

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

In British Literature, hedonism has become one of the popular topics that interest scholars. The scholar generally exhibits hedonism in the sense of high-minded ideals, for instance, aesthetic, sexual desires, solitude, and everything related to individual satisfaction as a social concern in pursuit of pleasure. However, just a few literary scholars have explored the connection between hedonism and British Literature. A Modern-day scholar, Grant Allen (1894), has observed hedonism in her book entitled *The New Hedonism*. Allen examines the complex gratification in the aesthetic movement of hedonism as a doctrine that the art of beauty is an innumerable pleasure (579). It captures a magnificent classic novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Therefore, Allen shares her interest in Wilde's characterization, which proposes aesthetic education as a means for self-improvement. Wilhelm (2018) states that beauty is an ethical good. It improves Victorian regards through the refinement of the aestheticism taste self-priority (209).

Moreover, Johnson (2012) argues that hedonism features a person's sexuality as described in *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's* novel, pointing out pleasure as sexual liberation. Fathillah and Vengadasamy (2020) explore the standard linkage between solitude as hedonistic views in *Bryce Andrews' Badluck Way*, which resulted that

solitude gives Andrew more pleasure to fill the mental state, a process of achieving freedom and happiness after the exhaustion of challenging labor (50). Frank (2015) explored 19-century novels, which convey that solitude plays a vital role in overcoming tension and discordancy. It reigns the character to reach the mental state. Therefore, hedonism primarily describes the actual person's behavior to recall what goods for them and things expected to be a positive motivation to avoid a negative experience (Fletcher, 2015:10).

Hedonism is an exciting topic to discuss because it is a controversial issue that creates many speculations, especially in the Literature area. According to Venhoveen (2003), some authors praise hedonism as a natural habit to increase self-development, and others associate it with addiction, overindulge, and moral decay. Venhoveen later states that the hedonistic lifestyle is the openness of pleasure experience (Venhoveen 1, 3). Therefore, hedonism shapes humans into several types of actual behavior, giving more varieties impacts both pain and pleasant experiences are essential in undermining hedonism.

Many authors describe hedonism as the belief that pleasure is the incessant pursuit of happiness to avoid pain. One of them is Aminatta Forna. A Scottish writer concerned with the world of diversity, migration, and the multi-layered can grow resilience. She was born in Bellshill, Scotland, spending most of her childhood in Iran, Thailand, and Zambia. She is the daughter of father Mohammed Forna, and her Scottish mother, Maureen Christian, is the inspiration in writing. Forna is the author of well-

known novels like *The Devil that Danced on the water*. She is an award-winning author of novels such as *The Devil Danced on the Water*. Her novel *the memoir of love* was awarded as Commonwealth Writer's prize for the best book in 2011 and was also shortlisted for the orange prize fiction (Smith)¹

In her fourth novel, *Happiness*, Forna gives insight into what pleasure needs that determine our lives. As seen in the character of *Happiness*, Attila Asare sees hedonism as a pleasurable experience by excessively consuming things to relieve the pain after the death of his wife. Hedonism also implies Jean Turane finding her happiness by fulfilling her desire and achieving career goals that change her perspective toward marriage. Wolfer does everything to satisfy the needs by ignoring others' rights to becoming wealthy. Tano asked something that satisfied his curiosity to reunite with his mother to get the answer he wanted. Happiness this way stops with emotional weight by preserving happiness, satisfaction, and nature everywhere as proxies of pursuing pleasure.

In this research, I choose hedonism as my research because this issue has become a trend nowadays. This idea has survived for a thousand years and still goes strong today. In happiness, I want to expose how Forna depicts hedonism through her storyline, elaborating on different types, impacts, and principles, whether hedonism guides a person to happiness and regret in some ways. Therefore, to analyze the

¹ Smith, Dr. Jules. "Aminatta Forna". British Council, 2011. Retrieved on October 8 2021: <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/aminatta-forna>

existence of hedonism, I am using the theory of principle by Sigmund Freud hence its relation to the hedonism's theory from Dan Weijers. **I entitle this research as Hedonism in *Happiness* by Aminatta Forna.**

1.1.2 Identification of Problem

In *Happiness*. Forna's description of hedonism in presenting the idea of pleasure above pain is somehow unique. Commonly, the author exposes the agent who devotes pleasure by the goodness of indulgence and excess. However, Forna also emphasizes the cause of hedonistic behavior as the motivation behind someone's action. Hedonism motivated people to behave for the experience, gratification, and satisfaction that equated them to happiness. As Freud states that any pain or pleasurable experience, whether it is in the past, could be as the outturn for what would happen to us (in Darley, 1967:200) based on his ideas of 'pleasure over the pain predicates hedonism by asserting many interpretations, methods, and behaviors that intensified In the novel.

In this research, I am using the psychological approach of Sigmund Freud to explore hedonism through *happiness's* characterization, followed by hedonistic theories by Dan Weijer, which introduce different types and aspects of hedonism based on the action the characters exhibited. It also helps me investigate how far Forna engages hedonism as a theme as the novel's theme. This paper will examine the complexity of the hedonistic principle in searching for instant gratification to avoid pain

1.1.3 Review of Previous Studies

There are many qualms of hedonism in Literature studies that identify hedonism by categorizing the tenets, principles, and hedonistic traits with psychological and hedonism theories. However, not many articles have *Happiness* by Aminatta Forna. Instead of what it is, I chose some essential books and selected articles that related to the ideas of hedonism.

For instance, a journal article by Merve Sarikaya-Şen from the University of Cambridge, London, is proven helpful for my topic research. In her articles *Building Resilience and Interconnectedness among Humans and Nonhuman Entities: Aminatta Forna's Happiness*, Sen (2020) examines the psychological aspect through the character of happiness. She claims that the possibility of psychological healing wounds toward Attila and Jean transforms into happiness, the development of the character healing process from trauma, the relationship between humans and animals, and the interrelationships of working together to build a self-defense mechanism to deal with personal difficulties. This article was fascinating because it shows how the characters depend on each other to help and complete. It provides the idea of *Happiness* success in representing the need for an interconnected world and the impossibility of a sovereign self to achieve happiness in the modern era.

Another journal article that examines hedonism from the psychological aspect is Karlia (2018). In her research, Karlia introduces several tenets of hedonism conducted in *The Picture of Dorian Gray's* novel. She examined three tenets of

hedonism; ethical, egoistic, and aesthetic hedonism. Hence, every character in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* progresses to maximize happiness by successfully perceiving the award of self-beauty and validation from others' admiration. As evidence of hedonism, this research analyzes from the lens of the psychological approach, which divides humans into several types: impact and characterization. Therefore, this research encouraged me to imply psychoanalysis theories in this research paper.

On the other hand, this undergraduate thesis is not the one I have read using the psychological approach. Virnandi (2008) also examined the characters of *The picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde*, significantly using psychoanalysis principle theories by Sigmund Freud. This research discussed two principles that define pleasure and reality as the concepts used to control human behavior. It can be seen through Dorian's characterization following the pleasure instinct by changing his appearance, overindulging in the nightlife, and embracing the aesthetic movement. Dorian's behavior ignores the reality principle, which only craves the urge of the id and ignores social consequences. Dorian's mindset is influenced by Lord Henry after he taught a hedonistic lifestyle, while other characters' Lowry manifests the pleasure principle by searching for wealth. On the opposite, basil's attitude represents the reality principle because he dictates with painting and art without being foxy or harming others. His behavior obeys moral restrictions and social standards.

The other research similar to previous research is written by (Valuvi & Retno, 2020). The researchers review *The Persuasion* novel by Jane Austen consists of several

types of hedonism, using the hedonism theory by Dan Weijers. The researchers examine the main character of the novel, Sir Elliot. His attitude was the powerful reflection of a hedonist who praises the privilege as a nobleman, living an exclusive lifestyle that made his family lost in bankruptcy. Elliot has fallen into an abyss of debt causes a bad impact on his hedonistic lifestyle. In this paper, at least two types of hedonism are captured in the novel: aesthetic and selfish hedonism. This concept of hedonism was observing in Karlia (2018) undergraduate thesis.

Regarding the popular notion of hedonism as an all-encompassing theory, pleasure is intrinsically valuable, and pain is intrinsically worthless. This concept observed by Veenhoven (2003) in his journal entitled *Hedonism and Happiness* explains the interrelationship between happiness and hedonism that occurred in human life. It can be measured in two-level; the nation and the individual. At the national level, the average of satisfaction relates to the moral acceptance of pleasure and active leisure; meanwhile, for the individual, sometimes it reduces the satisfaction, which creates the negative view of hedonism. However, happiness views the reduction of satisfaction by presenting a positive view of hedonism, not just displaying the negative based on valid information. It compels the speculative articles which delve into hedonism tendency.

The researchers mainly discover the critical view such as behavior and personality toward the novel's main characters. As Ksendzova et al. (2015) examine, the phenomenon exists in society and influences the characters' ability to deal with hedonism instead. It classifies them to specific types and personality traits. The authors

are concerned about the conceptions of hedonism, showing the differences between people who value pleasure above goals or excessively pleasure-seeking. They cannot control themselves for over-consuming something by comparing the personality and people whose pleasurable require sacrifice and ethical differences between people who prioritize pleasure overvalues and those who pursue it maladaptively.

After reading these journal articles, I concentrated on how hedonism ideas are defined explicitly as taking action based on the essential pleasure that determines others' happiness. The researchers mostly use the same approach, whether it analyzes from psychoanalysis and hedonism, which is attractive to discuss. Moreover, hedonism can be formulated both in a practical sense and in a theoretical sense. In simplest terms, the hedonist views the constant pursuit of happiness because deep down, we are all hedonists who want to feel good, not to feel terrible, considering the primary motive to value hedonism or excessively do so several tenets and brings up the impacts.

1.1.4 Research Question

This research will answer the following questions:

1. How does Fornia depict the hedonistic issues in happiness?
2. What types of hedonism does Fornia represent in the novel?
3. To what extent does Fornia portray hedonistic behaviors?

1.1.5 Scope of Research

This research will focus on hedonism, mainly how Forna depicts hedonism as theorized by Sigmund Freud and Dan Weijers, and I limit this research to three discussions. Firstly, this research explores the kinds of hedonism depicted in *happiness's* novel. In analyzing the type of hedonism, I focus on five of them. They are; folk hedonism, value hedonism, motivational hedonism, egoistic hedonism, and Utilitarianism. Secondly, to analyze the impact of hedonism in characters, whether it gave bad or good impacts. Finally, it will figure out how far Forna depicts hedonism that is extended pleasure and pain as the only essential elements that interested me in studying more about it. I also question the underlying implication that relates to this hedonism aspect. Forna emphasizes the importance of hedonistic practices that cannot be separated from the life around us, from buying things impulsively to fulfill their desires and reach their happiness or sacrificing others' happiness for their own sake

1.1.6 Objectives of Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze how Forna depicts hedonism in *happiness*
2. To reveal what types of hedonism Forna represents in the novel
3. To find out to what extent Forna portrays hedonistic behaviors based on pleasure and reality principle by Sigmund Freud.