

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Research

African literature is a literary work born from the African continent that uses several languages : French, Portuguese, and English. According to Sone (2009), written literature begins with African languages and ends with written literature in English. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, African writers began to use newspapers to convey their views through their works. After World War II, it continued to develop by producing many writers and their careers, such as poetry, short story, and novel in English, which cover almost the same issues. Gikandi (2003: 59) states that women writers began to emerge in the mid-1960s to redefine the term African novel and its trajectory. There are several African women writers: Nwapa, Ogot, Assia Djebar, and Nadine Gordimer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The authors began to expand the issue towards social life, gender roles in their literary works.

Many writers have raised the issue of gender roles, especially about gender inequality between men and women. One of them is Adichie's work. Adichie is a Nigerian female writer. She was born on September 15th, 1977, in Enugu, and she is part of an Igbo family. She is also known as a feminist, whose work conveys many strong feminist messages, which she thinks must be followed up.

Adichie started her career writing short stories until some novels; the first novel is *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), received the Commonwealth Writer Prize for Best First Book in 2005, *Half of The Yellow Sun* (2006) this novel won the Orange Prize for

Fiction in 2007. Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), and *Americanah* (2013), this novel was selected as the ten best books of 2013, March 2017, was chosen as the winner in the program "One Book, One New York."

As a feminist, Adichie often spoke about sexual desire and female identity, especially black women, in her speeches. One of her speeches was shown on a TED show (2017) entitled, "We should all be feminist." Adichie states that "she raised these issues to change how women should be treated in society and break the point of view that a woman is less valuable than a man, and a woman is not as capable as a man." This limited point of view is called Patriarchy. According to Beauvoir (1997), Patriarchy is a system in which men are absolute subjects, while Patriarchy places women as the other object (seconds). The procedure causes women to be limited to doing anything and unable to achieve what they want.

This study focuses on the novel entitled *Purple Hibiscus*, published in October 2003. This novel is set in a Post-colonial in Enugu and narrated by a teenage girl named Kambili as the central character in the story. This novel has a strong message and impact on its readers. This novel focuses on a family who has experienced domestic violence. This novel tells of the struggle of Kambili and her mother voicing their rights and balancing their lives from the chaos of violent patriarchal culture and religious extremism perpetuated by the head of the household, Eugene Achike. In patriarchal culture, the position of men in a family is always in the highest place. It can control their family members and the misinterpretation of religion which makes the belief uncontrollable. As a result, violence and oppression

have become normalized in this society. This condition harms family members in many aspects of their life, such as; marriage, sexual desire, and cultural identity.

Gikandi (2003) argues that some female characters in literary works are labeled as marginal, where women are shown as loving, passive, moody mothers and wives and stubborn daughters. It is evident in *Purple Hibiscus*, which generally describes an unhealthy marriage, where the wife is depicted as passive, powerless, and submissive to her husband so that men feel they have the power to control their wife and result in normalizing acts of violence and oppression against family members if they violate the rules imposed by the head of household.

This novel not only talks about marriage, but Adichie also depicts the sexual desire of children, where they do not have time to be able to know and explore themselves in aspects of sexuality because their entire life is regulated and controlled by his father. In addition, Adichie discussed the identity of Beatrice, and Kambili by breaking the rules that had been made by his father to gain freedom.

Adichie portrayed the problems in marriage, which was suspected of being violent to his family members, and discuss their sexual desire, which was under pressure and control of the head of household. Finally, examine their cultural identity by focusing on the factors that cause their self-awareness to increase in seeking their identity, which is hindered by patriarchal culture and religious extremists.

Finally, I would to bring up how Adichie depicts marriage, sexual desire and cultural identity trough the feminist and cultural identity approach. Based on this

research background, I entitled this research to “*The Portrayal of Marriage, Sexual Desire, and Cultural Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus.*”

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

In general, *Purple Hibiscus* is a novel that discusses the violence and oppression carried out by the head of the family against his family members, especially his wife and daughter. I assume that violence and intimidation are driven by the existence of patriarchal domination and the misinterpretation of religion, resulting in the role played by men being more valued than the role played by women. As a result, it perpetrated by men is considered normal in culture. Its continuous will damage the psyche and all aspects of the life of the oppressed character.

In several aspects, Adichie told her thoughts about violence and oppression in *Purple Hibiscus*. The first is marriage and sexual desire. It is an unhealthy and troubled marriage because a dictator husband often rejects his wife for not complaining about his command. Not only that, as a father, he is such a dictator of his children, so he doesn't hesitate to give punishment if his children don't live up base on his expectations. So it will harm his father to his children. They don't have time to recognize themselves and their sexual desire. Lastly, identifying cultural identity through the characters of Eugene Achike and Papa Nnukwu, where the original Nigerian (traditional) cultural identity was marginalized by Mel's missionary culture.

### 1.3 Review of Related Studies

Women's issues are often discussed in the literary world. Since gender equality has become an important thing to notice, this issue was raised to change how women should be treated in society and break the view that women are less valuable than men and women are not capable as men. Therefore many discussions highlight the women's problems or issues regarding gender inequality, such as how black women struggle against gender inequality, captured on *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Due to this issue, the writer reads several studies related to the same research object or different objects but has almost the same problems. There are five previous studies related to gender equality that I have chosen, including three international journals and two theses.

The first related study is an article written by Dr. Syed Hajira Begum, entitled *Women Empowerment in Purple Hibiscus* published in 2017. This article focuses on Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* using feminist theory and qualitative methods. This article examines how Adichie eliminates women who are suffering and oppressed by upholding women's empowerment. The researcher shows that Adichie has used many ways in his work to give women a voice in the face of silence, oppression, exploitation, and gender inequality. The results of this article show that Adichie makes stories and composes narratives aimed at leading women to be able to pursue their rights and realize women's empowerment. It must start from awareness and self-affirmation through education and solidarity between women. This research is beneficial for the author in identifying gender oppression and inequality as described by Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*.

The second subsequent previous study is an entitled “Women's Struggles and Independence in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*” by Maureen Amaka Azuike (2009). This study examines how women fight against marginality in a patriarchal culture in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun* through feminist theory. The researcher found that Adichie's work is very clear about the changes in society's transformation. The changes include breaking down all oppressive structures and creating peace without subordinating one gender. Overall, this study aims to open the minds of women, especially African women, to realize and face the realities of sexist culture to get their rights. The explanation above really helps the writer research the marginalization of women in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Furthermore, an article written by Fransiska Marsela (2019), entitled *Depressed Housewives as Results of Woman-Oppression Found in Short-Stories: A Comparative Literature Study*. It examines the oppression that often happens to women, especially housewives. It focuses on two literary works by Thomas Hardy, *An Imaginative Woman* and *The Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri. To prove the existence of oppression in these two short stories, the researcher uses feminist theory and psychoanalysis. The results of this analysis prove that housewives from *Imaginative Women* and *Interpreters of Maladies* experience oppression in different forms in each story. The researcher finds that this oppression causes psychological disorders in female characters that lead to bad habits, like depression, delusions, etc.

The fourth article is entitled, *Cultural Identity and Symbolic Interactionism in Karma Brown's Recipe for a Perfect Wife* (2021) by Divya Widyastuti, Alia Afiayti, and Yoga Pratama. This article discusses the cultural identity and symbolic interactionism that focuses on two female characters from different generations by using the qualitative method, cultural identity approach by Stuart Hall, and intrinsic approach to analyze the characters, plot, and setting in this novel. It is revealed that five cultural identities were found in different years, 1950 and 2018. Besides that, the researchers also found three concepts of symbolic interactionism such as; mind, self, and society. Based on the researcher's findings, the researchers assume that each generation has different characteristics in carrying out cultural interactions, and it will form the behavior of these characters.

Another article related to identity is *A Critical Peep into the Identity Crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Lowland*, written by Dr. Prem Bahadu Khandka (2021). He studied *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri through an identity theory. This article examines the transformation of the main female character named Gauri. The researcher explains how immigration has affected Gauri's identity. The author also states that this change in Gauri's identity is a deliberate action taken by Gauri to get rid of the old identity. Overall, this article shows how Gauri finds his identity as being in a foreign culture and leaving the culture he was born in.

The fifth is an international journal written by David L. Rowland entitled *The Enigma of Sexual Desire, Part 1: A Brief Review of Classical, Historical, Philosophical, and Literary Perspectives* (2016). This research aims to recognize the rich and varied understanding of sexual desire as an essential phenomenon to

the human experience that has shaped (and continues to) the form of western thought. The result of the research is to show that sexual desire is alternatively viewed as positive or negative; the social system has demonstrated a need to control or restrain that, with wide variations depending on the situation (out of wedlock, pre-marital) and the object of desire (children/adolescents, people of the same sex).

Next, an article written by Ashika Prajnya Paramita, entitled *Sexuality as Seen in Maya Angelou's Poem Woman Me, Phenomenal Woman, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* (2012) volume 1. This article examines the sexuality of women in Angelou's poems *Woman Me, Phenomenal Woman, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* through an expressive approach. This article reveals that Angelo creates female characters in his works to have the strength that comes from high self-confidence, so they can accept themselves and change their lives from that power. This study also said that Angelo's works are the embodiment of what Angelo was not in the past. Overall it is inevitable that Angelo conveys the message that being a woman must be able to stand on her own feet so that no one can control themselves.

The last subsequent previous study is written by Ehijele Femi Eromosele (2013), entitled "Sex and Sexuality in the Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie" from the department of English, University of Jos, and Plateau State, Nigeria. This study reveals sexual activity in Adichie's works *Purple Hibiscus, Half a Yellow Sun, and The Thing around Your Neck*, and sees the characters in the novel reflect Adichie's view of sexuality. In this study, the writer founds that the depiction of sexuality in Adichie's works *Purple Hibiscus, Half a Yellow Sun, to The Thing*



*Around Your Neck* is a form of maturation of an Adichie. Overall, this research assumes that the narrative about sexual activity in his works does not merely complement the story but is a form of Adichie's concern for sexual issues. Overall, this study reveals that the narrative about sexual activity in his works is not only a complement to the story but is a form of Adichie's concern for sexual issues. This thesis is helpful to add information on the topic of sexual desire in Adichie's work *Purple Hibiscus*.

After reading the related studies above, the writer concludes that the writer's research will be different from the related research. The writer wants to show how women write about the oppression and violence through marriage, sexual desires, and cultural identity depicted by Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*. This related research will help the writer enrich knowledge and analysis and opinions related to the topic to be analyzed.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Several issues related to gender equality occur in *Purple Hibiscus*. To limit the scope of analysis, the writer limited research to two topics,

They are:

1. How does the author portray marriage and sexual desires in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*?
2. How does the author depict cultural identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*?

## 1.5 Scope of the Research

The scope of this research is intrinsic and focuses on characters who are marginalized by patriarchal culture, especially, wives and children. Then, the authors limit this research into three discussions. First, the researcher will identify patriarchal practices in marriage that cause the wife not to be treated egalitarian by her husband, and result in discrimination and exploitation of her wife. Furthermore, it analyzes how Kambili's sexual desires are hindered by the impact of patriarchal culture and religious misinterpretation. Finally, examine the conflict between two opposing cultures, namely missionary culture and traditional culture.

## 1.6 Objectives of Studies

This study aims to investigate the impact of patriarchal practices on household life, and also to reveal Kambili's difficulties in finding sexual desire. Next, it reveals how Adichie ends the conflict between two opposing cultures, by presenting a mediating figure as a reference for the reader in resolving the conflict. The results of this study are expected to be used as a reference related to the same topic or theory.