

**AMELIORATING LIVES IN CHO NAM- JOO'S NOVEL *KIM JIYOUNG, BORN*  
1982 (2016)**

**THESIS**

***Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain Strata One (S1) Degree  
in English Department***



**By:  
Made Miranti Khaerunisya**

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This title has been verified

February 9, 2022

Andi Muhammad Irawan, Ph.D

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS  
UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG**

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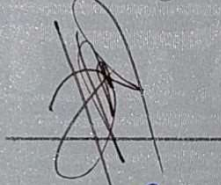
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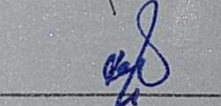
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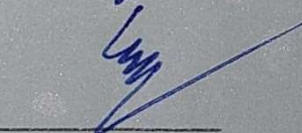
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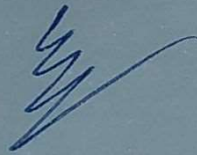


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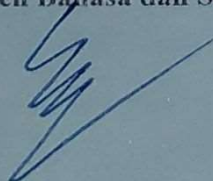
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Padang, 17 November 2022

The Researcher

Made Miranti Khaerunisya

## Abstract

Khaerunisya, Miranti Made. (2022). **Ameliorating Lives In Cho Nam- Joo's Novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016)**. Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

**Advisor: Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D**

This research is an analysis of the novel entitled *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) by Cho Nam-Joo. This research reveals the amelioration of lives by South Korean women who live in patriarchal society. This research uses qualitative method and feminist theory to find out how South Korean women try their best to get a better life. The result of this research finds out that South Korean women who are portrayed in female characters of the novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) by Cho Nam-Joo, struggle a lot to make their live and other women's lives around them to be better. The result also shows that they struggle against gender inequality in household, education, and workplace, which means in their whole life, women still get discrimination. The result shows that gender inequality happen because of the culture, society, and also the economy and education. Despite all of the difficulties and rejection they experience, women there still try to make a better life for themselves.

**Keywords:** Ameliorate, gender inequality, struggle



## Abstrak

Khaerunisya, Miranti Made. (2022). **Usaha dalam Menciptakan Hidup yang Lebih Baik Cho Nam- Joo's Novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016).** Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

**Advisor: Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D**

Penelitian ini merupakan analisis terhadap karya sastra novel yang berjudul *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) yang ditulis oleh Cho Nam-Joo. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan usaha-usaha yang dilakukan oleh perempuan di Korea Selatan untuk mendapatkan kehidupan yang lebih baik di tengah-tengah lingkungan patriarki. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan teori feminis untuk menemukan bagaimana usaha-usaha perempuan di Korea Selatan untuk menciptakan kehidupan yang lebih baik. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahawa perempuan yang digambarkan oleh tokoh-tokoh perempuan di novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) oleh Cho Nam-Joo berjuang dan berupaya untuk membuat hidup mereka dan hidup perempuan di sekitarnya menjadi lebih baik. hasil penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa para perempuan berusaha untuk melawan ketidaksetaraan gender yang terjadi di lingkup rumah tangga, tempat kerja dan sekolah, yang secara tidak langsung menunjukkan bahwa perempuan harus berjuang dalam seluruh hidupnya untuk melawan diskriminasi. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa ketidaksetaraan gender dapat terjadi karena pengaruh budaya, lingkungan, sejarah, dan juga ekonomi serta pendidikan. Di samping semua kesulitan dan penolakan yang didapat, perempuan tetap mengusahakan yang terbaik untuk hidup mereka.

**Kata kunci:** Memperbaiki/ menjadi lebih baik, ketidaksetaraan gender, perjuangan

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

The discussion about inequality between men and women becomes the important topic that needs to be talked because it often happens in society these days. There are many cases that are caused by gender inequality in this modern era. According to Zhu & Chang (2019), gender inequality refers to the inequality that often happens between men and women which causes unequal and different treatment, especially for women. Gender inequality gives impacts to people's life, because there are differences of treatment, opportunities and rights in many aspects, such as social, education, and economy that make some people cannot enjoy their life. From the statement above can be concluded that gender inequality can cause negative impacts to some people, and gives advantages to the other.

Gender inequality is a social construction that appears because of patriarchy system in society. It usually has negative impacts to women in society because it leads to discrimination to women that end up to harmful treatments that happen to them. Several cases that often happen to women because of gender inequality are violence, rape, sexual harassment, femicide, sexual exploitation, unequal salary, and access restriction to education for women. Gender inequality happens around the world. Even in the developed countries. One of the developed countries that has a wide gender gap between men and women is South Korea. According to Bicker (2022), South Korea is one of the developed countries that has the worst women's rights. Almost of 90% of South Korean men do not support feminism. They tend to refuse feminist movement that have been done by South Korean women for a long time.



South Korean women that dedicate their life to fight for women's right have a rough time due to the rage from South Korean men. Bicker (2022) also states that there are many South Korean women who have been struggling to stand aimed at the amelioration of their lives. Amelioration itself refers to the process to make a bad situation become better. Amelioration can appear because of the trigger of women's awareness after they experience inequality and discrimination from men and society. South Korean women fight to ameliorate their life in the middle of the patriarchal culture. They do not only fight for their own life, but also the life of the other women. According to Jenkins (2016), in the society where women get discrimination and oppressed, there are the concern and awareness from the women itself to change life. The concept of *amelioration* is used in this situation, so the women can solve their problem and get a better life even in the patriarchal culture.

According to Manne (2017), women tend to face the hostility because there is the enforcement of patriarchal norms. It means that women can be treated as the object of patriarchy, and they struggle to get out from that situation. In the process of amelioration, there are many efforts that women should do, because the power of men and women in society are different. In South Korea, for example, women have faced a hard processes to improve their lives and help each others. According to Na- Yoon (2020), due to gender inequality that cause discriminations for women, South Korean women become braver and enterprising to be increasingly more visible in society. It can be proved from their achievements, for example in education where many women get highest grades, in workplace where many of them get higher position, and in politics where they can be leaders.

According to Hines and Song (2021), South Korean women who try to ameliorate their lives and get their right often get unimaginable consequences when they reveal their face and speak up about gender inequality in South Korea. One of the example case that happens to South Korean feminist women is a suicide case of a youtuber, BJ Jammi. Based on Kang

(2022), BJ Jammi ended her life because of the abuse she experienced because the society thought that she was a feminist that hates men. This case happens because most of South Korean men believe that men should be more powerful than women, so women need to accept the belief because it is a social culture that has lived in South Korea for a long time. This cultural root is also known as Confucian traditions. The concept of Confucian ideals or Confucianism is defined by Van (2020) as the system of ethics, social philosophy, educational philosophy, statesmanship, and political philosophy taught by Confucius and his followers, with the aim of building love for humanity, ancestor worship, reverence for parents, and harmony in thought and conduct. Confucian ideals are largely rooted since the Joseon Dynasty. It resulted in the system of marriage where. The result is that husbands often have full control over not only inheritance matter, but also the right to grant divorce. Confucianism also creates the roles of every member of a family. The husband has a role as the bread-winner for the family, while the wife need to stay at home, maintain the household and raise the children. The Confucian traditions create gender inequality toward women in South Korea. According to Evans (2017), gender inequality refers to the social phenomenon or social inequalities where women usually treated differently than men. Based on Jayachandran (2015) one of the cause of gender inequality is cultural factors that set societal mindsets. The cultures that live in South Korea create mindsets of society. Most of people there still believe in tradition and think that women have the domestic roles and need to be obedient to their fathers or husbands. It creates the gap between men and women that causes gender inequality.

After many years, many people have more concern about gender inequality in South Korea, especially the women. There has been more awareness from women to change the situation to be better for them, even though the process to get the rights is not easy, but they try their best, and do not want to accept the unfair treatment around them that happen for many years. They make a good progress that leads to less inequality to women. The unequal

treatments that women get makes them try hard to get equality. According to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2017), there are many cases that relate to the issue of women, such as the marriage that harms the women, discrimination in workplace, discrimination in household, and violence. A lot of cases that are going around day by day makes women start to stand up for themselves to get better life. They attempt to get their right as humans and citizens. More young women earn university degrees than men. They are also more vocal in challenging the conservative social mores that hold them back rather than the previous generations. It happens because they realize that some social mores is unfavorable for women.

The topic of ameliorating lives is also portrayed in two figures of South Korean women that participate in feminist activism. They are Jung Se-Young and Baek Hana, two enterprising women who often talk about women's life. Based on Lih Yi (2020) from the article entitled *No Sex, No Babies: South Korea's emerging Feminists Reject Marriage*, In their Youtube channels, Se-Young and Hana often discuss about the idea of women to have holidays free from the obligations to cook for family, and give advices to women who want to be single and live alone, include investment advices and budgeting tips. They help many women to be more independent and happy in life.

The other example of ameliorating lives is the campaign initiated and held by thousands of South Korean women (Strother, 2019). This campaign was inspired by a state prosecutor, Seo Ji-Hyeon who spoke out about sexual assault that happened to her. Her actions encouraged the other women to come forward and protest against sexual harassment. Ten thousands women even have taken the street to protest about it. Previously, many South Korean women are too afraid to speak up about the sexual harassment that happen to them, especially when the harassers have higher position, but the courage of Seo Ji-Hyeon inspires them to do the same.



These cases prove that a small action from a woman can help the other women. The activities and movements of South Korean women are not addressed to prove that women are superior than men, but they do it for ameliorating their lives and get the equality as much as the men. Although there are many people and some political figures that still do not agree with the equality of gender, but South Korean women still try their best for their life and their children, such as work hard to earn money for their children, and study for their future.

This study focuses to examine the female characters's effort on ameliorating their lives against gender inequality that happen for many years in South Korea, which also portray the life of most South Korean women. It is important to know Korean women's struggle to get their right in a country where women do not have chances as men have, even they have similar degrees or skills which often more talented than men. The patriarchy system also affected women's lives from many aspects. Several cases that have become the main issues in South Korea these days such as in domestic, many women cannot work after having children because they need to take care of their children. The treatment from the family to the daughter is different from the son because they believe that their sons will have their financial and be the leader while women should be at home. In workplace, women often earn less salary than the men although they have similar position. They also often being the object of sexual harrasment by men. The treatment that they get lead them to fight back to break the society system. This case can be seen in the novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) by Cho Nam- Joo. This novel portrays the struggle of women's lives in different generations in South Korean to achieve their right in society.

The novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) by Cho Nam- Joo portrays woman's struggle in many fields. Kim Jiyoung, a thirty-three years old woman got married and has a daughter. Before her marriage, her struggle as a woman is already started when she worked at a small marketing agency. Jiyoung is a smart and talented woman, but her ability and skill did not

acknowledge by her manager because he think that women are weak and unskilled. It also happens to the other women in that agency and other companies. The salary between men and women are also different where men earn more money than women, because they are considered more capable and potential, even though women work harder than men. Women in that agency also get sexual harassment by men.

After her marriage and then her daughter was born, Jiyoung must resign from her job because in South Korea, women must handle and be responsible of all the domestic works. It is similar in many countries in Asia. Her life as an independent woman changes significantly after her marriage. She cannot accept it but she still tries her best to do her role as a wife and a mother. She spends her days to take care of her family and cannot go to work anymore. It makes her suffer from mental disorder. The main character, Jiyoung always tries her best in a situation where she was born being a woman and life is hard for women, especially in South Korea. Even though her life is hard, she always struggles until she suffers from a mental disorder because of the pressure of being a woman in a patriarchal society. This novel not only portrays women's life after marriage, but also society's treatment to women, the different treatment of fathers to their sons and daughters, and how the women fight back for their life in a patriarchal society. It can be proved from the struggle of the other female's characters in this novel, such as Jiyoung's mother and Jiyoung's colleagues.

## **1.2 A Brief Description of Author Biography**

Cho Nam-Joo, a 43 years old Korean female, was born in 1978, in Seoul. She graduated from the Department of Sociology of Ehwa Women's University and a former of television scriptwriter for nine years. After deciding to quit as the television scriptwriter, she started her career as a novelist. "*Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*" is her third novel that is written on 2016. The story on this novel was based on her experience as a woman in South Korea who decides to

quit her job after giving birth to a child. This novel leads her winning Hwangsanboel Award for Young Adult Literature in 2016. Her work becomes a hotly debated bestseller in South Korea when it was published in 2016. *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* has had a profound impact on gender inequality and discrimination in Korean society. Cho Nam-Joo's novel has been translated into 18 languages, including English.

Cho Nam-Joo has experienced the similar situation with the character of Kim Jiyoung. She has gotten the different treatment since she was a kid. Her father and her uncle even made a deal before she was born that her father will give her to her uncle if she was a boy, because at that time, many parents want to have a son, so does her uncle. During her mother's era around 1980s and early 90s, women often did not have a right in a family because in Korean society, men are powerful than women. Women at that time would get an abortion if they were pregnant a baby girl.

### **1.3 Focus of the Problem**

This analysis is aimed at analyzing the acts of ameliorating women's life as reflected by the female characters in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) by Cho Nam-Joo, who experience discrimination and then want to make their lives better.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Therefore, to reveal the issue, questions are formulated below:

1. What are the forms of inequality that the female characters face in the novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016)?
2. How do the female characters in this novel ameliorate their lives and fight the discrimination they experience?



### **1.5 Purpose of the Research**

This study aims to find out how far Cho Nam- Joo's novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) brings up and reveals the issue of gender inequality that is faced by women. Moreover, it also to find out the efforts of the female characters in ameliorating their lives in order to get a better life.

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework

