

# FORMS OF OPPRESSION REFLECTED IN I AM MALALA BY MALALA YOUSEFZAI AND CHRISTINA LAMB

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**FORMS OF OPPRESSION REFLECTED IN *I AM MALALA* BY MALALA  
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**ABSTRACT:** This study discusses about the forms of oppression in Malala Yousefzai and Christina Lamb's *I am Malala*. The study focuses on the Pashtun women and Malala as the main character in the novel. The study uses qualitative research because it provides understanding into the problem and it derives meanings from the quotations. The study uses an extrinsic approach in analyzing the oppression on the Pashtun women. The extrinsic approach used is psychological approach as the literary approach. The data source of this study is a novel entitled *I am Malala* by Malala yousefzai and Christina Lamb. The study found that there are five form of oppression as suggested by Iris Young in her essay. These form are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, Violence and Culture Dominance. The Pashtun women and Malala experienced these five forms because of the cruelty of the Government regime and the fundamentalist Islamic group Taliban.

**Keywords:** Oppression on women, Pashtun women, Taliban

**ABSTRAK:** Penelitian ini membahas tentang bentuk-bentuk penindasan di *I am Malala* karya Malala Yousefzai dan Christina Lamb. Penelitian ini berfokus pada perempuan Pashtun dan Malala sebagai tokoh utama dalam novel tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif karena memberikan pemahaman terhadap masalah dan memperoleh makna dari kutipan-kutipan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan ekstrinsik dalam menganalisis penindasan terhadap perempuan Pashtun. Pendekatan ekstrinsik yang digunakan adalah pendekatan psikologis sebagai pendekatan sastra. Sumber data penelitian ini adalah novel *I am Malala* karya Malala yousefzai dan Christina Lamb. Studi ini menemukan bahwa ada lima bentuk penindasan seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Iris Young dalam esainya. Bentuk-bentuk tersebut adalah eksploitasi, marginalisasi, ketidakberdayaan, Kekerasan dan Dominasi Budaya. Perempuan Pashtun dan Malala mengalami lima bentuk ini karena kekejaman rezim Pemerintah dan kelompok Islam fundamentalis Taliban.

**Kata Kunci:** Penindasan terhadap wanita, wanita pashtun, Taliban

## INTRODUCTION

History has shown how oppression has become a constant trend throughout the world. Many people especially women have always been subject to excessive social pressure by facing violence, slavery and discrimination. Marilyn Frye in her book Marilyn Frye : Oppression portrays oppressed women as a bird in a cage. Woman that became caught in a bind will always get difficulties from the cage bar whatever they do, say or think (Frye, 1983:18). Many women become an easy prey to oppress in developing countries, such as Pakistan. According to the 2017 census, women in Pakistan make up to 48.76% of the inhabitants ([https://2017\\_census\\_of\\_Pakistan.com](https://2017_census_of_Pakistan.com)). Even though women make up half of the worlds population, they are always being treated as second class citizens. Women in Pakistan have been controlled by many gender discrimination. Being denied from their own identity, many women are considered as a property and don't have the right to make any decision regarding their own live. They are mistreated and kept away without any access to education and mostly become victims of

honor killings, rape, early marriages and as a debt payment.

<sup>12</sup> *I am Malala* is a novel written by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb. It is a book that pictures the oppression on women that occurs in the Swat Valley of Pakistan. The book tells a story about a young adult girl called Malala who was born in a Pashtun tribe. Its a tribe and a land where the birth of a <sup>3</sup> son were celebrated, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain. While growing up, Malala tells the story of her parents background and the history of her region on how it was ruled by two father and son kings and how the region became a part of Pakistan in 1969. She also tells the story of General Zia who ruled Pakistan and the man who is responsible of the Islamization there. Under his regime, religion gains prominence and women's freedoms are restricted. Then at last she tells the story of the arrival of the Taliban in her region when she was ten years. Slowly the life of the Pashtun women are restricted and treated brutally, especially in the Swat city where the Islamic fundamentalist group called the Taliban comes and implement their brutal version of sharia law or Islam in the region. <sup>4</sup> The Taliban becomes notorious internationally for their sexism against women.

The writer chooses this novel because the oppression on women in it is pictured strongly. Through the novel, women had to face different forms of oppression in the name of religion, tradition, honor, and male entitlement. They had to face it because of the Taliban who intend to create a secure environment where the chastity and dignity of women may once again be sacrosanct. Beside that, the novel I am Malala shows the various forms of Oppression including the cause and the impact of it, since the case of oppression on women is not yet appropriately executed.

The following study is based on a previous study by Sinta Mega Murni entitled *Oppression in Suzanne Collin's The Hunger Games*. This research is made at the Faculty of Cultural Science of University of 17 August 1945 Surabaya. The study analyzes the government's reason to do the oppression toward the society in Panem. The power and rich government oppresses all the districts that living in poverty and starvation. Because of the districts rebellion, the government gives public punishment by holding the hunger games every year. The types of oppression that found are psychologically oppression, physically oppression, exploitation and

marginalization. The researcher will perform a different study from the previous study. The similarity between this study and the previous study is about oppression, but this study will use Iris Young form of study to find the type of the oppression in the novel.

## REVIEW AND RELATED LITERATURE

According to Irish Young in her essay "The Five Faces of Oppression" oppression are identified into exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, violence, and cultural dominance as major factors enforcing privilege and subordination (Young, 1992:64). Women have been the most oppressed victims in public and private places by norms, conventions, and culture, regardless of their origin, ranking, or hierarchical standing. Because of several categories such as their gender, poverty, class, color, caste, or other categories, they are persecuted, denied, and discriminated against in their basic rights.

### Exploitation

Since long time, women have been the victim of exploitation in various aspects and fields whether it is physically, socially, mentally or

economically. <sup>7</sup> Exploitation is the act of using people's labor to produce profit while not compensating them fairly (Young, 2014:13). Sexual exploitation, such as prostitution and trafficking, adultery, rape, abduction, wrongful confinement, and murder, as well as crimes involving women's property, such as domestic violence, dishonest misappropriation, dowry extortion, criminal breach of trust, and outraging women's modesty, are all examples of women being exploited. They also face problems of life aspect such as employment, access to health care or property rights.

## <sup>2</sup> Marginalization

Marginalization is the act of relegating or confining a group of people to a lower social standing or outer limit or edge of society (Young, 2014: 18). People who are marginalized are ostracized, deemed insignificant, or placed in a weak position within a community or organization. Disabled individuals, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQ people, and women make up the majority of disadvantaged groups. Economic, social, political, educational, and psychological marginalization are all examples of marginalization. In certain societies, men have always had authority over

women's lives. All of their interests are entirely managed by their father prior to marriage, and will be continued by their spouse following marriage. This imprisoned them in the roles of daughter and wife, who could only concentrate on their womanly obligations and stayed at home. They don't have the option of taking a different route.

## Powerlessness

According to young, <sup>15</sup> the powerless are dominated by the ruling classes and situated to take others (Young, 2014: 21). Despite today's superior knowledge, the majority of the powerless are women. Because of the disparity in power between men and women, <sup>18</sup> women's lives were put in jeopardy and they were treated as second-class citizens. To live, they are compelled to rely on others, particularly the male in their family. They may only lose contact with the man breadwinner through divorce or death as a result of extreme poverty.

## Violence

<sup>13</sup> Violence and the threat of violence towards women are the most common kind of oppression that women experience till this day. Violence is used to keep a group or individual to keep 'in its place'(Young, 2014:1). The 1993

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Declaration on Violence Against Women defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether in public or private life.

### Cultural Dominance

<sup>9</sup> According to Young, cultural dominance involves taking the culture of the ruling class and establishing it as norm (Young, 2014:3). Culture is sometimes invoked as a reason to disregard gender equality, and it also manifests itself in violence against women. In certain cultures, key decision-making processes are linked to a specific household status or gender role. Women are viewed as inferior and submissive to males in some male-dominated cultures. Daughters are seen as a liability in this society, whereas sons are praised and worshipped. This is because men in this culture can earn and make their own living, they can continue the family line, they can care for and provide money for their elderly in the family, they can <sup>8</sup> have a wife who is considered a domestic helper in the family, and they play an important role in death rituals in some cultures to

ensure the soul of the deceased is released to heaven. Women, on the other hand, are the polar opposite of males in certain cultures; they are seen to be incapable of anything and viewed as economically and emotionally reliant on men.

### RESEARCH METHOD

The study uses descriptive qualitative research that involves collecting data to analyze the forms of oppression. The study uses an extrinsic approach in analyzing the oppression on the Pashtun women in <sup>6</sup> I am Malala by Malala Yousefzai and Christina Lamb. In this study <sup>6</sup> the data source is a novel entitled I am Malala by Malala Yousefzai and Christina Lamb. The data taken are all the sentences related to the oppression. The data are gained from the conversation, the thoughts of the characters and the description by the author that are related to oppression on Pashtun women.

### RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Cultural Dominance

Cultural domination refers to the adoption of cultural norms such as values, language, customs, religion, and social conduct. Cultural domination is a worldwide phenomena that is strongly

ingrained in many Southeast Asian countries, particularly in Pakistan. Many Pashtun women in the novel *I am Malala*, have been subjected to cultural domination since birth. Neglect, housework, and early marriage are all frequent experiences for Pashtun women. The fact that Pashtun women were born as daughters placed them in a subservient status to males. Because of this patriarchal values, women is only expected to take care of the home as a wife and a mother and men can dominate the outside world.

The movement of a women is not only limited inside the house but also outside the house. The Pashtun women are never allowed to go outside the house without the companion of a male relative. Pashtun women are not supposed to do anything even if it is for the sake of their child health. Pashtun women are obligated to obey and respect the rule and regulation that is made by the man in their family. They must protect their reputation for the sake of their family. Another feudal tradition that torments women is the tradition of swara. Swara is a tradition where a girl is given over to the rival for the sake of reconciliation in case of murder or any other rivalry. They are forced to marry someone from the rival family and traded to settle personal, family or tribal

disputes. Many Pashtun women are being held responsible for crimes they did not commit. This custom has become a mental torment for Pashtun women for the rest of their lives, and it is made much worse when the woman is given while she is an infant or a juvenile. This custom is not only incompatible with basic human rights, but also with Islamic beliefs.

### **Powerlessness**

From the past, women have always been under pressure and excessive social expectations which have resulted in many women becoming helpless. This form of oppression on women, especially the Pashtun women has made them powerless and voiceless against their oppressors. General Zia's laws and restrictions have become a battle for women. Pashtun women are denied the opportunity to establish their innocence. Many women are left helpless as a result of this, and many of them become victims of accidental incidents such as rape. So, following a trial in which she was not given the opportunity to testify, these raped victims must be punished to jail, public flogging, or death by stoning. Pashtun women's helplessness is felt not just by those who are married and have

husbands, but also by those who have become widows.

Many Pashtun women have lost their spouses as a result of the Taliban sending men to battle, and they have received no more information about their husbands' lives. As a result, many Pashtun women are left to wonder if their husbands are still alive or if they have become widows. Being a widow as a Pashtun woman is difficult; they can't even work outside the home since it would go against the family's honor. The only other choice is to marry a guy they despise and leave the children in the care of their parents. If the parents reject because they believe it would be a burden on them, the children will be put to an orphanage. In their lives, Pashtun women are never given the right to accomplish anything. They are treated as a puppet that can be controlled.

### **Exploitation**

Because most Pashtun women are helpless, they are easy victims for exploiters, especially young girls. Many of them are compelled to work in the most hazardous conditions, endangering their health and safety. The youngsters are vulnerable to exploitation. Children who would rather study and play are compelled to work in a dangerous environment in order to generate money

to live. They scavenge the garbage for money to survive, while the stores benefit from what they collect. Another kind of exploitation is perpetrated by the Taliban at one of the largest female madrasas, Jamia Hafsa, which is a component of Islamabad's Lal Masjid, the Red Mosque. The mosque contains two madrasas, one for girls and the other for boys, that have been used to recruit and train volunteers to fight in Afghanistan and Kashmir for years.

Even inside the classroom, Pashtun women are treated like puppets and weaponized. In the name of religion, these ladies have been indoctrinated to commit such acts. Because of Pakistan's extreme poverty, the majority of females are enrolled in religious schools such as madrassas, where they get free education and accommodation. Some of the females are also taken from the streets and low-income neighborhoods. Preachers with promises give them a way out of the monotony and misery of poverty. They are frequently given visions of heaven in exchange for sacrificing their lives as suicide bombers.

### **Violence**

Women's violence has been a regular occurrence in Pakistani society, particularly among Pashtun women who are constrained by conventional



restrictions. In the novel *I Am Malala*, Pashtun women are subjected to a great deal of physical and verbal assault. They are intimidated, tortured, and sometimes killed for making mistakes that are deemed unfit for a woman's virginity and dignity. The Taliban are primarily responsible for these actions. They began by threatening all Pashtun women and girls, and then they escalated to more heinous acts of violence, terrorizing Pashtun women and girls.

The Taliban began publicly opposing female education and began attacking girl schools in Swat. In Swat, more than 120 girls' schools have been demolished. The Taliban forbids women from receiving education because it is regarded incompatible with the Islamic Shari'a they follow. They even get violent towards Pashtun women who do not comply with their norms, which include wearing the burqa. When women who are not wearing burqas venture outside the home, they shout and threaten to beat them. The talibans are very strict with the rules that they believe can purify the pashtun women, so that whatever punishment they do to the women, they consider it as their dedication to god to take away the sins of the sinners. As a result, when there are Pashtun women who they consider

insulting their religion, then it is no longer beating as a punishment but death.

For example Shabana who is a well-known dancer in the Swat town of Mingora. Everyone enjoys seeing her dance, and the Pashtun people are quite proud of their music and art. However, since the Taliban declared music and dance to be un-Islamic, everyone has stopped doing it out of fear, but Shabana continues to do it in secret because dancing is her livelihood. Shabana's pleas and groans are ignored by the Taliban on the day she is brutally murdered. Shabana is slain and placed into the Bloody Square, a place where the Taliban dump their dead bodies so that others may see who they kill and learn from them. Not only Shabana, the Taliban also almost killed Malala Yousefzai, the girl who stood for education for Pashtun girls. Malala was shot by the Taliban and was struck by three bullets. She was killed as a result of her efforts in the Swat Valley to educate Pashtun women. The Taliban also accuse her of promoting secularism. On her way home from school, a 15-year-old Pashtun girl is shot on the bus. Malala was not the only one wounded by the bullet; two of her companions, Shazia and Kainat, were also injured but not seriously.

## **Marginalization**

Many Pashtun women are disenfranchised as a result of the discriminatory Pashtun culture that emphasizes men. Furthermore, the Taliban's treatment of Pashtun women in restricting them makes them even more sad. They have been marginalized by their father since birth, then by their spouse after marriage, and finally by the culture in which they reside. Even after their deaths, they are still ostracized, as seen by the quotation below from the day Shabana was slain by the Taliban.

Shabana is thrown to the bloodied square as she is slain. Even though many adored Shabana while she danced, no one worried about her death. Even after her death, she didn't have the right to rest in peace.

The Taliban's obstruction of women's health care may be observed in the statement above. Pashtun women are not allowed to get therapy from males who are not connected to them; instead, they must seek care from other women. At the same time, this extremist organization denies Pashtun women the opportunity to pursue careers as teachers or doctors. As a result, many Pashtun women are illiterate, and they disregard their own or their daughters' health.

Pashtun women of all religions, are severely disadvantaged in Pakistan, whether as a result of General Zia's Islamization policies or the Taliban.

Another example of marginalization happened to Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, has been sentenced to death by hanging. She is a poor woman who survives by picking fruits. She is the mother of five children. When she handed her worker pals some water one day, they refused to drink it, claiming that the water was unclean since she was a Christian. They believe the water she provides is contaminated as a result of her faith, which they consider blasphemy. They eventually got into a fight because they were defending one other's faith. Asia Bibi, on the other hand, lives in a mostly Muslim country with strong Islamization laws. Asia Bibi is condemned to death under General Zia's Blasphemy Law, despite the fact that she has never been found guilty of blasphemy. The law and the Taliban are not in accordance with the Islamic values that teaches how to respect each other, especially the women. Their beliefs only creates misery for the women and not peace as they promised.

## **Conclusion**

From the study it can be concluded that the Pashtun women had to endure being oppressed in forms of violation, marginalization, culture domination, exploitation and powerlessness. They are violated in the form of being threatened, beaten and killed. The Taliban threaten many women for not wearing burqa and for going to school. The worst part is that they killed Shabana and the first female prime minister Benazir Bhutto. Lastly, they attempt to kill Malala by shooting her with three bullets. They are discriminated and mistreated in many ways. Young orphan girls are exploited by becoming a rubbish scavenger for some money to live but yet the shops are getting profit of what they gather. They also brainwash some of the women to do suicide bombing in the name of religion. Cultural domination is also a form of oppression that can be found in the novel. Several Pashtun traditions are mistreating the women. These women often become a victim of Swara which is a tradition where women are being sold to a rival family and traded as a settlement of personal, family or tribal disputes. This tradition becomes a mental torture for the rest of the Pashtun women's life and is even worse when the woman is given when she was an infant or in a minor age.

They are also forced to wear the burqa out of fear. They are forced to imprison themselves in meters of fabric in the name of modesty, even though they are feeling caged and suffering of it. The Pashtun women become powerless to all the rules of Taliban and their custom tradition of Pashtun. One of the Pashtun girls, Moniba, becomes very careful with her study as she is afraid her male relative will stop her if she makes any mistake. In the Pashtun tradition or the Pashtunwali, men start their role in becoming decisive in the most important issue of a woman's life, especially in education. A woman's life is supposed to be centered at home. She is only responsible of homemaking, food preparation, and childbearing, which do not support her education. As a result of the discriminatory Pashtun culture that prioritizes men, many Pashtun women are marginalized. In addition, the treatment of the Taliban in restraining Pashtun women makes them even more miserable. They are marginalized since birth by the man of their own family, then marginalized by their husband after marriage and also by the society that they live within. The Taliban controlled everything in the life of a Pashtun woman. They are demanded to be passive to keep their dignity. They have no role and position in the society, they

are given no right to choose or decide anything related to their own life. As a Pashtun women the only status they have is as a housewife and a child bearer.

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