

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Choosing the Subject

Poverty, an ongoing global issue, continues to affect millions, if not billions, of people globally, despite geographical and cultural barriers. Poverty is defined as a lack of resources required for an acceptable level of living. It presents itself in a variety of ways, including inadequate access to education, healthcare, and work prospects. According to Sen's capacity approach, poverty is more than just a lack of income; it also includes a lack of fundamental capabilities that allow people to live satisfying lives (Sen, 1985). This multidimensional view emphasizes the complexities of poverty and the necessity for comprehensive methods to address its basic causes.

Poverty has a far-reaching influence on communities and cultures. Persistent poverty can cause a vicious cycle of disadvantage, in which a lack of access to education and healthcare fosters intergenerational poverty. (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997) underline the negative impact of childhood poverty on cognitive development and long-term well-being. According to the authors, poverty during formative years might limit educational prospects and impede social mobility, contributing to the persistence of poverty over generations.

Addressing poverty necessitates a multidimensional strategy that includes economic measures, social initiatives, and empowerment strategies. Scholars such as

(Sachs, 2005) call for the implementation of sustainable development goals to eliminate poverty in all of its dimensions, including education, health, and economic progress. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 1 (Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015) particularly aims to eliminate all types of poverty, highlighting the necessity of global cooperation and concentrated efforts to help the poor.

The feminization of poverty, a global phenomenon, highlights how economic adversity affects women disproportionately. This idea, coined by Diana Pearce in the late 1970s, refers to a tendency in which women make up a larger proportion of persons living in poverty, frequently due to systematic gender inequities. Women experience a variety of problems that contribute to their economic vulnerability, including salary disparities, limited access to education and career prospects, and the burden of unpaid caregiving. The intersectionality of gender and poverty needs a comprehensive understanding of women's distinctive problems within the larger context of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Stephanie Land's novel *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* is a moving firsthand narrative that speaks to the difficulties of the feminization of poverty. In her story, Land describes her experiences as a single mother working as a maid, negotiating the difficulties of low-wage job, minimal social support, and the shame associated with poverty. Land's portrayal highlights the terrible reality that many women experience when they are pushed to the edges of society owing to economic

difficulties. Her tale is a microcosm of the bigger structural factors that contribute to the feminization of poverty, demonstrating the interdependence of human narratives with larger social and economic systems.

Land's journey, as recounted in *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*, highlights the importance of comprehensive social policies and cultural adjustments to combat the feminization of poverty. Her experiences underscore the complex web of problems that women in poverty frequently confront, ranging from insufficient childcare alternatives to the difficulty of finding permanent job with decent salaries. Connecting Land's story to wider scholarly discourses on the feminization of poverty highlights the importance of structural adjustments to eliminate gender-based inequities, eventually leading to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Stephanie Land's *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* is a gripping investigation of the intersections of gender and poverty. Land's book, published in 2019, is an intimate and direct account of her experiences as a single mother negotiating the hurdles of low-wage labor and the cultural stigma associated with poverty. The novel digs into the nuances of feminizing poverty, bringing light on women's disproportionate economic hardships. Land's personal journey serves as a prism through which readers may explore larger concerns such as gender inequity, undervaluation of women's labor, and institutional challenges that lead to the feminization of poverty (Land, 2019).

Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive chronicles Stephanie Land's brave journey as a single mother attempting to make ends meet in the difficult world of low-wage jobs. The story begins with Land working as a maid for the wealthy, cleaning their mansions while dealing with the hard realities of poverty. Land confronts a culture that stigmatizes and ignores the problems of individuals on the economic outskirts as she works on a daily basis in physically demanding and frequently unpleasant jobs. Land's tale reveals the larger ramifications of the feminization of poverty, as she deals with challenges such as poor childcare, restricted access to school, and the never-ending cycle of economic insecurity.

Land's work not only acts as a personal testimonial, but it also adds to the continuing discussion about poverty and gender disparities. Drawing on her personal experiences, Land paints a vivid and empathic picture of the difficulties that many women confront, highlighting the importance of institutional changes to address the core causes of the feminization of poverty. As readers connect with Land's tale, they acquire insight into the larger cultural mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequities and limit women's economic potential.

The feminization of poverty is still a widespread problem, interweaving structural gender disparities with economic disadvantages disproportionately experienced by women. Pearce's idea of the feminization of poverty sheds light on the structural factors that lead to this phenomena (Pearce, 1978). Persistent gender wage disparities, restricted access to education and career prospects, and the burden of unpaid

care duties all contribute to women's economic fragility. This issue extends beyond individual experiences to wider cultural conventions and regulations that undervalue women's contributions to the workforce and impede their socioeconomic success.

Stephanie Land's novel *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* offers a personal dimension to the numerous issues of feminization of poverty. Land's tale highlights the brutal reality of low-wage job as well as the social stigma associated with poverty, highlighting themes identified by researchers such as Duncan and Brooks-Gunn. The story depicts the negative impact of economic hardship on families, particularly single moms, who have restricted prospects for educational and professional growth (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Land's experiences highlight the deeper systemic factors that underpin the feminization of poverty, stressing the critical need for substantial societal reforms.

Gender inequality and poverty are intertwined concerns that need comprehensive approaches to sustainable change. Sachs supports for sustainable development objectives that address the multifaceted facets of poverty, including gender inequities (Sachs, 2005). The fifth Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, which focuses on gender equality, is consistent with the need to address the core causes of feminization of poverty. Societies may seek to create an environment that empowers women economically and breaks the cycle of poverty by tackling structural concerns like uneven pay and inadequate access to education and healthcare.

Diana Pearce's idea of the feminization of poverty, introduced in 1978, emphasizes poverty's gendered aspect and the disproportionate impact on women. Pearce's concept highlights that poverty is not a gender-neutral reality; rather, it is impacted by the societal structures and structural inequities that perpetuate women's economic vulnerabilities. This approach extends beyond economic statistics to recognize that women's poverty experiences are influenced by a variety of linked issues, including but not limited to pay discrepancies, limited access to education and work, and the weight of caring duties (Pearce, 1978).

Linking the feminization of poverty theory to Stephanie Land's novel *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* sheds light on women's lived experiences within the larger framework of systematic gender disparities. Land's experiences are consistent with Pearce's theory, as she deals with the economic problems of low-wage job, restricted chances for professional growth, and the cultural shame associated with poverty. The novel provides a moving depiction of the linked challenges mentioned in the theory, showing how women, particularly single moms, manage the intricate web of hurdles that lead to their excessive representation among those living in poverty.

The incorporation of feminization of poverty theory into discussions about poverty and gender inequality emphasizes the significance of identifying and addressing the diverse nature of women's economic challenges. Scholars such as Sachs advocate for holistic methods, highlighting the need of addressing not just economic

inequities but also the underlying social and cultural elements that lead to the feminization of poverty (Sachs, 2005). By placing into perspective Land's narrative within this theoretical structure, it becomes clear that addressing gender-based poverty necessitates a comprehensive knowledge of the linked barriers women confront in achieving economic stability and social well-being.

The novel *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* by Stephanie Land was chosen because of its strong depiction of the feminization of poverty. Land's personal stories serves as a sensitive lens through which to see the complicated themes of poverty and gender inequality. Her experiences as a single mother working as a maid shed light on the difficulties that women confront while negotiating the combination of low-wage jobs, restricted professional growth options, and cultural shame. By selecting this work, I hoped to delve further into the lived reality of people dealing with the feminization of poverty and obtain a better knowledge of the systemic forces impacting women's economic vulnerabilities.

Diana Pearce's theory of the feminization of poverty was chosen because it provided a comprehensive framework for analyzing the gendered aspect of poverty (Pearce, 1978). Pearce's idea goes beyond standard economic indicators to acknowledge the linked elements that lead to women's overrepresentation among those living in poverty. It sees pay discrepancies, restricted access to education and career prospects, and the weight of caring tasks as being part of the feminization of poverty. Choosing this theory allowed me to conduct a more nuanced investigation of the

themes raised in Land's work, as well as providing a conceptual platform for investigating the larger systemic causes impacting women's economic challenges.

The intersection between *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* and the theory of feminization of poverty deepens my investigation into the gendered features of poverty. Stephanie Land's story not only serves as a fascinating example of the theory, but it also provides a more nuanced understanding of how these principles connect in real-life situations. By choosing this narrative and theory combination, I want to contribute to a more comprehensive discussion of the issues that women confront in low-wage jobs, as well as to emphasize the need of tackling the systematic injustices that perpetuate the feminization of poverty.

B. Problem Formulation

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the problem into two following questions:

1. How do the factors contributing to the feminization of poverty manifest in the experiences of Stephanie Land in *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*?
2. What are the varied responses exhibited by Stephanie Land, as depicted in *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*?

C. Objective of the Study

To answer the aforementioned question, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the factors of feminization of poverty experienced by Stephanie land in *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*.
2. To analyze the varied responses to feminization of poverty exhibited by Stephanie as seen in *Maid: Hard Work, Low pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*.

D. Review of Related Studies

In this part, the researcher summarizes several prior studies that have been conducted and are relevant to this research. The first one is by Kouadio Pascal KOFFI, he examines poverty as a crucial component of Amma Darko's feminist discourse in her paper *Feminization of Poverty as a Postcolonial Feminist Parlance in Amma Darko's The Housemaid and Faceless* (KOFFI, 2021). This statement's usefulness stems from the analysis of postcolonial novels that focus on feminism and gender issues. These previously indicated domains provide a type of connection wherein female writings are perceived as a series of appeals against structural prejudices that result in impoverishment. The Housemaid and Faceless both highlight feminist literature as a specific lingo. Here, the phrase is driven by the central issue of poverty as seen through the lens of postcolonial feminism. The purpose of the work is to demonstrate how Amma Darko conducts her household in line with poverty as a way

to emphasize the plight of women and raise social awareness. This interpretation of Amma Darko's feminist writings accurately places her criticism of gender inequality in postcolonial culture.

The second one is Eleanor Thornton Hough's thesis, *The Good Old Days, when Times Were Bad: The Feminization of Poverty, Its Traumatic Effects, and Care-based Recovery in Appalachian Literature*, examines how poverty is portrayed, the trauma it causes, and ways to mitigate its negative effects in the novels *The Time of Man* by Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver, and *Home* by Toni Morrison (Hough, 2020). While the novels have little in common other than their portrayal of rural women in Appalachia, each novel depicts the development of a protagonist through nurturing and care, either the act or the act being enacted upon them, as they grow through the experience of poverty and oppression.

And the third one is by Rosanne Kennedy (Kennedy, 2023) entitled *Domesticating Humanitarianism: Stephanie Land's Maid, This American Life, and the Imaginative Politics of Need*. This article uses "domestic humanitarianism" as a critical lens to examine the cultural logics and moral economy that shape Stephanie Land's book *Maid* and the episode "Three Miles" of *This American Life*. This investigation sheds light on the humanitarian remedies and impromptu responses to economic insecurity that have taken the place of the American Dream's fading promises.

The three studies above have relevance to the research being carried out by the researcher. There are several similarities, the first two previous studies contained issues

about feminization of poverty and the struggle for how a person tries to survive poverty and the third study have the same research object. However, on the other hand, there are also several differences between the three studies and the research currently being carried out by the researcher. The first two studies have differences on research objects. And the third study is using a different lens which is domestic humanitarianism, while the research conducted by the researcher of the book *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* by Stephanie Land using the theory of feminization of poverty that focuses on personal factors, social factors and responses to feminization of poverty experienced by the character Stephanie.

These studies collectively contribute to the scholarly discourse on the feminization of poverty in novels, offering diverse perspectives and analytical frameworks for understanding the representation of women's economic vulnerabilities in literary works.

E. Methods of Research

In this research, the focus is on a qualitative content analysis of Stephanie Land's novel, *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*, to delve into the nuanced portrayal of the feminization of poverty. The choice of a qualitative approach aligns with the nature of the research question, aiming to explore the lived experiences of the protagonist, Stephanie Land, within the broader context of systemic gender inequalities. The research design draws inspiration from Diana Pearce's theory

of the feminization of poverty, which emphasizes the interplay between gender and poverty.

By employing qualitative content analysis, the study seeks to uncover recurring themes, patterns, and narratives within the text, focusing on factors such as wage disparities, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and societal stigmatization. Additionally, the analysis will contextualize Land's experiences within the framework of related studies exploring the feminization of poverty in literature, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics portrayed in the novel.

The research presentation will culminate in a thematic analysis, organizing extracted data into overarching themes that capture the essence of the feminization of poverty in *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*. The analysis will explore the character responses to the identified factors, shedding light on the coping mechanisms employed by Stephanie Land. The findings will be interpreted in the context of Pearce's theory and related studies, aiming to contribute novel insights to the ongoing discourse on gender, poverty, and literature. This research presentation, adhering to APA citation guidelines, underscores the significance of qualitative content analysis as a valuable tool for unraveling the intricacies of gendered economic struggles within the realm of literary works.

1. Data and Source of Data

This study draws on two sources of data. The primary data for this study comes from the entire novel, including monologues, dialogues, phrases, etc. Stephanie Land's novel released in 2019 serves as the basis for this research. The secondary data sources include journals, thesis, and reviews on the feminization of poverty and other relevant topics.

2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

When conducting this research, the researcher collects data using a qualitative technique. The researcher use methods to gather detailed information on a study topic, which may then be utilized to establish research objectives. Reading the book, journals, and scientific articles about the issue can provide rich narrative accounts with insights. To gather data for this study, the researcher collects data that is linked to the topics, such as books, theses, journals, or any online sources that are related to this research. The researcher then gathers it according to its component.

In order to conduct the analysis, researchers gather supporting material from journals and scholarly works. This involves identifying themes, patterns, and recurrent motifs in the texts that offer insight on the personal and social factors driving the feminization of poverty. The researcher then collects information by reading the novel and identifying crucial points related to the theme or subject matter covered. After gathering the data for this study, the researcher double-checks and gives critical support before analyzing it. Finally, by collecting and analyzing data qualitatively, the

researcher might get crucial insights on the feminization of poverty. This method helps the researcher structure the study in a way that makes it easy to analyze.

The following were the steps used to acquire data: First, the researcher began by reading the novel multiple times and comprehending the storyline. Second, the researcher highlights and takes notes on any relevant dialogues, signals, and statement. Then, drawing on Diana Pearce's idea of feminization of poverty, which focuses on the disproportionate impact of poverty on women, it emphasizes the gender inequality and economic discrepancy suffered by the character, particularly the single mother. Fourth, recognizing women's challenges to make ends meet and survive poverty. Fifth, in order to form a final conclusion from the overall analysis, it is first required to collect results and evidence from the book that are credible enough to support the major theory applied to this research.

3. Method of Analyzing Data

For data analysis, the researcher groups the data or notes gathered throughout the process of gathering data into categories according to their own topics. The researcher identifies the data collected from *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* by examining the notes that have been grouped one by one to be given in paragraphs. The researcher then describes the data from the novel discussed the factors including unpaid care work, single motherhood, gender wage gap, occupational segregation, discrimination and stereotypes, inadequate social safety nets and the responses which are seeking employment, utilizing available social safety nets,

and seeking legal and social protection by using the theory of feminization of poverty. Then the researcher analyses the personal and social factors of feminization of poverty and the varied responses exhibited by Stephanie in the novel. This thesis aims to unveil all of the factors and responses to feminization of poverty experienced by the character Stephanie in *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*.

F. Presentation

The research was presented into four chapters. The first is the introduction which consists of the background of the study, problem formulation, objectives of the study, review on related studies, method of the study, and presentation of the study. The second chapter is theoretical approach, theoretical framework, such as theory of feminization of poverty and gender discrimination. The third chapter will describe and discuss the analysis of the gender discrimination experienced by the character Stephanie in the book *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* and how Stephanie copes with that matter. The last chapter is the conclusion.