

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background of the study which expose the rationales of the choosing topic, followed by the Identification of The Study, Scope of Problems, Research Question, Objective of The Study, and Sequence of The Writing.

1.1 Background of The Study

Technology and communication have significantly evolved, transforming how people connect, work, and access information. The digital age has provided opportunities for education, career advancement, and global discussions on social issues. However, despite these advancements, some societal issues, such as gender inequality remain a significant concern. According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2024* by the World Economic Forum (2024:5), it will take approximately 134 years to fully close the global gender gap at the current pace of progress. Moreover, as of 2024, women only hold 32.2% of senior leadership positions worldwide, and the global labor force participation rate is 69% for men compared to 47% for women. These numbers demonstrate that, despite advancement, gender inequality still persists through exposing ongoing differences in representation, treatment, and opportunities between both genders.

Historically, scientists have distinguished between males and females based on anatomical and physiological traits, a concept commonly referred to as sex. Sex is biological in nature, involving physical characteristics such as reproductive organs, hormonal profiles, and chromosomes that differentiate males and females. However, the concept of gender extends beyond biology and is shaped by social, cultural, and psychological factors. As Rubin (1975:179) noted that “*Gender is the socially imposed division of the sexes. It is a product of the social relations of sexuality.*” This means that gender is not an inherent trait determined at birth but rather a social construct influenced by cultural norms and values. Unlike sex, which is rooted in biology, gender evolves with societal changes and varies across cultures and historical periods, making it a dynamic and complex concept.

The issue of gender is also explored through the analysis of various literary texts. This is because literature has long served as a mirror of society, reflecting the values, struggles, and lived experiences of people across different times and cultures, including those related to gender. Works such as *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) by Anne Brontë critiques gender inequality by portraying a woman who defies oppressive marital



with her work *The Awakening* (1899), *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath 's by Brit Bennet (2016), and many others of work engage with sistance and aims to expose the struggles of women and advocate erature provides a space for women's experiences to be alidated, giving them the agency that society has often denied.

Through storytelling, women reclaim their voices and challenge the societal norms that have been silenced them.

In African literature, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* stands as a seminal work that not only captures the rich tapestry of Igbo culture in pre-colonial Nigeria but also offers a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics and a critique of patriarchal society. The novel, published in 1958, explores the life of Okonkwo, a proud and ambitious leader of the Igbo community. Okonkwo's life is shaped by his fear of being like his father, Unoka, who was seen as weak, poor, and unable to fulfill traditional expectations of masculinity. Determined to be the opposite of his father, Okonkwo works tirelessly to achieve success. He gains respect as a fierce warrior, a prosperous farmer, and a man of high status in his village. However, his strict belief in masculinity ideas, where men must always be strong, aggressive, and emotionless, creates problems in his family and community. He sees anything soft or gentle as a sign of weakness. This mindset influences how he treats others, particularly his family. He treats his wives harshly and often violently, seeing them as subordinates, which reflects his belief that dominance and control are essential traits of manhood.

The most tragic moment in the story is when Okonkwo's decision to kill Ikemefuna, a boy he had taken into his household and become like a son to him. The Oracle advises that Ikemefuna must be sacrificed. Even though he is warned not to take part in the boy's death, Okonkwo chooses to do it anyway because he is afraid of being seen as weak by others. This event leaves a deep emotional impact on him, causing inner confusion and sadness. However, he hides his shock and pain, pretending to remain strong and unaffected in order to protect his image as a tough and powerful man.

When European colonizers arrive, they bring Christianity and new political systems that disrupt Igbo traditions. Okonkwo sees these changes as a threat to his identity and to the values of his society. However, his strict and confrontational approach to these challenges makes it difficult for him to adapt. As his community begins to accept some of the new ways introduced by the colonizers, Okonkwo becomes increasingly isolated. He refuses to compromise or understand the changes happening around him, further deepening his struggles.

In the end, Okonkwo's refusal to change and his strict beliefs about masculinity lead to tragedy. When his fellow clansmen do not support him and refuse to fight against the colonizers, he realizes that the community no longer shares his vision of masculinity and resistance. Feeling betrayed and unable to cope with the changes, Okonkwo takes his own life. His death is especially tragic because suicide is a dishonorable act in Igbo culture, leaving his legacy tarnished.



Okonkwo's story, the author critiques the destructive effects of rigid and narrow definitions of masculinity. Okonkwo's need to appear strong and his rejection of anything soft lead to his alienation and downfall. The novel shows how these narrow definitions of masculinity did not only harm individuals like Okonkwo but also disrupt families

and communities. Other than that, the female characters in the story became the target and suffer from pervasive gender inequality. Women like Ekwefi and Ojiogu, are subjected to physical and emotional abuse, while others, such as Okonkwo's first wife and Ezinma are marginalized and expected to conform to traditional feminine roles.

While much scholarly attention has been devoted to analyzing the male protagonists and broader socio-political themes of the novel, the voices and experiences of Igbo women remain overlooked, overshadowed by the dominant male-centered narrative. Therefore, it is important to discuss gender inequality in *Things Fall Apart* as it reveals how traditional gender roles have limited women's rights, freedom, and social value. By examining how female characters are treated, such as being excluded from decision-making, subjected to domestic violence, or undervalued, this study aims to enhance understanding of the deep-rooted gender biases within Igbo culture. This research, entitled *Gender Inequality in Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, focuses specifically on the portrayal of female characters' experiences in the novel. Consequently, the findings are expected to benefit not only literary scholars but also broader communities concerned with gender and cultural studies.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

After reading novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, the writer finds several points of discourse which can be inspected as follows:

1. Cultural clash between tradition and colonialism reflected in the novel *Things Fall Apart*.
2. Identity crisis of the character in the novel *Things Fall Apart*
3. Conflict between individual and society depicted in the novel *Things Fall Apart*.
4. Gender inequality and women as the victim in the novel *Things Fall Apart*

1.3 Scope of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problems, the writer limits the problem only focus on the issue of gender inequality in the novel *Things Fall Apart*, analyzed through structuralism approach. As for the scope, this research focuses on the female characters who experience gender inequality in the novel. There are five female characters that would be analyzed, namely Okonkwo's first wife, Ekwefi, Ojiugo, Ezinma, and Ezeani.

1.4 Research Question



the background of study as well as the identification and scope of proposed the research questions below:

the kinds of gender inequality depicted in *Things Fall Apart*?
 the female characters respond to gender inequality in the novel?

1.5 Objective of The Study

In connection with the problem formulation above, the writer concludes that some of the objectives of the researcher are:

1. To find out gender inequality depicted in *Things Fall Apart*.
2. To elaborate how the female characters navigate gender inequality.

1.6 Sequence of The Writing

This research entitled “Gender Inequality in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” consists of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that consist of background of the study, identification of the problems, scope of problems, research question, objectives of problems, and sequence of chapter. Chapter two is literature review that contain of previous related study and theoretical framework. Chapter three contains explanations about object of study, design of study, method of collecting data and method of analyzing data. Chapter four discusses data of collection and the results of research related to Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Chapter five is the closing chapter that consists of a conclusion of the research and suggestion from the writer.



CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer discusses literary review, which consist of Previous Study, Intrinsic elements, and Gender Inequality Concept.

2.1 Previous Studies

Previous studies are reviewed to understand another research related to this thesis. Some data can be gathered from studies that are relevant or closely related to the current research. Based on observations made by the writer in various sources, there are several other writers who have discussed the same issue, object and approach in this thesis. The writer finds some theses related with this research Some of the research that is considered most related is as follows, "*The Analysis of Gender Inequality Lawson's The Drover's Wife*" by Zahrani (2020), "*Id, Ego, and Superego of the main character of Things Fall Apart (1959)*" by Kariimah (2022), "*The Power of Women to Against Sexual Harassment in Walker's The Color Purple*" by Inayah (2024).

The first study is written by Zahrani (2020) entitled "*The Analysis of Gender Inequality Lawson's The Drover's Wife*". The purposes of this study are: (1) analyze the gender inequality in *The Drover's Wife* by looking at the problems that are felt by the main character in the novel, (2) Revealing how the character solves the problem that she faced. In examining the study, the writer used genetic structuralism approach which discusses the intrinsic elements and the extrinsic elements of the novel. The analysis finds that the novel portrays gender inequality especially double burden. The main character doing double role including household labor and her job as breadwinner. The study also found the struggle of Drover's wife as a mother who lives in a remote area with a lot of wild animal threats and how she faces all the problems with her own. The similarity of this study and the writer's is both discuss about the issue of gender inequality. However, these studies are differing in object and approach. She uses the novel *Drove's Wife* by Lawson as the object and genetic structuralism as the approach, while the writer uses *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe and structuralism approach.

The second research is conducted by Kariimah (2022) entitled "Id, Ego, and Superego of the main character of Things Fall Apart (1959)". The purpose of this study is to analyze the behavior of the main character and the behavior of the other characters toward the main character. The researcher uses psychoanalysis approach in analyzing the data. The result of this study indicates that there were id, ego, and superego that depicted in the main character of the novel that effecting on the other



ilarities of these studies are both analyze the same object, *Apart*. On the other hand, the differences of these studies are the ch. Kariimah analyzed the psychological issue in Achebe's *Things* psychological approach. Meanwhile, the writer of this study portrayed in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* by using structuralism

The last previous study is written by Inayah (2024) under the title *The Power of Women to Against Sexual Harrasment in Walker's The Color Purple*. The purpose of this study is to examine the sexual harassment faced by the characters in Walker's *Color Purple*, and how the characters against such harassment. This study employs a structuralism approach to analyze the literary work. It focuses on intrinsic elements, specifically character, plot, setting, and theme. The research issue is sexual harassment experienced by women, so the writer uses the theory of violence in analyzing the problems faced by the female characters. The research method used by the writer is qualitative and explains the research results obtained descriptively. The findings of this research revealed that female characters face various forms of sexual harassment including, physical, verbal, and psychological—and take different steps to overcome it. Celie gains independence by leaving her husband, moving abroad with Shug Avery, and starting a business, while Nettie escapes harassment by Mr. ___ and becomes a missionary, leading a better life. The similarity of this research with the writer's study is using the same approach, structuralism approach. On the other hand, the differences of this research and the writer's study are the issue and the object. She discussed about sexual harassment in Walker's *The Color Purple*, while the writer of this study analyzed about patriarchy depicted in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

2.2 Intrinsic Elements

Structuralism is a key theoretical approach in the humanities and social sciences that originated in the early 20th century, primarily in Europe. This approach has its roots in the works of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who attended the linguistic schools of Prague, Copenhagen, and Moscow. His focus on language as a structured system of signs and symbol laid the foundation for structuralist thought. In the 1940s and 1950s, French intellectuals such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault built upon Saussure's ideas. The approach was later expanded into various field beyond linguistics, including anthropology, sociology, and literary theory.

According to Nurgiyantoro (2002:23), the foundation of literary work lies in its intrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements include the plot, theme, characterization, and setting. All of these parts work together to build the story and help the reader understand it. Similarly, Endraswara (2013:96) emphasizes that literature should be analyzed as a text by focusing on its core elements. Strong narrative, cohesive concepts, themes, storyline, characters, and other elements are crucial to creating a well-written work. This approach posits that the elements of literary work are interconnected as unity, influence each other and work as autonomous structures. Therefore, to understand the literary work's meaning, it is essential to analyze its



er than relying on historical or social.

02:37) explains that there are several steps in applying the theory
llows:

key intrinsic elements, such as theme, character, setting, and plot,
ely convey the work's meaning.

2. Examine each identified element in-depth to gain a thorough understanding of the work's theme, characters, setting, and plot.
3. Explain the function of each element and its contribution to the work's overall meaning.
4. Integrate the analyzed elements to reveal how they interconnect and shape the work's theme, characters, setting, and plot.

Based on the whole explanation above, the writer concludes that structuralism is a theoretical approach that analyzes systems and structures to understand meaning. In literature, it focuses on how elements like plot, characters, theme interact within a system of rules and conventions to create meaning. The structural approach also views a literary work as a unified, self-contained whole, excluding external factors such as psychological, biographical, historical, social, political, cultural, economic contexts, and others. It is followed by the writer in analyzing novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, a fictional prose narrative that build a certain story by combining characters, plot, setting, and theme.

2.2.1 Character and Characterization

Characters are essential elements of literary works, as they drive the story and bring it to life. Analyzing characters in the story is more complicated compared to analyzing the plot, as characters tend to be more diverse, intricate, and sometimes unclear or open to interpretation. In novels, the authors typically reveal the characters by portraying their physical features, social background, behaviors, personality traits, interests, and interactions with other characters (Nurgiyantoro, 2002:165). According to Bennet and Royle (2004:60), characters play a central role in literature, as they often become the focus of readers' interest, emotions, and judgments. From this perspective, characters can be interpreted as reflections of human desires, preferences, or aversions. They may also serve as a medium through which the author conveys approval or criticism of certain events within the narrative.

Characters in literary works serve specific functions, which can be categorized into two main types, the main characters and the minor characters. As cited by Handayani (2017:15), Koesnobroto explains that characters are divided into two main types: the major character, who plays a central role in the story and often serves as the focal point of the plot and narration, and the minor character, who supports the development of the narrative. Typically, the major character is often portrayed as the hero or a commendable figure. Meanwhile, minor characters assist in advancing the storyline and building tension.



characters' position in the story, as cited in Nurgiyantoro (2002:181) characters in story into two, namely flat character and round characters are one-dimensional and built around a single idea or trait, roles. Round characters, on the other hand, are fully developed and complex motivations and personal growth throughout the narrative.

The role of characters can be divided into two types, namely protagonists and antagonists. As noted by Altenberd and Lewis in Nurgiyantoro (2002:178).

1. Protagonist

The protagonist is the admirable character, often considered the story's hero, who embodies the values and norms that readers aspire to. This character typically aligns with the reader's perspective and hopes.

2. Antagonist

This type of character is responsible for creating conflict in the story. Often seen as the protagonist's enemy, the antagonist opposes the protagonist, either directly or indirectly, physically or spiritually, driving the plot forward.

Based on the explanation above, the writer concludes that a character is a figure crafted by the author to play a role in their story. Characterization refers to the depiction or portrayal of the character within the narrative as explained by the writer. Readers can discern a character's traits or characterization by observing their words or actions throughout the story. Characters are categorized into two types: major and minor. Additionally, their roles are classified as either protagonist or antagonist.

2.2.2 Plot

Plot refers to the sequence of events in a story that reveal cause-and-effect relationships. Understanding the plot enables readers to follow the narrative's chronological order and grasp the causal connections between events. This, in turn, sheds light on how these events shape the characters and their development. Abrams (1990:159) explains that plot is not just a sequence of events, but rather the carefully structured and interconnected arrangement of incidents that form the narrative's unified whole.

A well-developed plot typically follows a chronological or thematic progression, including the exposition, which introduces the setting, characters, and initial conflict. As the narrative develops, it builds toward the rising action, where complications and tensions grow, culminating in the climax, the turning point where the primary conflict reaches its peak. This is followed by the falling action, where consequences of the climax are explored, leading to the resolution or denouement, in which the conflict is resolved, and the narrative concludes.

Plot is a crucial intrinsic element that drives the narrative from within, according to prose analysis. As the sequence of events that comprise a story, plot serves as the

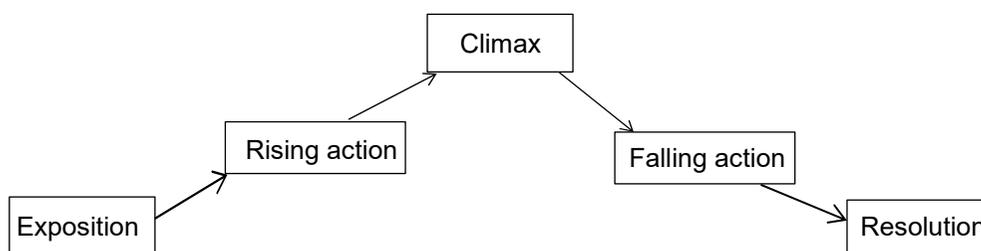


g readers to understand the narrative. To break it down, Charter s five key components of plot: exposition, rising action, climax, olution.

he introductory section where the author presents the characters, :tory.

2. Rising Action: This phase introduces conflicts that disrupt the equilibrium, revealing underlying tensions and propelling the narrative forward.
3. Climax: The most intense moment in the story, marking a turning point where the plot reaches its peak emotional intensity and sets the stage for resolution.
4. Falling Action: Following the climax, tension dissipates, and the narrative unfolds toward its conclusion.
5. Resolution: The final section where the conflict is resolved, and the story reaches its conclusion, establishing a new equilibrium.

Charter's (1987) ideas can be drawn as follows:



Based on the previous explanation, it's clear that plot enables readers to comprehend the narrative by revealing the interconnected patterns, sequences, and relationships between events, as well as their impact on character development. Moreover, plot is intimately linked with characters, as their actions, attitudes, and decisions shape the story's progression from one event to the next, ultimately reflecting their distinct personalities.

2.2.3 Setting

Setting is made up of two main components; the physical and the social context. The physical context refers to the depiction of nature and all living things, while the social context reflects the societal conditions, including people's attitudes, behavioral norms, and belief systems as noted by Timmer and Jennings:

Setting are the time, place on social reality within which a story takes place. Setting seems to be insignificant elements in same stories; they could take place just as well in any time or place in other stories. Most in fact, setting is more important. We have to understand where the characters are, in which level in that society if we are interpreting correctly the other element in the story (Timmer & Jennings, 1985:76).



Setting in literary works plays an essential role in shaping the reading experience and increasing the reader's engagement with the story. Setting is divided into three main components: place, time, and social conditions. Setting of places is where the story takes place. Setting of time refers to the specific moment or period when the story takes place. On the other hand, the setting of social condition refers to the social atmosphere within the story. Those three settings work together to create a multidimensional world that supports character development,

enhances themes, and drives the plot. When carefully crafted, the setting transcends its role as a backdrop, becoming a dynamic element that enriches the storytelling experience. Through their skillful use of setting, authors invite readers to step into their world, allowing them to connect with the story on both an emotional and intellectual level.

2.2.4 Theme

Theme, as one of the intrinsic elements in literature, refers to the central idea or message that a literary work conveys. The theme represents the core message or central idea that the author aims to convey. It becomes apparent after thoroughly reading the entire narrative, often revealed through the characters' dialogues, the storyline, and the setting. As Gill (1995:192) explains, a theme develops through the progression of the plot, character interactions, dialogue, and setting.

In literature, the theme can be found by looking closely at the plot, character actions, dialogue, and setting. It is sometimes called a "motive" because it appears throughout the story to support the message the author is trying to share. According to Abrams (1990:120), while "theme" and "motive" are sometimes used in similar ways, the theme is better understood as a broad idea or belief that the story is meant to show and make the reader understand or agree with. Themes are not explicitly stated; instead, they emerge through the reader's analysis of the narrative elements and their connections.

In conclusion, the theme is the central idea or message that gives a literary work its depth and universality. It serves as the underlying framework that connects different elements of the story, such as plot, character development, and symbols. It enables readers to connect with the text on an intellectual and emotional level, enhancing their understanding of both the story and the broader human experience.

2.3 Concept of Gender Inequality

According to Lorber (2010:15), gender is a complex idea that includes social position, legal status, and personal identity. These are all influenced by social processes that place gender roles and expectations into major parts of society like the family, economy, government, culture, religion, and law. These social processes, that have a profound impact on how people view themselves and others based on gender. Gender becomes a system that not only categorizes people but also assigns power, value, and responsibility differently. Therefore, gender inequality arises from these institutionalized differences in social positions and expected roles between men and women in



requently lead to unequal access to resources, opportunities, and

ity affects both men and women, but women often more
ny aspects of life, such as education, employment, leadership, and
Men can also be pressured by strict gender roles, for example

being expected to always be strong or the main breadwinner. However, women are more likely to face injustice, lower pay, limited career opportunities, and lack of representation in decision-making roles. This imbalance is rooted in traditional beliefs and social structures that favor men over women.

Fakih (2008:13) explain that gender inequality manifested into several points as follows:

1. Marginalization

Marginalization refers to a form of social exclusion where individuals or groups are denied access to essential resources or social connections. This leads to marginalized groups being deprived of the rights they should have. Fakih (2008:14) explains that marginalization is essentially the same as impoverishment, as it denies the marginalized group opportunity to grow and improve their conditions. This situation is particularly evident in gender relations, where women often experience more severe disadvantages than men, making them the more oppressed group in cases of gender inequality.

The marginalization of women takes place in multiple dimensions and is caused by various factors, such as governmental systems, policies, cultural beliefs, traditions, social practices, and even prevailing forms of knowledge (Fakih, 2008:15). Limited access to economic resources is one of the most obvious forms of women's marginalization. Economic marginalization leads to economic disadvantages for women, including high rates of female unemployment and poverty. The use of feminine and masculine words to classify professions in certain job leads to women's economic marginalization. Women are expected to take on traditional roles that are considered feminine, such as nursing, teaching, and clerical work. This expectation limits women's access to a wider range of job opportunities. Additionally, these so-called feminine professions are typically low-paying, which contributes to the high number of women living in poverty (Domenico & Jones, 2006:2).

2. Subordination

Subordination of women refers to the condition in which women are placed in a lower or secondary status compared to men. This condition occurs from the societal belief that women are naturally less capable intellectually or physically than men. As an instance, women have smaller bodies and less muscles than men. This has led to the assumption that men are better suited for physically demanding jobs, such as

cturing, emergency response roles, because they are perceived also often viewed as overly emotional or irrational, which leads to ey are unsuitable for leadership roles and consequently results in in less important positions (Fakih, 2008:16). In summary, the men stems from gender differences that originate from the en are intellectually and physically less capable than men.



3. Stereotype

Jones (1997:201), stereotypes are *"thought by many to be the engine that drives prejudice. Stereotypes are prejudicial because they involve generalization"*. He also explains that a stereotype is a set of positive or negative beliefs an individual holds about the characteristics of a group. It can be can differ in how accurate it is, depending on how well it reflects the actual traits of the people being stereotyped and how many others believe in those same ideas.

This shows that stereotypes on women are a form of prejudice. In society, there are many common stereotypes about women, such as the idea that women are gentle, weak, emotional, and only suited for certain jobs like being secretaries, teachers, or nurse. These stereotypes lead to limitation of women's opportunities and roles in life. According to Fakh (2008:17) stereotypes are a form of labeling or marking a specific group. In the context of gender, this often leads to injustice, especially against women. For example, women are sometimes blamed for crimes like rape simply because of how they dress, which is believed to attract men's desire.

4. Violence

Violence means using physical force or power on purpose, either actually or as a threat, against yourself, another person, or a group. This kind of behavior can lead to injury, death, mental harm, poor development, or deprivation (World Health Organization, 2014:1). One common cause of violence is related to gender. In many societies, women frequently face violence such as sexual harassment, trafficking, and forced prostitution in everyday places like neighborhoods, public transport, workplaces, schools, sports clubs, and other social settings. Many women suffer both physical and emotional abuse from men. Although some religions teach that women should obey and submit to their husbands, this does not give men the right to treat women unfairly or violently based on that belief.

5. Double Burden

The workload borne by women, especially housewives, is extremely heavy, as they are often responsible for managing the household and caring for family members. These responsibilities are usually seen as natural duties for women and are often unpaid and undervalued. Society tends to expect women to handle these roles regardless of their personal interests, time, or physical capacity. According to Mansour Fakh (2008:22-23), domestic roles are often viewed as less important or lower in status compared to e by men. This perception leads to the belief that women's work at ple or respectable as men's work outside the home, even though it ater effort.

