

Women Stereotypes on Margaret Atwood's Novel "The Handmaid's Tale"

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Abstract

The patriarchal culture tradition has existed for a long time. This social system encourages various types of stereotypes, especially for women. Men's dominance over women makes women's existence stereotyped with the issue of social class and gender segregation which causes dystopian life. This study is to show how novels can be used as social critiques of woman discrimination. The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood is one of the literary works that addresses the topic of gender stereotyping across how the stories happened. This research uses it to get the data on stereotype aspect especially for the woman stereotype that appears in the novel. The objective of this study is to find out the types of woman stereotypes realized in Margaret Atwood's Novel "The Handmaid's Tale". Therefore, the method used is descriptive qualitative. The study's results show that the women in the novel especially the lower status women are stereotyped as sexual partner, reproducer, erotic object, motherhood and housewife, weak creatures, lacked in political and education, and having emotional expressiveness. This study's impact is encouraging women to engage in critical thinking and not make themselves objects to men.

Keyword: *women stereotype, The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood*

Introduction

Literature often illustrated as a permanent expression in written or spoken form about life and the universe, both real and fictional. The expression of imagination or thoughts can express through literary works. Literary work defines as an art that uses words as a basis for building depictions, thoughts, or stories in a meaningful way.

The most popular fiction in literary works that are most written and read are novels and short stories (Sumardjo and Saini, 1986: 32). The messages conveyed by a novel is typically linked to societal phenomena depending on the

setting time or true events that may occur in real life. Many stories of different characters in literary works, one of which is the story of woman. Morris (1993: 7) states that literature gives people insight into the disadvantages that women have to receive from society.

From the existence of gender discrimination, it formed a stereotype in society. Stereotyping is indeed the act of labeling groups of people in negative ways (Fakih, 2012: 16). Faced with such gender stereotypes as the foundation, the novel "The Handmaid's Tale" written by Margaret Atwood, focused on the role of women as handmaid named Offred as the main character to sexual slavery in a totalitarian state.

The Handmaid's tale by Margaret Atwood is one of those literary works about women's lives in a patriarchal society which can open people's eyes that until now many women still face stereotyping. Walby (1990: 20) defines that a patriarchal social system is one in which men control, exploit, and oppress women. The novel became an instant feminist classic upon its release in 1985. Studying this novel in recent era is important to track back how women stereotyped since 19th Century in United States. What interesting move is the object of oppression is white woman.

The writers use the feminism approach to focus on woman character and see the stereotypes addressed to a woman as main character.

Literary Review

A work of literature is a response to the problems of human existence and fate including discrimination against women. Literature comes from the imagination of a author from several perspectives that are fiction or the truth and expressed through the art of language and one of them is feminism. Geofe (in Sugihastuti and Suharto, 2005: 61) states that feminism is an organized activity that fights for the rights and interests of women. This movement of women clearly states that

patriarchy have been producing an ideology that creates sexist oppression and gender discrimination towards women.

In a patriarchal system, men control women's lives. Patriarchy is an ideology and a way of thinking that legally, politically, socially, religiously and economically enforces male dominance and power (Rakoczy, 2004: 10). This social system of patriarchy encourages various types of stereotypes, especially for women. Stereotypes are perceptions or beliefs that are espoused about groups or individuals based on opinions and attitudes which was formed first. Stereotyping is labeling a group of people in the ways which tend to be negative (Fakih, 2012: 16). Those kinds of stereotypes are the social norms which demand women and men to behave in different ways (Aksu, 2005: 14).

A stereotype is divided into two types, namely hetero stereotype and auto stereotype. Hetero stereotype refers to stereotypes associated with other groups, while auto stereotypes are stereotypes related to themselves. This stereotype is not always negative but also sometimes contains positive image. This stereotype can be in the form of positive or negative views, usually, it is entirely true, but it can also be entirely wrong (Matsumoto, 2003: 69).

Simone de Beauvoir as one of the most influential feminists of the 20th century says that women are "the other", defined negatively, that is, women are those who lack power. This weakness is then considered as fate that women must accept without being able to be changed. Women are then symbolized as night, chaos, and immanence. Their inability to perceive reality is attributed to their lack of logic and ignorance (Beauvoir, 1989: 302).

In Beauvoir's book entitled *The Second Sex* discusses why our societal concept of "woman" is problematic. Beauvoir insists that we must not look at societal good, but individual good. She further writes that there is no public good other than one that assures the citizens' private good; we judge institutions from the point of view of the concrete opportunities they give to individuals (Beauvoir, 2011: 16-17).

Beauvoir discusses women through the concepts of transcendence and immanence. She defines transcendence as active, creative, projecting forward into the future and immanence as passive, internal, and centered on the maintenance of the species. Beauvoir argues that women face particular issues with transcendence. Despite being autonomous beings rooted in freedom, women find themselves in a society where they are pushed to the position of the Other or the object. Attempts are made to reduce them to immanence and prevent their transcendence (Beauvoir, 2011: 16-17). This is the source of the problem for Beauvoir which woman ought to be able to achieve transcendence, and the concept of womanhood and “femininity” constrain her ability to do so.

There are several stereotypes towards women contained in the Simone de Beauvoir’s book entitled *The Second Sex* (2011), as follows:

1. Women as Sexual Partner, Reproducer, and Erotic Object.

For man woman as a solely productive force including a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic object, an Other through whom he seeks himself. These old patriarchal constraints are exactly the ones the U.S.S.R. has brought back to life today. It has revived paternalistic theories about marriage; and in doing so, it has asked woman to become an erotic object again: a recent speech asked Soviet women citizens to pay attention to their clothes, to use makeup, and to become flirtatious to hold on to their husbands and stimulate men desire (Beauvoir, 2011: 92-93).

2. Women as Motherhood and Housewife.

The differences between men and women can be seen in contrast, when men hunt and catch fish, women just stay at home. As a housewife and mother, woman gives up her free holidays to fields and forests, usually preferring to plant gardens and be in the kitchen quietly, she tames flowers and puts them in vases (Beauvoir, 2011: 745). In her function as wife, mother, and homemaker, she is unrecognizable in her singularity.

3. Women as Weak Creatures.

According to Beauvoir (2011: 126), the general point of view in stating that a woman must live closed at home and obey men. Slaves were completely deprived of their freedom of conscience; woman does have it, but she is weak and powerless. What is dangerous for her is that women are weak and have less productive capacity does not explain this exception. Since women are weak, in other words powerless, compared to men, it is evident that society's opinion on gender describes that men should have the power. This is contributing to the social construction of gender by making men seem like they have more power and privilege over women.

4. Women Lacked in Political and Education.

The main focus of this kind of stereotypes is the characteristics of man more domination than women in political and education. Beauvoir (2011: 175) says that political discussion will bring disagreements between the couple. Women are different from men. Voting is an obligation and not a right, women do not deserve it. They are less intelligent and educated than men. If women choose, men will become effeminate. In fact, women lack political education so they will choose according to the wishes of their husbands.

5. Women are More Emotional Expressiveness.

More instability and less control makes the woman more emotional, which is directly related to vascular variations such as palpitations, flushing, and so on and thus they are subject to seizure attacks such as tears, nervous laughter, and hysteria (Beauvoir, 2011: 66). Thus, it concludes that women are more emotional, nervous, and irritable than usual and can exhibit serious psychological problems.

Research Methodology

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. The data source of this study is a novel entitled "The Handmaid's Tale" written by Margaret Atwood which published by Vintage in 2017. The techniques used to collect the data in

this study are reading the novel repeatedly and underlying the necessary lines and quotation in the novel. After collecting the data, the writers analyze the novel by doing several steps based on Miles and Huberman (1994: 10). Firstly, the writers focus on arranging the data into several part based on its classification and selecting the data by rejecting the irrelevant information. Secondly, the writers display the data in table and interpreting the findings, and the last is drawing the conclusion of the analysis.

Discussion and Findings

Women as Sexual Partner, Reproducer, and Erotic Object

In this novel, women are degraded to the status of slaves and are only utilized for reproduction by men. Stereotypes about women in society cause women to feel the need to wear make-up and sexual clothing. Women as objects are treated without regard to their personality or dignity. From all the types of stereotypes, the type of women as sexual partner, reproducer, and erotic object is the most frequently found in the Handmaid's.

As a sexual partner, it can be seen when Offred explores her imagination in relation to her sex story is the first stereotype that arises as a result of the patriarchal system. Offred explores her imagination in relation to her sex story is the first stereotype that arises as a result of the patriarchal system. "*There was an old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without a shape or name. I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then, in the small of the back, or out back, in the parking lot, or in the television room with the sound turned down and only the pictures flickering over lifting flesh*" (Atwood, 2017: 9). This depicts Offred's sexual experience; she has to be an object of erotic to men; they need to satisfy men's desire any time any place.

Power owned by the commander made Offred inevitably an object of sexual desire. Men control women even in their sexual life.

Men typically use a variety of words and phrases during sex, such as "gets laid" "makes out" and so on. This depicts how women have no role in controlling what to do during the sexual activity. All things to do is passively obeying the commander's instruction. Surely, there is no feeling of love since Offred is just the maid whose job is to serve her master sexually. "The night is mine, my own time, to do with as I will, as long as I am quite. As long as I don't move. As long as I lie still. The difference between lie and lay. Lay is always passive. Even men used to say, I'd like to get laid. Though sometimes they said, I'd like to lay her. All this is pure speculation. I don't really know what men used to say. I had only their words for it" (Atwood, 2017: 40).

Further is women as reproducer, means that women's task is only to produce children. The handmaids have to wear red colored robes as identification. Everything which is related to the Handmaids is in red color, including the Red Centre, the place where the Handmaids are indoctrinated.

"The Ceremony goes as usual. I lie on my back, fully clothed except for the healthy white cotton underdrawers... My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body" (Atwood, 2017: 89). Herewith, the handmaids might conceive from the prescribed sexual intercourse they have to do with their male superiors at appointed night, which is called the Ceremony.

The ceremony is the name of the right time when the husbands which is the commander who have a wife but cannot get pregnant should have sex with the handmaid. The wife also needs to look for a new Handmaid if the time is finished but the Handmaid still cannot give birth a child. If the handmaid can give birth a child, it is her duty to give the baby and to take care of the baby. For the main character, Offred has her ceremonial sexual intercourse with the Commander because she is living in his household.

Because of the low birth rate under the pre-Gileadean system, the Republic of Gilead's government oppresses women in order to achieve its ultimate objective of repopulating the country. It is clear that the Gileadean rule is a government built on a patriarchal system that increases stereotypes about the manner in which women should have children, and this argument is also mentioned in the story, as quoted, "*Gilead was, although undoubtedly patriarchal in form...*" (Atwood, 2017: 278). The Republic of Gilead, being a patriarchal government, raises men's social standing while lowering women's social status by placing men in administration and relegating women to breeding roles.

This novel shows how women are gathered based on their reproductive capability, separating the usable women from the women who are barren. Men can decide, which one to choose as a handmaid. The women who are able to conceive and bear healthy baby are considered as women for breeding purposes only. This phenomena can be related to the life of black women in slavery era, the only purpose of their life is to give babies, to breed, and to work hard in the field. Handmaids are not different compared to those slavery, whose rights are taken away and live under multiple oppressions. "*We are for breeding purposes: we aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans*" (Atwood, 2017: 128).

Based on the data found in the novel, infertile women are sent to the Colonies to isolate and force to do dirty labour. It is because women in the Gileadean rule exist solely to procreate and repopulate. For the Handmaids, who are regarded as fertile, conceiving would be tough and if they were successful in conceiving and delivering the baby, they would not be transported to the Colonies. "*But she'll never be sent to the Colonies, she'll never be declared Unwoman. That is her reward*" (Atwood, 2017: 118). Women able to reproduce children are preferable than those the other side. This depicts the status of women in the social life; which means the body merely giving profit to those having the power.

Beside being sexual partner and tool for reproduction, women in the novel are also described as erotic object. Here, the women are considered not as

individual with its qualities or sense of dignity but merely objects of sexual desire. This objectification raises women to be hegemonized by the need of society addressing to the desired characters or image of women. *"The women teeter on their spiked feet as if on stilts, but off balance; their backs arch at the waist, thrusting the buttocks out. Their heads are uncovered and their hair too is exposed, in all its darkness and sexuality. They wear lipstick, red, outlining the damp cavities of their mouths, like scrawls on a washroom wall, of the time before"* (Atwood, 2017: 31). This stereotypes have made the women in the novel need to obey wearing sexual clothing to raise men's desire on them. *"It's been a long time since I've seen skirts that short on women. The skirts reach just below the knee and the legs come out from beneath them, nearly naked in their thin stockings, blatant, the high-heeled shoes with their straps attached to the feet like delicate instruments of torture"* (Atwood, 2017: 31). Historically, women are often expected to wear what is deemed traditionally feminine, while men are often expected to wear what is deemed traditionally masculine.

Women as Motherhood and Housewife

Women's roles as spouses and mothers have traditionally defined them. Women with impairments are thought to be unable of full caretaking and partnership duties, such as women being limited in kitchen labor and women being restricted to the garden and back yard. Thus, women are always connected with domestic roles.

Women as motherhood is one among stereotypes attached to women in the novel. Women are obligated to having kids and raise them well under their caring. Women able to have kids are preferable in this novel rather those who are infertile. *"We would have children. Although we knew it hasn't too likely we could ever afford it, it was something to talk about, a game for Sundays, Such freedom now seems almost weightless"* (Atwood, 2017: 28).

In Gilead, most women takes all the household tasks. It is stated that the amount or type of work women have to do depend on their social status. The

Marthas are sterile women who serve as servants in Commanders' houses, such as cooking and cleaning, they dress in green. The Wives are the women of Commanders. They dress in blue and only do leisure pursuits like gardening or crocheting. And the last one is Handmaids, they are a special case. They only work in a commander's house and their only job is to breed.

In the novel, women are traditionally defined as domestic creatures whose job is only as wives with so many things to do at houses and mother who has to take care of their kids. *"I wait, for the household to assemble. Household: that is what we are. The Commander is the head of the household. The house is what he holds. To have and to hold, till death do us part"* (Atwood, 2017: 77). Men think that good women are those taking full role on domestic area. Women are relegated to kitchen chores. According to the novel, the kitchens is the realm of lower-class women such as Offred and the Marthas Rita and Cora – the house handmaids. The word kitchen signifies an essential place where important things happen, particularly those done by women. For example, the kitchen is the sole location where Offred can obtain tokens, or cards from Martha in order to purchase eggs, fruit, bread, and other everyday necessities. *"I would like to stay here, in the kitchen. Cora might come in, from somewhere else in the house, carrying her bottle of lemon oil and her duster, and Rita would make coffee –in the houses of the Commanders there is still real coffee – and we would sit at Rita's kitchen table, which is not Rita's any more than my table is mine, and we would talk, about aches and pains, illnesses, our feet, our backs, all the different kinds of mischief that our bodies, like unruly children, can get up to"* (Atwood, 2017: 15).

Women in the novel are identically related to the kitchen, garden, houses; meanwhile office in the house is not allowed for women to enter. Beauvoir (2011: 516) conveys that the conventional family, or more specifically, a male-dominated family, is one of the components of a society that supports the notion of man's dominance and superiority. The daily responsibilities as a handmaid include walking to the market to purchase food for her allocated household. Women's

roles as spouses and mothers have traditionally defined them. Women with impairments are thought to be unable of full caretaking and partnership duties, such as women being limited in kitchen labor and women being restricted to the garden and back yard. That is, women are always connected with domestic roles.

Women as Weak Creatures

Women characters in the novel experienced stereotypes which women are symbolized by various colors based on their social class. The government also stresses the loss of women's self-identities. Since women are considered weak, emotional, docile and so on. In short, women in the Republic of Gilead are regarded as men's belongings rather than as human beings. Beauvoir (2011: 126) states that the general point of view in stating that a woman must live closed at home and obey men. Slaves were completely deprived of their freedom of conscience; woman does have it, but she is weak and powerless.

In the novel, the robes worn by the women under the Gileadean rule serve as their identification and are what Republic of Gilead women are expected to wear and each group of women has their own color, which is red for the Handmaids. The Gileadean bestows certain robe colors to create false consciousness among women in order to segregate women based on the color of their clothing, seeking to make them believe that those colors possess power among each group of women. This conduct contributes to the Handmaids' stereotypes as the detested and primarily segregated because they must be avoided at first glance due to their red color. The desire to create false awareness in the Handmaids is also demonstrated during the Prayvaganza event or any other time when women encounter. The Handmaids would then receive their own space in accordance with their red color. *“Here there are no chairs. Our area is cordoned off with a silky twisted scarlet rope, like the kind they used to have in movie theaters to restrain the customers. This rope segregates us, marks us off, keeps the other form contamination by us, ... so into it we go, arranging ourselves in rows, which we know very well how to do, kneeling then on the cement floor”* (Atwood,

2017: 196). Women with low social status such as handmaids are considered the weakest creature. They have no intention to choose or to gather with others belong to another upper social status. Their existence is only to serve and to obey what said by the masters. Even they are not existed and considered unimportant.

The women in the novel also lose their identity. As weak creatures, they have no identity to show their existence. The handmaids in the novel have to accept new names provided. It is to prevent them to recall their former life as an individuals. "*My name isn't Offred, I have another name, which nobody uses now because it's forbidden. I tell myself it doesn't matter, your name is like your telephone number, useful only to others; but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter*" (Atwood, 2017: 80). Offred has lost her identity after being a handmaid, yet, she provokes herself that loosing identity is indeed a serious problems. The name Offred derived from the prefix 'of' means belonging, and Fred is the name of the commander. This must give a vivid picture that she is the objects of belongings of the superior.

In this case, women in a patriarchal society are not considered human beings for the simple reason that they are women. When men are seen as strong, intellectual and active then women are considered weak, emotional, docile and so on. In this patriarchal paradigm, women become everything that is not equal to men. As has been stated by Beauvoir (2011: 724) that women are not born feminine, but that society and culture develop them to be women, shaping them with stereotypes and second status in patriarchal society. She claims that no one or nothing can define what a woman is, but there are social factors that create her oppressive circumstance and determine what a woman must be.

The Gilead government effectively robs women of their individual identities and makes them into disposable objects throughout the story. They are even denied the use of their true names. The names of the Handmaids are only devices to show who they belong to; absolute male ownership as one of the foundations of Gilead's patriarchal regime and also stresses the loss of women's

self-identities. Handmaids are sex slaves and fertility machines controlled by society's upper classes.

Women's basic freedoms are overlooked in this patriarchal society. In short, women in the Republic of Gilead are regarded as men's belongings rather than as human beings. It demonstrates that women are weak and subordinate creatures in patriarchal societies.

Women Lacked in Politic and Education

In the Handmaid's Tale, the Gilead government begins to disenfranchise women systematically by taking away their money, property, and education rights. Furthermore, women live under stringent regulations and are subject to several restrictions, such as limited freedom of speech, literacy, and act. Beauvoir (2011: 175) says that political discussion will bring disagreements between the couple. Women are different from men. Voting is an obligation and not a right, women do not deserve it. They are less intelligent and educated than men. If women choose, men will become effeminate. Women lack political education. They will choose according to the wishes of their husbands.

The Republic of Gilead is the ruling government, and the story goes that the pre-Gilead regime was the United States of America, but the Gileadean overthrew it with armed force. The Gileadean dictatorship uses interpellation on its citizens, especially women, in order to preserve the government so that they can achieve their purpose, and there are numerous ways for interpellation to influence its people. In the Gilead government, men are in charge. They are free to engage in any activity. They have the right to keep everything in their homes in good condition. They are allowed to ask the women any inquiries they want to. Men can work and receive a quality education for their future. They're able to make their own money.

Gilead with a monetized spirituality that funds the Nation while pacifying the consciences of the rich. Gilead society is highly militarized. It is no coincidence that higher ranking leaders are called Commanders and troops are

called Angels, who are the soldiers of God. The dictatorial authority of Gilead forbids women from possessing property, including finances and jobs. Women are not allowed to work, and all money in their accounts is frozen and transferred to their husband's account.

“They’ve frozen them, she said. Mine too. The collective’s too. Any account with an F on it instead of an M. All they needed to do is push a few buttons. We’re cut off. But I’ve got over two thousand dollars in the bank, I said, as if my own account was the only one that mattered. Women can’t hold property anymore, she said. It’s a new law. Luke can use your Compucount for you, she said. They’ll transfer your number to him, or that’s what they say. Husband or male next of kin” (Atwood, 2017: 164 - 165). Offred’s checks her bank account and finds out that the money has been transferred to her husband, Luke. Women in the novel are not allowed to keep their own money or wealth.

Women will be easily controlled when they have no economical power. Offred thinks that her rights, dignity, and worth as a human being is rapped and taken away. *“You don’t know what it’s like, I said. I feel as if somebody cut off my feet. I wasn’t crying. Also, I couldn’t put my arms around him. It’s only a job, he said, trying to soothe me. I guess you get all my money, I said. And I’m not even dead. I was trying for a joke, but it came out sounding macabre. Hush, he said. He was still kneeling on the floor. You know I’ll always take care of you. I thought, Already he’s starting to patronize me. Then I thought, Already you’re starting to get paranoid”* (Atwood, 2017: 165). Offred speaks out loud about the oppression she has. Offred believes that a woman should be able to enjoy her rights and freedoms without interference yet the fact that a woman can only agree to government regulations is undebatable. In other words, women are never supposed to be free.

The story of dystopian literature is frequently associated with the existence of regulations and constraints in the main character's life that restrict freedom. People in *The Handmaid's Tale* live under severe laws, and they suffer as a

consequence. In this dystopian story, many rules are broken, including the loss of freedom of speech, literacy, and action. Offred, one of the Handmaids, informs the reader of various restrictions she is aware of, such as how she and the other Handmaids in the Red Centre, where the Handmaids are indoctrinated, speak in whispers. Whispering behavior demonstrates that the Handmaids are not permitted to speak up. The handmaids belong to their master. They are experiencing multiple oppression; as woman as well as individual.

Women in the land of Gilead are not permitted to read books or the Bible, which is another restriction that must be observed. Science is hated and persecuted in Gilead society, where it is forbidden to obtain any scientific information. Scientists and medical professionals who performed abortions in the past face the death penalty. The few remaining doctors are viewed as a sort of "necessary evil" and only step in as a last resort. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion are not respected in Gileadean society. In order to find books, periodicals, and other "vanity" things, the dictatorship coordinated raids; everything it found was burnt. Although the educational system is not even mentioned once, we can be assured that women are not a part of it, as quoted, *"This hasn't been blacked out, even though we aren't supposed to be reading"* (Atwood, 2017: 112). Offred claims that because the government forbids it, she is unable to read the Bible as a handmaid. The authority to read the Bible belongs only to a leader. Beyond that, there is a restriction. Offred is claiming that a handmaid can only hear what the Commander reads from the Bible.

Women have More Emotional Expressiveness

The story shows the women who have to live in fear and without basic human rights which results in stereotypes. Women are described more sensitive than men, such as crying often, easily provoked by anger, unstable, easily carried away and tend to have difficulty controlling their thoughts. Beauvoir (2011: 66) said that more instability and less control makes them more emotional, which is directly related to vascular variations such as palpitations, flushing, and so on and thus

they are subject to seizure attacks such as tears, nervous laughter, and hysteria. Beauvoir (2011: 83) defines that the woman would fear baldness, penetration, pregnancy, pain, and these fears would restrain her desires, this explanation too rational. Instead of accepting desire disguised as anxiety or being overpowered by fear, we must consider the urgent and frightening pull it exerts on a woman's desire as fundamental. Thus, it concludes that women are more emotional, nervous, irritable than usual, jealous and can exhibit psychological problems.

This study reveals that many women under the policy in the Republic of Gilead try to run away or escape the burden; some even have suicide attempt. The fear of reality faced by the women has made them deciding to do a suicide. They have to suffer the stress, depression, tension, and lack of freedom under the government. That living in a restricted existence is a terrible experience triggering women to escape. The Handmaid, Offred, yearns for freedom since she fears the death penalty and being alienated, therefore she looks for ways to get away. Due to the patriarchal system in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Handmaids are the women who are most negatively impacted by stereotypes.

"I can see the deepening furrows to either side of her nose, the engraved frown. Her eyes blink, she smiles nervously, peering to left and right, checking out the audience, and lifts a hand to fidget with her headdress" (Atwood, 2017: 249-250). This tells Aunt as the handmaids' leader suffering from insecurity while leading the women. She keeps showing her anxiety when talking to the handmaids. This should not become a belief for women that a woman is not worthy to be a leader, if women continue to believe that then there will be no courage and self-confidence that can bring change to the social and gender equality.

Women in the novel also described to express everything excessively that is why they are viewed as weak by men. Women often getting excessive expression when they get mad, keep shouting when they feel uncomfortable even crying. This things are then used by men to label women as helpless creature.

"Serena has begun to cry. I can hear her, behind my back. It isn't the first time. She always does this, the night of the Ceremony. She's trying not to make a noise. She's trying to preserve her dignity, in front of us. The upholstery and the rugs muffle her but we can hear her clearly despite that. The tension between her lack of control and her attempt to suppress it is horrible. It's like a fart in church. I feel, as always, the urge to laugh, but not because I think it's funny. The smell of her crying spreads over us and we pretend to ignore it" (Atwood, 2017: 87).

It is said that Serena always cries every night of the ceremony because of the social demands of the system that requires women to produce offspring. Serena thinks that being unable to give birth makes her feel unworthy of being a complete woman. Women should not always be blamed in terms of fertility to have children because this problem does not only come from the women's side but can come from men.

The feelings felt as well as the action done to show them is actually because women have no power to speak up. They are not permitted to tell the feelings, no one hears and no one really care of what they say. By not admitting women's right to speak, surely it raises the women's confusion to express feelings.

Conclusion

The Handmaid's Tale is a story about women's stereotypes in which women are forced to severe control in all aspects of their lives. According to Atwood and Beauvoir, women as a group are treated as second-class citizens in society. They continue on to assert that women's stereotypes are mostly based on their ability to reproduce.

In the novel, Atwood depicts women's second-class place in society. She portrays a depiction of a world in which women have no freedom, choice, or voice. Women are men's property or objects, and the patriarchal system has stripped women of everything, even their individuality. As can be seen, women

were subjected to stereotypes in the story. Atwood's objective in writing this novel is to facilitate the reader understand the social conditions of women over time.

The stereotype of women still exists and becomes a problem in society. Since all women have the freedom to make their own decisions and determine the course of their lives, it is important to eliminate the stereotype of many women that still experience and is still prevalent today because women actually have equal rights.

Hence, the writers suggest for new researchers that interested in analyzing this novel have a broader perspective in using different theoretical approaches.

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