face was drawn with terror. "An' whatta I got," George went on furiously. "I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus keep me shovin' all over the country all the time." (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.12)

This quote from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck depicts the challenges of maintaining a meaningful friendship in a bourgeoisie class context, specifically in the context of job security and economic stability. In this scene, George is expressing his frustration with Lennie, who is portrayed as being slow and unable to keep a job. George's statement, "You can't keep a job and you lose me every job I get," emphasizes the challenges that working-class individuals face in finding and maintaining employment in a highly competitive and often unstable job market. The frustration that George feels towards Lennie reflects the broader social and economic stresses of working-class life, where individuals must often rely on one another to stay afloat financially and emotionally.

c. Class Struggle toward Rejection in Social Environment and Friendship

In this part, researcher finds the data Class Struggle toward Rejection in Social Environment and Friendship with ten excerpts.

Excerpt 51

“The swamper considered..... "Well.... tell you what. Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's alla time picking scraps with big guys, Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy.” (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.29)

In the novel *Of Mice and Men*, the character called the swamper is talking about Curley, who is the son of the boss on the ranch. The swamper is saying that Curley dislikes and is jealous of big guys. Curley is always picking fights with big guys because he wants to prove that he is just as strong and important as they are. However, Curley's anger towards big guys is most likely because he feels insecure about his smaller size. In the context of social rejection or friendship in the bourgeoisie class, one can interpret that Curley, despite being the son of the boss, does not receive the respect or attention that he desires due to his size and status.

### 3. Social class toward intimate relationship rejection

In this part, social class is divided into two classes, there are bourgeoisie class and proletariat class, but the influences of social rejection toward social class are alienation, false consciousness, and class struggle, then the influences are linked with intimate relationship rejection.

#### a. Alienation toward intimate relationship rejection

In this part, researcher finds the data alienation toward intimate relationship rejection there are five excerpts.

##### Excerpt 60

“The girl flared up. “Think I'm gonna stay in that two-by-four house and listen how Curley's gonna lead with his left twict, and then bring in the of right cross? One-two' he says. 'Jus' the of one-two an' he'll go down.” (John Steinbeck, 2023, p.88)

In the novel *Of Mice and Men*, this text is describing a scene in which Curley's wife is talking to Lennie, George, and Candy in the barn about her dissatisfaction with her marriage. In this text, she flares up and expresses her frustration about being stuck in a small and unclean house and listening to her husband's boasting about his fighting skills. This highlights the theme of intimate relationship rejection in a bourgeoisie class context in the story's setting, as Curley's wife is trapped in a marriage that she is not happy in, and her husband's behavior further exacerbates her sense of disillusionment and alienation. The use of the phrase "one-two" along with the boastfulness of Curley's manner shows that Curley doesn't value or respect his wife, his talk of violence and fighting representing him as a brute to her.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research are based on the finding and discussion of the previous chapter. The findings and discussions are the forms of social rejection in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck and How social rejections are influenced social class in the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. The result of this research are dominated by social rejection, the strong rejection in the novel by data that researcher found is rejection in social environment or friendship in the novel, then followed by rejection in workplace or career rejection in the novel, and the last rejection is intimate relationship rejection in the novel. The influence of social class toward rejection in social environment are causing an alienation, false consciousness, and social struggle. The researcher already presented the data In the forms of social rejection, the strong rejection in the novel by data that researcher found is rejection in social environment or friendship and having 71% with forty six excerpts in the novel, then followed by rejection in workplace or career rejection that has 21% with fourteen excerpts in the novel, and the last rejection is intimate relationship rejection that has 8% with five excerpts in the novel. In the influence of social class toward social rejection, alienation as one of influence of social class has a strong rejection in social environment or friendship rejection with twenty four excerpts in the novel. The second comes from workplace and career rejection toward alienation with three excerpts in the novel. Third is alienation becomes an influence of intimate relationship rejection with five excerpts in the novel. Then, false consciousness as an influence of social class toward social environment or friendship rejection has twelve excerpts in the novel, such as workplace and career rejection toward false consciousness has seven excerpts in the novel, but intimate relationship rejection false consciousness does not an excerpt in the novel. After that, class struggle is one of influence toward social environment or friendship has ten excerpts in the novel, then coming from workplace and career rejection toward class struggle with four excerpts in the novel, beside that there is not excerpt in intimate relationship rejection with class struggle in the novel. Overall, alienation as an influence of social class toward social rejection has the most excerpts in the three forms of social rejection, especially in form social environment or friendship rejection it is the most rejection.

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