

THE WOMEN'S SUFFERING IN THE NOVEL *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* BY MARGARET ATWOOD

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Abstract

The research discusses social problems experienced by women in a literary work entitled *The Handmaid's* by Margaret Atwood. The social problems in question are discussed the social problem of women that happened in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and described the impact of social problem on women characters in the novel. The suffering that befell women handmaids such as Offred, Ofglen, Janine, and others occurs in a country called the Republic of Gilead. The research uses the Structuralism Approach, a literary research method that emphasizes structural aspects in the form of character, plot, setting, theme, and others. Gender study in literature becomes the perspective of this research which highlights social injustice towards female characters in the fictional story. The research data are then analyzed by using qualitative research methods and explained descriptively. The results of this study indicate that during the reign of the Gilead Republic, women experienced various social problems in the form of separation from family, not getting proper education, restrictions on freedom, forced childbirth for elite families, and the obligation to perform certain rituals. The social problems experienced by these women resulted in severe depression that almost claimed their lives.

Keywords: Social Problem, Women, Novel *The Handmaid's Tale*

INTRODUCTION

Society is formed from several social groups that have different conditions between one group and another group. The formation of social groups in society is motivated by professions and interests, including fishermen, traders, farmers, business people, bankers, teachers, politicians, and others. Within the same group also appears the diversity of social conditions between one human being with another human being. Diversity can arise in the form of social class differences, economic inequality, racial discrimination, gender injustice, and others. This fact shows that in society there are various social facts that have the potential to create social problems.

Social problems can appear in the form of conflicts, disagreements, coercion, fights, killings, and so on. One cause of the emergence of social problems is social

inequality and the difference between expectations and reality. According to Ratna (2010: 58), social problems are discrepancies between elements of culture or society, which endanger the lives of social groups, or hinder the fulfillment of the basic desires of these social groups. Humans naturally always have desires in the economic, educational, biological desire, facilities, entertainment, others, but not all of these desires can be achieved so that it becomes a social problem.

The social problem that has become one of the global issues today is gender injustice in the form of stereotypes that harm the role and position of women. One of the stereotypes attached to women is biological function in the form of reproduction related to giving birth to babies, caring for children, and serving their husbands. Reproduction is not a problem if this function takes place naturally, but reproduction has the

potential to become a problem when this function is engineered in the form of coercion. An example of forced reproduction is in a married couple who do not have children, then the wife forces her husband to have a biological relationship with his helper to get offspring. The biological relationship between employer and servant is not a problem if it is based on love and is bound in an official marriage.

The deviation of reproductive function that befell women becomes one of the issues in several literary works, including in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwoods. This novel tells the fate that befell a female character named Offred. She is a handmaid in the Gilead Republic. She lives in a distinguished family of a husband and wife who have no children so Offred was deliberately kept by this family for reproductive purposes. This fictional story is dominated by the description of Offred's living conditions as a handmaid who carries out her duties as a housemaid as well as carrying out her reproductive duties. As a housemaid, her main duties are taking care of kitchen needs and shopping for household needs with limited access. She was forbidden from reading books so as not to gain knowledge about the temporary state of the public and the only thing that had to be instilled in him was obedience. Every month when experiencing reproductive fertility, Offred must lie in bed and pray with the commander's wife before the commander impregnates her to carry out the task, namely pregnancy and childbirth.

The following are some previous study that conducted a research that related to this research, the social problem of women in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. There are Aldy Sam Perkasa (2011), Ainun Nadya Idil (2018), and Monique We Mattappa (2018). The

first is Aldy Sam Perkasa Putra with *The Tittle Social Life of Blacks In To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee* analyzed a justice between black people and white people in society. The second is Ainun Nadya Idil with the tittle *Gender in Equality in Austen's Persuasion* analyzed the consequence of the gender inequality and the effort of the main character in solving the consequence of gender inequality. The last is Monique We Mattappa entitled *Women Rights in Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale* studied the injustices of the main character and the kinds of women's rights in the novel.

The correlation of this research to all the previous studies that have been explained is the use of structuralism approach, the problem of injustice in social life, and the main issue of gender perspective. On the other side, the differences that found by the writer are Aldy used genetic structural approach and focused to describe the injustice in social life of black people. Besides that, Ainun focused to analyze the consequence of the gender inequality and what the effort of the main character did in solving the consequence of gender inequality in the novel. And the last is, Monique focused to analyze injustice that the main character experienced and pointed out women's rights. Those analyses have a contract to this study because it focuses to the social problem of main characters in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood.

The objectives of this research are to explain the social problem of women that happened in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood and to describe the impact of social problem on women characters in the novel. Those research objectives are absorbed from some problems that are identified in the novel such as the social problems of the woman character named Offred, she receives

unfair treatment from her employer related to her reproductive function, and sexual coercion experienced by Offred has a negative effect on her.

Novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwoods attracts the attention of the writers because this novel documents social problems, namely unfair treatment of women. Some of the female characters in these fictional stories get unfair treatment. Women do not have the right to knowledge, experience slavery practices, social discrimination, and acts of coercion according to the rules in force in the Gilead Republic. Based on these fictional facts, the writers are interested in examining the social problems experienced by women in the novel with the research title as *The Women's Suffering In The Novel The Handmaid's Tale* By Margaret Atwood.

METHOD

The method of this research used the structural approach. It is one of the approaches that are used in literary works which focuses in intrinsic elements that can be used as study materials in identifying, assessing, and describing the function and relation between elements in the novel in which it is concerned. In etymology, structuralism comes from Latin in a word that is *structura* which means form or building, at the same time in Latin word is *systema* which is means method. In definition of structuralism is a concept of elements, which is the structure itself with mechanism between the connections. It is the arrangement of elements systematically which the elements occur the mutual relations and mutually determine. Assessing and describing the function and relation among elements in the novel in which it is concerned according to Teeuw in Abdullah (2011: 9) stated that structuralism is a way

of thinking the world that is associated with perceptions and structure.

The knowledge basic of structuralism approach is everything in this world has a structure and people are also working in structurally. This theory is used to do a deep research towards the structure that underlines almost all things that human do, think, observe, and they feel. Structuralism approach is a theory of humankind in which all elements of human culture, including literature, are thought to be parts of signs. Jean Piaget in Faruk (2012: 173) mentioned that the three fundamental ideas of structural approach, namely the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation, and the idea of self-regulation. The idea of wholeness is to build a story need to determine the whole story in any intrinsic elements. The idea of transformation is to generate the new materials and the structure is consistent with the principal of transformation. The idea of self-regulation is activities direct towards ourselves in controlling our own thoughts and behavior. This activity is either done in the form of habits or requires effort in the will.

Structuralism approach aimed to elaborate the function and relevance between the elements of literature. Structures of literature of divided into several intrinsic elements such as characterization, plot, setting, and theme. Character is an actor in the story's events according to Monahan (1986: 47) defined that a character is a person in a story or play. Plot is casual sequence of events that make up a story according to Perrine (1983: 41) said that plot is sequences of incidents of events of which a story is composed. Setting consists of place, social, time according to Nurgiyantoro (2010: 217) explained that setting in the story has function to influence the situation, mood, and personality of characters. Theme is a main idea of author creating the fictional story which is

interpreted by readers to identify the morality message of story.

The main issue of this research is the perspective of gender in literature so the writers use the concept of gender and the social problem of women. The concept of gender has undergone a shift in values over the time. At the beginning, this concept only describes to the differences between male and female that leads to marginalization, discrimination, subordination and violence. Today, gender is being a study of justices and equalities between male and female in a social intercourse that appreciates the humanity and proposes an agreement reached with the others. In addition, Abbas (2006: 17) stated that gender is a cultural prespective toward male and female in the social life.

Barbara (2011) explained that sex roles are basic roles and thus modify expectations in virtually all other roles. Differential expectations by sex other roles leads to differential perception of the same behavior in a woman and a man (a businessman is strong-willed; a business woman, rigid). Differential expectations and selective perception limit the extent to which individuals can step outside their sex roles and are major mechanisms for the maintenance of these roles. Female and male roles form a role system in which the expectations for and behaviors of each sex have implications for the definitions of and behavior of the other sex this research which highlights social injustice towards female characters in the fictional story.

Women in social relation have been potential treated inequality, harassment, and violence. Abbas (2006: 16-21) categories in gender violence into several forms such as rape, physical attack, mistreating, prostitution, pornography, compulsion, touching, and sexual harassment. Rape is the violence happened when someone wants to get sexual services but it was done by force without any willingness of the victims. Physical attack

generally occurs in domestic life and the victims are women and also the children. Mistreating on sexual organs can be forming into the circumcision of girls. Prostitution is a form of violence against women with extremely adverse economic motives for girls. Pornography is another kind of a non-physical violence against women. This is generally in the form of violation violence against women, which is their bodies become the objects to get a benefit for someone. Compulsion is a kind of violence in the form of coercion to perform an action that is concerned with the sexual organs of the victims. Touching related to the sensitive organ of women deliberately and also hurting the victims. Sexual harassment is a kind of violence that can be as a slob in vulgar jokes delivered to someone in a way that conveyed on a frequent basis, hurting or embarrassing someone with a slouchy statement, asking someone to the personal life especially their sexual activities, asking for sexual reward in order to ask for an appointment to get a job or something else, and the last is touching and nudging the women's body intentionally or without permission from the parties concerned.

The concept of social problem of women is a condition in which women are often victimized in this matter. In general, violence towards women occurs as a result of two factors, namely the cultural factors and structural factor. The cultural factor is the values and norms in a society that position men as those who take every decision and also has authority over everything that is owned and conducted by women, whereas the structural factors is the perception that both men and women have an unequal position in society. The impact of this problem can make depression.

Women's issue is very influential in the life of women because it can be a problem in their lives and can impede

human rights. Social problem of women has never been detached from the issue of women especially regarding violence against women and gender inequality. Women's issues are problems that have a direct impact on women. The coverage of women's issues are reproductive rights, child care problems, economic problems, job creation, poverty reduction, education, health, and religion. The diversity of women's issues is sourced from two female interests.

Women's interests can be distinguished into "practical" gender interests and "strategic" gender interests. Practical gender interests depart from the concrete conditions that women experience on a daily basis. The importance of gender does not equalize unfair gender constructions, but rather comes from the difficulties facing women in carrying out their functions as women. Examples of practical gender interests are the problem of child maintenance, health care, environmental sanitation needs, clean water and food needs fulfillment. Meanwhile, strategic gender interests are born from the subordination of women in society that encourages the desire to realize a fairer social order of gender. This strategic gender interest is identical to feminist issues. Examples are the elimination of domestic violence, the provision of opportunities for women in the field of politics, and the freedom for women to have children or not, including abortion. So, issues of women are very related to social problem of women because it is can make women's trauma and far from freedom.

In collecting data is used a library research method to get the information of this research. The main data is the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood and other supporting data such as books, writings, journals, article and other useful printed sources that related to the

problem in this research. After that, some notes are done that supposed to be noted during read the novel. Then, the data is verified and analyzed to find out the social problem of women in the novel. The last step is writing down the result of the analyzed data, and then makes a conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research applies the structural approach method so firstly, it describes the structural aspects of the novel *The Handmaids Tale* such as character, plot, setting, and theme. Secondly, it discusses the social problem of women in the novel. Thirdly, it describes the impact of social problem on women characters in the novel.

1. Result of The Research

1.1 Description of Novel The Handmaids Tale

The story is told in first person narration by a woman named Offred. In this era of environmental pollution and radiation, she is one of few fertile women remaining. Therefore, she is forcibly assigned to produce children for the Commanders, the ruling class of men, and is known as a "Handmaid" based on the Biblical story of Rachel and her handmaid Bilhah.

Offred details her life starting with her third assignment as a Handmaid to a Commander. Interspersed with her narratives of her present-day experiences are flashbacks of her life before and during the beginning of the revolution, including her failed attempt to escape to Canada with her husband and child, her indoctrination into life as a Handmaid by the Aunts, and the escape of her friend Moira from the indoctrination facility. At her new home, she is treated poorly by the Commander's wife, a former Christian media personality named Serena Joy who supported women's domesticity and subordinate role well

before Gilead was established. To Offred's surprise, the Commander requests to see her outside of the "Ceremony", a sexual ritual obligatory for handmaids and intended to result in conception in the presence of his wife. The two begin an illegal relationship where they play scrabble and Offred is allowed to ask favours of him, whether in terms of information or material items. Finally, he gives her lingerie and takes her to a covert, government-run brothel called Jezebel's. Offred unexpectedly encounters Moira there and she learns that those who are found breaking the law are sent to the Colonies to clean up toxic waste or are allowed to work at Jezebel's as punishment.

In the days between her visits to the Commander, Offred also learns from her shopping partner, a woman called Ofglen, of the Mayday resistance, an underground network working to overthrow the Republic of Gilead. Not knowing of Offred's criminal acts with her husband, Serena begins to suspect that the Commander is infertile, and arranges for Offred to begin a covert sexual relationship with Nick, the Commander's personal servant. After their initial sexual encounter, Offred and Nick begin to meet on their own initiative as well, with Offred discovering that she enjoys these intimate moments despite memories of her husband, and shares potentially dangerous information about her past with him. However, shortly after, Ofglen disappears (reported as a suicide), and Serena finds evidence of the relationship between Offred and the Commander, which causes Offred to contemplate suicide.

Offred tells Nick that she thinks she is pregnant. Shortly afterward, men arrive at the house wearing the uniform of the secret police, the Eyes of God, known informally as "the Eyes", to take her away. As she is led to a waiting van, Nick tells

her to trust him and go with the men. It is unclear whether the men are actually Eyes, or members of the Mayday resistance, an underground network to overthrow the Republic of Gilead. Offred is still unsure if Nick is a member of Mayday or an Eye posing as one, and does not know if leaving will result in her escape or her capture. Ultimately, she enters the van with her future uncertain.

1.2 The Structural Aspects of The Novel The Handmaid's Tale

The structural aspects mean intrinsic elements such character, plot, setting, and theme. Some characters have been found in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. Those characters are Offred, Serena Joy, Nick, The Commander, Ofglen, Aunt Lydia, Janine/Ofwarren, Moira, and Rita. The main character in the story is Offred. On the other hand, the minor characters are Serena Joy, Nick, The Commander, Ofglen, Aunt Lydia, Janine/Ofwarren, Moira, and Rita. The role of Offred, Serena Joy, Nick, The Commander, Ofglen, Janine/Ofwarren, Moira, and Rita are protagonist characters but the other character consists of Aunt Lydia is antagonist.

Several parts of the plot have been found in this fictional story including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution/denouement. The exposition of story was beginning when Offred as handmaid arrived at the Commander's house. Before she was sent to the Commander's house, she was given special training so that she knew of her duties and functions as a handmaid. Being handmaid, there are some rules to must be obey, like they must be wearing red dress untill her ankle, full of sleeves, gloves, an shoes are in red. Except the wing on her head that covered up her face is white. After arriving at the commander's house Offred met with the Commander's wife

called Serena Joy at the sitting room, this is their first time they meet each other. At the first meeting, Serena join informs to Offred if she is the third handmaid sent to her house, before anyone has succeeded in giving a baby, hope you can succeed. She also told that she has read a file about handmaids that will stay at her home and must obey all the rules given, if the handmaids makes a mistake their will punish. After Serena Joy talked to her, she felt unhappy, because this is not like she hoped. She hope, Serena Joy can be her an older sister, a motherly figure, or someone how can understand her.

The rising action of this story is when Offred was circling the Commander's house in search of freedom, she walked carefully so taht no one would hera him. But she heard something suspicious, there was someone walking behind her with the same steps like she did. Then she head a wishper and it turns out it was Nick. At the time Nick was assigned by the Commander to inform Offred that the Commander wanted to meet her secretly. After receiving a message from Nick, Offred was very corious the reason of the Commander wants to meet her. After that, Offred begun visiting the Commander regularly. She met with the Commander in the Commander's office. She was invited inside, she looked at the entire contents of the room make her feel alive and in the real life. There, she plays scrabble with the Commander and after that the Commander ask her to kiss. During his meeting with Offred secretly, The Cmmander was not only violated one rules in Gilead, he also violated another rules which gave Offred megazines to read and bought lotion to her. The Commander can provide anything that Offred wants. Although the things are dangerous and porhibited for a handmaid and also him.

The climax in the story is when Serena Joy asked Offred whether she was

pregnant or not, but Offred is not yet pregnant. Then, Serena informed Offred that your time to become a handmaid is almost up, you should be pregnat. Serena also informed Offred that she should try another way to get pregnat because Serena thought her husband impossible make Offred pregnant. Furthermore, Serena told Offred to try with another man but Offred was worried because this very dangerous for her and Serena also.

The falling action of this story is when the relationship between Offred and Nick continued without knowing of Serena Joy. Offred returned to meet again with Nick after meeting with the Commnader. She took a huge risk and even rsked his her life to fulfill his desire to get happiness. Offred was comfortable with Nick, she felt something diffrent when she was with Nick, something make her more alive. She thinks that now the Commander is no longer of immediate interest to her but she must make an effort to keep her indifference towards him showing. On the other hand, Nick also asked Offred if she met with the Commander. She must keep on doing everything.

The resolution or denouement of this story is when Serena Joy finds out about Offred's outing to the club, and confronts both Offred and the Commander. In this part of the last story, Offred is waiting in her room, not sure what the punishment was. She imagines on how to burn down the house and kills herself, climbs up the window, or cries in front of the Commander. She also imagines kicking Serena in the head, as did Ofglen in particiution. Finally, she imagines going on to Nick's room. After that, Offred stands to plan something and sees a black van with winged eye logo has come out and rang the doorbell. Serena Joy and the Commander look surprised because they do not call the Eye to catch Offred. Serena Joy asks the Eye, what Offred did and the

Commander asks for warrant, but the Eyes say it is violation of state secrets. The Commander puts his hand to his head and Serena Joy goes pale. The two Eyes help Offred get into the van. She knows that she cannot do anything else so she enters to an uncertain fate. She just thinks, the way is in the darkness or in the light.

Setting is a description of the place, time, and atmosphere of a story. Physical background in the story can be identified into some places such as The Republic of Gilead, The Sitting Room, The Commander's Office, and The Garden. Setting of time in the story can be identified into some situation such as in the morning and in the night. Setting of social in the story consists of some events, namely the ceremony and pryvaganza.

The theme of this novel is the handmaids' women effort themselves from the violence of physical and physiological. The Gilead preaches both gender and sexuality essential by creating various categories for women that all relate to servitude, housework, Martha, wife, and handmaid, invoking the associations to the roles being played, of simply going through the necessary motions. Handmaids are not able to write, read, drink alcohol, ask questions, or be concerned with their appearance at all and thus all cosmetic products and regular clothing are forbidden as it has been known from the purpose of the handmaid must be giving a baby for the elite class. Gilead's leaders attempt to present the society as an utopia for women as a strategy to normalize the regime and brainwash the population into believing that it's truly better like this, and they use classic manipulation techniques such as making women think they are spoiled, lucky, and in a good place. For example in the story being a handmaid, she is not allowed to read or get education because those activities are only for masculine,

"play cards, most likely, or read; some masculine pursuit" (Atwood, 1985: 108).

2. Discussion

In this section is discussed the social problem of women that happened in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood and described the impact of social problem on women characters in the novel.

2.1 The Social Problem of Women In The Novel The Handmaid's Tale

The problems were beginning in the novel when the women kidnapped then separated in their family to become a handmaids. They were filtered according to their fertility, the fertility became a handmaid and the infertility become a martha. They lived under pressure and must obey the rules in the Republic of Gilead. Those who break will get the trouble even in death. There are some problems affecting women under the rules of the Republic of Gilead like as sexual harassment, brainwashing and control, no access education, and far for freedom.

Offred is one of many characters who experienced sexual harassment. She gets improper treatment, she must serve the Commander with sexual relations that she never wanted but she has to do. Beside that, Offred has also been treated as a form of sexual harassment while he is doing routine check up to the doctor. The doctor teases and offers help to Offred so she can get pregnant quickly. The doctor told Offred that she could get her pregnant quickly by having sex with her. Not only Offred, another handmaid's also experienced sexual harassment, Janine. She is another handmaid who has a bad experience when she was fourteen years old, *"... it's Janine, telling about how she was gang-raped at fourteen and had an abortion"* (Atwood, 1985: 66). Another case in the novel is a form of rules that there women must wear clothes covered from toe to head. In the patriarchal society of Gilead heterosexuality is an ideal form

because reproduction is their purpose and other forms are forbidden by the states, and they do not have right to choose. In Gilead, sexuality is bound to notions of biological sexual differences and reproductions and the state privileges heterosexual relation over other sexual relation.

Control is heavily a feature that dominates society in Gilead. It is an oppressed society where individuals are highly controlled by the totalitarian regime. The new regime controls the handmaids' minds, bodies, and even their relationship. In Gilead, the bible is an effective tool to control and brainwash the handmaid. They are taught to believe that they are useless before, but it is high time to work and fulfil their duties. Propaganda is used to convince the handmaid that they are neither oppressed or controlling, yet it was what they have to do and it is their way to find happiness, "...*Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said, who was in love with either/or*" (Atwood, 1985: 8). Aunt Lydia always brainwashes them by saying that the handmaid is an honour for everyone, "...*Aunt Lydia said she was lobbying for the front. Yours is a position of honour, she said*" (Atwood, 1985: 13).

Everyone has the right to achieve education. The objectives of education include the full development and dignity of each person, the ability to participate effectively in society, and the strengthening of respect for human rights. Education is important in itself and is often also called a multipier human right, as the degree of access to education impacts the level of enjoyment of other human rights. But not all countries provide educational rights to women, like in the Republic of Gilead, women do not get the education, being handmaids are forbidden to write and read, "*Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is any case forbidden. But if it's*

story even in my head, I must be telling it to someone. You don't tell a story only to yourself. There's always someone else" (Atwood, 1985: 37). In Republic of Gilead knowledge is used as an experiment so it is not important to a handmaid because she only prepares her body for giving a baby for the elite couple.

In Gilead, women do not get free to make friends with others, Offred as handmaid needs friend to make she lives vibrant but it is just hallucination for Offred because she is under Gilead's Control. In the novel the women also do not have freedom of dress. Their clothes are arranged according to their position. Clothing is a form freedom of expression, a person is wearing clothes for feeling comfortable and in accordance with the wishes. In Gilead, people have a dress code that rules, according to what they think is good and right, but it is not good that they determine how the women especially the handmaid should dress. This rules make the handmaid be uncomfortable, as experienced by Offred. She felt that she had never matched the red, because it was not her color. Besides the women especially the handmaid are not given the freedom to make friends and choose clothes according to what they want to wear, they also prohibited from singing openly, especially songs that use the word free. Offred as handmaid said there no music in the house so nobody can not singing. A sing can express the feelings and emotions. A lack of music is thus a lack of expression and also lack of freedom of communication.

2.2 *The Impact of Social Problem On Women Characters In The Novel The Handmaid's Tale*

In the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, the women into an institution called Red Center before being sent to the house of the Commander. Everything that had been women's rights such a work, ownership,

read, writing, far from freedom, to make friends, and any others rules are banned. In other hands, women only play a role in accordance with the biological nature inherent in their bodies that produce offspring. This role causes their lives more risky, not free, depressed, and even close to death. Then the social impact of women related to this condition is unexpected for future, hopeless, and traumatic.

The first impact for women is that they have no hope for the future. They just daydream about a beautiful future that will never come true. They are worried to their future because everything they have was confiscated. As handmiads, their lives are still far in sight. Let alone think about the future, thinking of life tomorrow, they are very difficult to imagine. Before they sleep, they never forget to imagine about the future, what should they do to get this imagine, the future always hunt them. It can be seen in the novel description, "*We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability? It was in the air, and it was still in the air, an afterhough, as we tried to sleep, in the army cots that had been set up in rows, with spaces between so we could not talk*" (Atwood, 1985: 3).

The second impact is the women's lives are more risky and dangerous. The depiction of women are not being given the education. They only know about how to give a baby for the elite couple. Being a handmaids, they must obey the rules in Republic of Gilead such as banned to write and read anything. If their breaking up the rules it can be problems and make impact for their lives, "*Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden...which is riskier, more hazardous; who knows what chances are out there, of survival, yours?*" (Atwood 1985: 67).

The third social impact of handmaid is always haunted by the past that can cause

their lives depressed or traumatic. Before being a handmaid, Offred has a happy family, she has a husband, little girl, and mother. Nowadays, she only imagines the happiness situation. She is separated from their family to become a handmaid, every day before sleep, she is always thinking her daughter and her husband, for her it is a nightmare that can make her depressed. It can be seen the quotation by Offred, "*Old love; there's no other kind of love in this room now. When I saw taht, taht evidence left by two people, of love or something like it, desire at least, at least touch, between rwo peolple now perhaps old or dead, I covered the bed again and lay down on it. I looked up at the blind plaster eye in the ceiling. I want to feel Luke lying beside me. I have theme these attacks of the past, I like faintness, a wave sweeping over my had. Sometimes it can hardly be borne. What is to be done, what is to be done, I thought*" (Atwood, 1985: 49).

Based on the whole condition, Offred is living under pressure, feel broken, and as if the world forgets her. She feels lonely while in the room, she is remembering her past contrasted to present. Offred has told us inderectly that she has been living as a handmaid who lived under pressure from the past, present, and future so people understand the suffering experienced by the handmaid and her future dreams.

CONCLUSION

Novel *The Handmaid's Tale* concerned with the objectification of women in the patriarchal society. It tells the women's oppression, slaves subjected to the rigid control in every aspect of their lives. Atwood in the novel shows the women's second status in the society, the women as second sex, a world without freedom, without choice and opinion for women. This novel also shows a society in

which women are mentally and physically enslaved. Women are slaves and men as their masters which women are shapeless objects that society forms them in accordance with men's desires. Women are worthless and just for reproduction to satisfy men's sexual desire. They are men's property and the patriarchal norms deprived them of everything even their identity.

There are two problems in the novel such as the social problem of women that happened and the impact of social problem on women characters. First problem is the women characters in the novel get unfair treatment from the government of the Republic of Gilead which can be a problems in their lives. They are get some problems such as not get right education, far from freedom, dan sexual harassment. Their lives are limited and under control, everything that is done must be according to the rules, because their jobs only give a baby to elite couple and if they are not follow the rules they are sent to colonies directly. The second problem is the impacts of social problems on women characters, namely their lives do not get freedom and women only act according to the biological nature inherent in their bodies which produce offspring. All things are making their lives more risky, not free, depressed, and almost dead.

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