

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Literary work has been one of the crucial evidences that represent the issues of human history; one of the issues is violence towards family members. While attracting much public attention in political debates and media reports, violent incidents happen in the name of God at the same time has caught the attention of the society. This kind of sanctified violence is deeply embedded in nearly every religion. Instead of becoming a result of cultural practices, religion is one of the important aspects that need to be considered as a tool in violence. Some would argue that the violent images in religion are greatly misunderstood. The misinterpretation of religion leads to violence; secretive perpetrators legitimize their deeds by using religious justification and sully the purity of religion's reputation.

Recently, many literary works have depicted the representation of violence towards family members. Family members have suffered violence in many ways whether it is in domestic or public areas. The violence includes harmful practices such as physical, sexual, economic, and psychological abuse. Nowadays, family members in the novel are represented in different ways than before according to the purposes of the authors. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, is a Nigerian female author whose works draw extensively on

the Biafran war in Nigeria during the late 1960s. In recent years, she attracts the attention of critics and public more than any other African writers of her generation. The reviews of her fiction can be found in both newspaper and academic journals. Adichie's reputation is further intensified by the success of *Purple Hibiscus*. The novel wins the 2004 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award for Best Debut Fiction and the 2005 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. In 2004 it was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and long-listed for the Booker Prize. Her works have been translated into thirty languages and also appeared in various publications such as *The O. Henry Prize Stories* in 2003, *The New Yorker*, and *The Times Magazine*.

Purple Hibiscus discusses about family members who have received the unequal treatment as a result of religion misinterpreting committed by the head of the family. The story of the novel *Purple Hibiscus* is set in Enugu, a city in post-colonial Nigeria, and is narrated by a fifteen-year-old girl named Kambili Achike. It focuses on an Igbo family living in the south eastern part of Nigeria in the late twentieth century. It is a novel about the life of its main character, Kambili, who struggles from a very painfully shy girl to become self-assured woman who is able to manage her social and economic structure to her own benefit and capable to free herself in the chaos of violence in the name of God perpetuated by her own biological father, Eugene Achike.

Literary works of African writers are characterized by unequal power

relations between men and women. The position of men in family especially under patriarchal culture is always as the one who has the power to dominate and control their family including in the matter of their religious practices. Unfortunately, the misinterpreting of religion by men has caused negative effects towards the family members. The misinterpretation of religion makes men justify their act of violence towards their family members as in the name of God. This condition harms the family members in many aspects of their life as the inferior one as reflected in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

In her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie reworks the role of religion on violence towards women and children projected by the head of the family which causes his family members to suffer both physically and mentally. Besides, Adichie also depicts the changes of man's and woman's roles in the novel. This book also promotes a male character whose existence weakens the patriarchal culture by helping the female characters to free themselves from violence. Therefore, it will be interesting to discuss *Purple Hibiscus* since Adichie is explicitly involved in the creation of discourse which is meant to push women from the margins to the centre as they confronts patriarchy.

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

Purple Hibiscus represents violence suffered by family members and it also shows the changes of man's and woman's roles in society. The work specifically portrays the violence and dehumanizing situations of family members as the victims of violence in the name of God committed by the head of the family. This novel shows man's arbitrary attitude towards women and children in the name of religion as a cover for the acts of violence he committed. Thus, the novel has direct relevance to shows the problems of the contemporary society.

This novel describes a male character who is a Catholic fanatic named Eugene who beats his wife, Beatrice and children, Kambili and Jaja, until they are severely suffered. He punishes his wife, Beatrice Achike (Mama), and his children when they fail to live up to his high expectations. Eugene's religious fanaticism and violent actions results in imprisoning his own son. And in the end, the most unexpected actions come from the least expected person and his life ends up in his wife's hands. These victims of patriarchal oppressions do everything possible to claim their rights in the oppressive situations caused by the head of the family. Adichie does not only discuss violence in the name of God but also the changes of man's and woman's role as depicted in the novel.

1.3 Scope of the Research

This study examines how *Purple Hibiscus* described family members who suffer from violence committed by the head of the family and the changes of man's and woman's role as reflected in the novel. *Purple Hibiscus* offers the examination and analysis of violence in the name of God towards family members in a society dominated by Catholics and patriarchal culture. Furthermore, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* provides an insight into the world of violence as suffered by women in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- a. How do the family members suffer from violence committed by the head of the family as reflected in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*?
- b. How does Adichie present the changes of man's and woman's role in *Purple Hibiscus*?

1.5 The Objective of the Research

This study aims to examine how *Purple Hibiscus* represents violence experienced by the family members and also to shows the changes of man's and woman's role under Nigerian patriarchal culture as represented through several characters in the novel. Furthermore, as the events unfold, efforts will be made in order to show that despite the struggle and pain, women assert

themselves in the world of patriarchy. Therefore, the choice of *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is premised on the fact that her novel depicts many issues of violence in the name of God towards family members as well as the changes of man's and woman's role to show their rebellion against violence. Additionally, her work provides an insight into the world of violence as suffered by Nigerian women.

1.6 Review of Related Literature

Different scholars have analyzed *Purple Hibiscus* and discussed various issues regarding women and their representation in fictions. My study focuses on a number of scholars who have touched on concepts related to violence on family members.

First, an issue raised by Heather Hewett in her article entitled "Finding Her Voice" (2003). In this article, Hewett investigates how Eugene uses his political view in public area and his Christian ideology onto his family at home and causes the family to a sphere of the silence. As the result, Hewett sees Eugene as political a figure that uses his popularity and his *Standard* newspaper to speak democracy for Nigerians and uses violence in the name of religion to suppress his own family according to his desire. Hewett's article shows the cause and effect of Eugene's silencing to his family. I argue Hewett sees silence as reciprocal relationship; whoever perpetuates silence is bound to silence in return. Thus, silence is violence in

words which inflicting pain to someone either physically ormentally.

Second, Helen Chukwuma in her article entitled “Women’s Quest for Rights: African Feminist Theory in Fiction” (2007) examines the importance of how women fight for their rights in institutions such as religion, tradition, and society. Chuwukma describes how *Purple Hibiscus* portrays women to react against violence committed by men by focusing on how different female characters respond to their struggle against violence and patriarchy to have access to their denied rights; one of the examples is by killing the assailants so women will be able to free themselves from patriarchy. As a result, Chuwukma considers killing violent men as one of the solutions in order to acquire the rights as presented in *Purple Hibiscus*. However, Chuwukma's reflection about women who fight for their rights by killing the assailants leaves the outcome of violence and revenge in society. This shows the weakness of her article because she does not discuss the impact of actions taken by women whereas this study shows how such solution as killing negatively effects towards the characters in *Purple Hibiscus*. Thus, this study focuses in analyzing violence and its implications to both male and female characters.

Third, Ogaga Okuyade in her article entitled “Changing Borders and Creating Voice” (2009), which highlights the issue of voicing the characters in *Purple Hibiscus* to emphasize the need for change in family and

dictatorship country. As a result, Okuyade observes that the crisis which happens throughout the novel engenders the voicing of Kambili and Nigerian citizens as well as explains the struggle of the characters in the novel in order to survive. This shows that Okuyade depicts that violence not only occurs at home but also witnessed on public place. Okuyade provides an analysis of the experiences Kambili goes through to survive in a violent environment by describing her consciousness along the company of women and redefining her identity into adulthood. I argue that in the process of fighting against violence, a lot of things can happen because the trial and the outcome of the characters' struggle in order to get rid of violence, which only either success or failure.

Fourth, an article by Ifechelobi, J. N. published in 2014 entitled “Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus”, which seeks to protect and promote the interests of women; it is the notion that women are human beings. The rights of women are part of human rights because feminism works hand in hand with human equality to achieve the equality of both sexes. In conclusion, Ifechelobi views patriarchy as the system that consider man is superior by nature, born to rule in all works of life, the woman, and inferior, born to be ruled and to serve the man as Ifechelobi highlights how women must take a second place in society because patriarchy considers women as meant to be

seen and not to be heard (Ifechelobi: 2014).

Ifechelobi argues that the members of Eugene Achike's household live in a deafening silence; they are friends of "silence" and practice silence wherever they go. In my understanding, what Ifechelobi means by silence is the tool that Eugene uses in order to gain power by silencing his victims whenever their actions are seen as wrong-doing according to his view. Ifechelobi claims that patriarchal aspect of silencing is seen in the character of Beatrice (Mama) who lacks self-confidence and only speaks in low tones as a result of years of abuse and oppression. Similarly, her daughter Kambili only speaks when she is spoken to and stammers. The society around them may picture them as a perfect family, but their physical and emotional scars only remain a family secret.

Fifth, an article written by Asante Lucy Mtenje in 2016 entitled "Patriarchy and Socialization in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*". This article sets out to examine the process of socialization and its implications for identity formation in the two novels. It further considers socialization as a critical means by which societies formulate and preserve their cultures and identities. Mtenje argues that Adichie's in *Purple Hibiscus* portrays patriarchal norms to urge mothers to impose patriarchal norms to their daughters in order to disempower them. Mtenje explains how a mother's socialization can give bad influence to the

daughter's psychological growth because once the mother is abused by the patriarchy and they are powerless because they do not fight back, unconsciously the mother will try to socialize the daughter into occupying the same subordinate position as them simply because they are female. Although Kambili eventually gains her own empowerment and voice because of the influence of her aunt (Ifeoma) and her cousins during her stay at Nsukka which challenges her father's ideologies, I note that Mtenje depicts how Kambili adopts powerlessness from her mother whom she has seen helpless countless of times at the hands of her father. Like her mother, Kambili experiences the abuse to the point that she sees it as normal. However, when the daughter discovers that this kind of socialization is harmful to their well-being as daughter as well as a woman, the only way to resist the patriarchal power according to Mtenje is for the daughter to sever emotional ties with her mother and work towards her own empowerment in order to fight against female oppression.

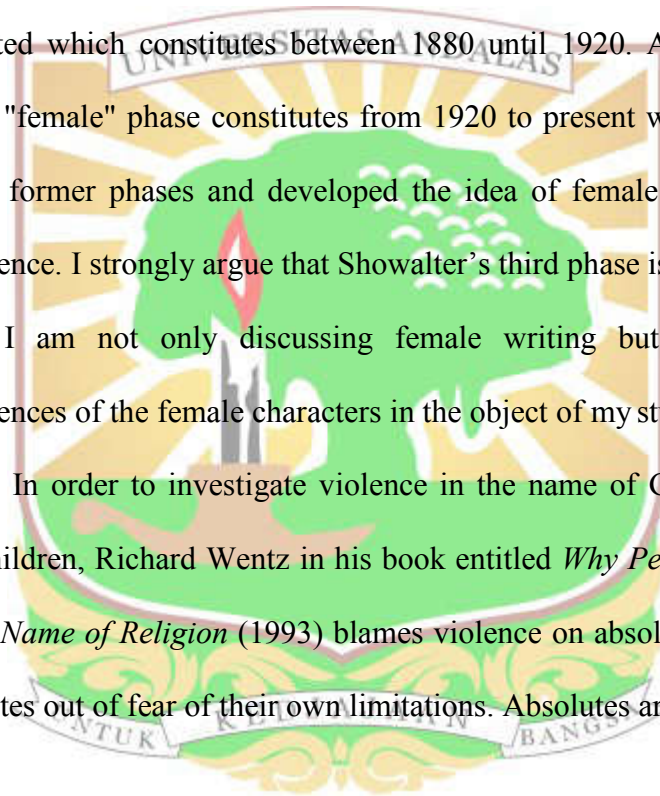
1.7 Theoretical Framework

In this study, I apply feminist literary criticism proposed by Bell Hooks as the theoretical framework in order to come up with the analysis of violence in the name of God towards family members and investigate the changes of man's and woman's roles under Nigerian patriarchal culture in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. When we are discussing about literary works, we

can see the world based on what is written.

Showalter in her book entitled *A Literature of Their Own* in 1977 divides women's writing into three phases. The first is "feminine" phase during 1840-1880 which women writers imitated the dominant male aesthetic standards and never step beyond the limits of their personal knowledge. The second phase called "feminist" about women advocated minority rights and protested which constitutes between 1880 until 1920. And the third one is called "female" phase constitutes from 1920 to present which inherited traits of the former phases and developed the idea of female writing and female experience. I strongly argue that Showalter's third phase is related to my study since I am not only discussing female writing but also the violence experiences of the female characters in the object of my study.

In order to investigate violence in the name of God towards women and children, Richard Wentz in his book entitled *Why People Do Bad Things in the Name of Religion* (1993) blames violence on absolutism. People create absolutes out of fear of their own limitations. Absolutes are representations of



a limited self and people react with violence when others do not accept them and when others disobey them. According to Wentz, religion has the tendency to provoke absolutism. In the title of his book, the word religion means anything people do that gives their lives order and meaning. At this point, religion has a great tendency towards fanaticism.

The religious believers put faith in God and their belief as Christian is used to justify their violent actions as absolute justification. It is this absolutism and fanaticism that makes obedience blind and causes the problem of all means to violence. Among the many world religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for example, incorporate beliefs and practices as well as cultures that vary greatly in their impact on women who are victims of violence (Wentz 1993). In dealing with violence against women and children, the Christian scriptural justifications for women and children remain abusive in family. Religious violence also can be misused to excuse or condone abusive behavior. In the context of violence against women and children, religious teachings and communities will play a role; they will never be neutral.

Unfortunately, this doctrine has been interpreted as male dominance over women: “Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands” (Ephesians 5.22-24

NRSV). Many men misinterpret the quotation as the reason of why they have the rights to treat their partner or wives as they wish and that including treating them with violence when necessary as long as it makes his partner or wife obey his orders.

Either by its silence or its instruction, the church has too often communicated to battered women that they should stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives, and forgive and forget. To batterers, it has communicated that their efforts to control their wives or girlfriends are justified because women are to be subject to men in all things. They have been permitted to “discipline” their wives and their children all for the “good of the family.”

Furthermore, according to Wentz (1993) violence in the name of God or also known as religious violence committed because of the belief that one is defending God's honor or will always immoral because others are being harmed due to their violence actions for the honor or will of God. According to Wentz, the religious believer or also called as fanatics, believes that their actions of violence in the name of god are a justification of their violence action which they believe as God's punishment for the sinner. They do not consider their violence actions as wrong doing based on the justification that it was in the name of religion nor responsible for the outcome of their actions towards the victims. Thus, religious believer act their violence in the name of God to those who has lesser power than them which makes them feel as if

they have the rights to do so.

Since the object of this study deals with patriarchal culture, I apply feminist literary criticism proposed by Bell Hooks. The words – “feminism” and “feminist” – first appeared in France and the Netherlands in 1872. Tyson in her book entitled *Critical Theory Today* (2006) states that feminist criticism as “the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (83). Feminist literary criticism also concerns with various forms of marginalization towards women. It reminds us that women and men write differently and analyze at how the gender of the author affects how literature is written. Many feminist critics look at how the characters, especially the female characters, are portrayed and ask us to consider how the portrayal of female characters in any literary works.

Feminist literary criticism is mainly focus on women's issue, but because feminism seeks for gender equality, Hooks in her book entitled *Feminism Is for Everybody* which published in 2000 argues that men's liberation is a necessary part of feminism and that are men also harmed by sexism and gender roles. Feminist literary criticism examines the way patriarchy shapes men as superior and women as inferior. It is a literary movement that tends to bring a change in the society especially on how women are treated; it tries to discourage discrimination and humiliation on women by focusing its attention on emancipation of men. There are lots of

emphasis has been made on feminism and its position in the African novel where women are often neglected when it comes to decisions making and the decisions itself made by men without their consent.

Violence against women and children has been criticized by feminist critics who have purpose to value the works of female writers as much as it done by male writers and pay attention to female characters with voice and power to react against the problems in society. Hooks (2000) notes that feminist first agenda is to fight against domestic violence on women and children. The agenda proposed by Hooks in discussing violence is important in my paper for my concern is to examine not only the representation of violence on women but also children. Thus, feminism seeks to give women a sense of self ascertains, worthy, and contributing human beings. It is a theoretical framework that directly opposes violence by supporting gender equality and reaction to such stereotype of women whereby women are seen as dependent, voiceless, and weak.

The patriarchal society views women's roles in the home as natural and something they supposed to do. When it comes to the roles of men and women, Hooks (2000) argues that the role of men comes from the idea that males as a group have and do benefit from patriarchy. She states: "... from the assumption that they are superior to females and should rule over us. But those benefits have come with a price. In return for all the goodies men receive from patriarchy, they are required to dominate women, to exploit and

oppress us, using violence if they must to keep patriarchy intact” (xi). Hooks (2000) believes that violence on women is generally sanctioned by men to exert control over women and their families. Hooks (2000) believes that violence on women is mainly sanctioned to create dependency of women on men and to ensure the subordination. Hooks (2000) points out that she believes women should fight against men’s superiority towards women and children.

In accordance regarding violence towards family members under Nigerian patriarchal culture, Hooks (2000) states that:

In a Christian culture, masses of people continue to believe that God has ordained women to be subordinate to men in the domestic household. Even though masses of women have entered the workforce, even though many families are headed by women who are the sole breadwinners, the vision of domestic life which continues to dominate the nation's imagination is one in which the logic of male domination is intact, whether men are present in the home or not. (2)

1.8 Method of the Research

In conducting this research, I apply qualitative research to collect the data by doing library research. According to Elmer E. Rasmuson in *Research, Instruction, and Library Research Process Outreach Services* (2016), library

research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. The steps are collecting data, analyzing the data, and presenting the data.

1.8.1 Collecting Data

In collecting the data, I take the data from both primary and secondary data. The primary data are taken from *Purple Hibiscus* novel by an African American author named Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the secondary data are taken from journals, articles, literary book, and critical essays in line with the study's primary purpose.

1.8.2 Analyzing Data

In this study, I use qualitative method since the data is non-numerical data. As Bryman in *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, states, "qualitative research emphasized the research process and demonstrated that qualitative research cannot be reduced to particular techniques nor to set stages, but rather that a dynamic process is involved which links together problems, theories and methods" (2).

Based on the definition, I argue that qualitative method will be effective to analyze the data. In order to analyze the data, I use Feminist Literary Criticism proposed by Bell Hooks. There are three steps in analyzing the data; first, I explain about the violence actions experienced by the family members. I analyze the violence experienced by the female characters named

Kambili and Beatrice as well as male character named Jaja, who have received extreme violence and oppression by Eugene as the perpetrator of violence. Second, I analyze the changes of man's and woman's role as depicted in the novel. Third, I use the quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the analysis.

1.8.3 Presenting the Result of Analysis

Since the study uses qualitative method, the result of the analysis will be presenting in a descriptive way. According to Bodgan and Biklen in their book entitled *Qualitative Research for Education: an Introduction to Theory and Method*, qualitative research is descriptive; the data is collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the study contain quotations since the collected data are in the form of words. Thus, in order to present the analysis of violence and changes of man's and woman's role, I present them by analyzing the data into subchapters.