

## THE MAIN CHARACTER'S DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION DEPICTED IN "KIM JI-YOUNG, BORN 1982"

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### Abstract

For a long time, women have been subjected to gender-based discrimination. Discrimination seems more severe in a patriarchal culture because of the widespread belief in patriarchal norms. Some people have mental health concerns as a result of these gender biases. Literature, a mirror of society, is well-suited to addressing social concerns such as gender inequality. The aims of this research is to analyze the gender discrimination reflected in the novel "Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982" by using Pilcher & Whelehan's (2004) theory and how it affects the main character's mental health using Beck's (2009) theory. This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method and analyzed using a feminist approach. This research showed that Ji-Young undergone discrimination both in the private sphere as a daughter and a wife and within the public sphere as a student and an employee. Moreover, as a result of her experiences with discrimination on the based on gender, she started to show depressive symptoms which are; emotional manifestation, cognitive Manifestation, vegetative and physical manifestation, and hallucination as a stress response. This research concluded that Kim Ji-Young received gender discrimination in every phase of her life and as stress responses she started to emerge some symptoms of cognitive depression.

**Keywords:** Novel, Gender Discrimination, Depressive Symptoms

### INTRODUCTION

As the majority of the population, women continue to experience gender discrimination. Most Asian cultures emphasize the distinction between men as head of the household and women as child-bearers and caretakers. Due to their alleged insufficient power and intelligence, society deems women unable to work. Therefore, women are assigned the position. South Korea has become one of the countries that still hold to the values of Confucianism and practice gender discrimination among its population to a significant degree. In South Korean culture, "husbands are the dominant partner responsible for taking care of his spouse and his family, while women are the one who takes a subordinate role, must constantly demonstrate subservience, devotion, and regard," which demonstrates the roots of patriarchal culture (Kyoung, 2001).

Confucianism is responsible for the gender-based social divisions that persist in today's culture, and these divisions have been preserved into the contemporary period. After getting married, women are socially pressured to have a family and give up their careers; as a result, they are forced to depend on their husbands' financial support since they are confined to their homes. Women are barred from many spheres of society, including the labor force, politics, culture, and education. Confucianism contributes to the formation of patriarchal societies in which women have little capacity to assert their rights against the males in their lives, including their husbands, fathers, and the male community at large.

Many people think that South Korea is a utopia for health and fitness. It boasts the greatest survival rate from cancer and heart attack, the ninth-lowest rate of obesity, and third-longest healthy life expectancy compared to other nations across the whole globe (Watkins, 2018). On the other hand, those who have mental diseases do not have such pleasant endings. About forty people in Korea take their own lives every day, which is

approximate twice as many as the number of suicides that occur in Hungary, which holds second place among OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) nations in terms of the number of people taking their own lives. It is estimated that 95% of Koreans are under some stress level, with close to a third experiencing chronic stress. In addition, depression affects 28% of older people in Korea, while the figure ranges from 10% to 15% in the United States. A large majority of Koreans over age 65 (78 percent) feel that being depressed and seeking help is a sign of weakness, hence they are less likely to seek help than their younger counterparts. Furthermore, in a society as patriarchal as South Korea's, being a woman may be a particularly trying experience because of the many roadblocks that stand in the way.

It should come as no surprise that a significant number of Korean women perceive that society views them in an unfavorable light because of how men and women are socialized to see women as subordinate, both within and outside the house. The fact that these women live in a patriarchal culture implies that they have no power and must submit to the authority of males, which means that they cannot oppose the thought established by society.

Cho Nam Joo's *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* is a work of fiction written by the Korean novelist. The item was launched in 2016. The protagonist of the novel is a 33-year-old South Korean lady called Kim Ji-Young who lives in the countryside of Seoul. In addition to describing how the heroine, a normal Korean woman called Kim Ji-young, suffered with symptoms of depression, the text also describes how the protagonist's family dealt with her illness. The book explores the challenges of gender inequality in public and private arenas that women have experienced in the past and in the present. These challenges affect both the public and private spheres.

The story is divided into six parts, and the first chapter describes how Kim Ji-Young behaved for the first time after she began acting strangely in the previous chapter, which takes place in the fall of 2015. The focus of the second and the third chapters is on her adolescent years, the times in her life when she encountered several instances of gender discrimination. The narrative of her early adulthood begins in the fourth chapter when she is around the same age as a recent college graduate. The aspect of gender discrimination that she encountered in the public realm, namely at her place of employment, a modest marketing business, is the primary focus of this narrative. In the fifth chapter, we learn about her life after marriage. Specifically, she felt pressure from her husband and her family over the duties she was supposed to play as a mother and a wife.

Lastly, the sixth and last episode occurred in 2016, one year after her husband became aware of her odd habits. In contrast to the previous chapters, written from the narrator's perspective, this one is recounted from the perspective of her psychiatrist. In contrast to the previous chapters, the tales were given from the point of view of a genderless narrator. This chapter presented the case of gender discrimination from the perspective of a male psychiatrist, while Ji-Young is the main focus, the novel also tells the story of his wife and a co-worker who saw the same situations., as well as Ji-Young's perspective on what happened to them.

In this research, the researcher analyzed two questions based on the research background. Which are:

1. What are the main character experiences that imply gender discrimination?
2. What are the main character's symptoms of depression portrayed in the novel?

## **Gender Discrimination**

This research's main focus is on issues of gender discrimination, and focused in the country of South Korea. Bernard E. Whitley Jr. and Mary E. Kite in *The Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination* describe discrimination as: "behaviour that has to do with how people act toward people from other groups. It involves treating people differently based on what group they belong to. Most of the time, discrimination means acting unfairly or degradingly or giving someone an advantage, they do not deserve" (2010, p. 370). So, unfair treatment of people because of their gender is a form of gender discrimination.

According to (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004) gender stereotypes are the most common manifestation of this sort of discrimination. In society, men and women are expected to accomplish different tasks. A woman's primary role as a housewife, mother, and wife is to serve her husband, tend to the family's needs and provide emotional support. A place where only persons of a given gender are welcome and considered suitable is known as a gendered sphere. They also think our status quo has two places, one for men and two for women.

### **Private Sphere**

People think that women should be in charge of this area. Women should take care of their homes and stay at home. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) states that "women are primarily responsible for managing and doing house chores" like cleaning, doing laundry, going shopping, cooking, and taking care of children (p. 31). They also said that "women are generally restricted to the house and have little possibilities to be part of public life" (p. 95). Even if this is a women-only environment, there is still gender discrimination since men and women have distinct duties at home. Women are still powerless and have less freedom in their own lives.

### **Public Sphere**

People say that as breadwinners, men should be in charge of this area. In this area, women are only expected to play a minor role (p. 125-126). In this field, males are supposed to work hard and have a high-paying job to support their families, while women are expected to remain at home and run the household. People think that women do not need to be involved in public life because their job is not to make money. As a result, women face discrimination in public in the workplace, where they face fewer employment opportunities and lower wages than males.

## **The Cognitive Theory of Depression**

Depression is a mood disorder that makes it hard for people to live a normal life at work, with friends, or at home (McLeod, 2015). According to Beck (2009) Depression can be described as the following: "a particular change in emotions, such as melancholy, solitude, or disinterest; a body image associated with self-reproaches and identity; backward and self-punitive desires, like trying to run away, keep hiding, or suffer horribly; vegetative changes, such as bulimia nervosa, trouble sleeping, or sexual dysfunction; and changes in the level of physical activity, such as retarding or speeding up". The following are symptoms that an individual may be suffering from depression.

### **Emotional Manifestation**

#### **Dejected Mood**

According to Beck, depressive patients often express feelings of "hopelessness" and "anxiety." Consequently, depressed individuals frequently report feeling agitated.

#### **Negative Feeling Toward Self**

Patients who suffer from depression often have a negative attitude regarding themselves. This emotion may originate from the person's dissatisfaction with them or even their hatred of themselves as an individual.

## Reduction in Gratification

This symptom is often identified as the feeling of boredom, the feeling of being unhappy with everything, and the feeling of having no delight in activities formerly full of pleasure.

## Reduction of Emotional Attachment

Patients who suffer from depression usually feel less satisfied with their lives, often followed by a lack of emotional connection.

## Crying Spells

Patients suffering from depression often have longer periods of sobbing and cry more often. Patients with depression, regardless of whether or not they are feeling sad, have the sensation that they want to cry, even when actual tears do not come out of their eyes.

## Loss of Mirth Response

This symptom indicates that depressed people often suffer from a diminished capacity for humor. They exhibit signs of losing their sense of humor, such as responding unexpectedly to a joke. Even though they seem to be laughing, they do not enjoy the joke. People that are depressed tend to take things seriously, even if it is only a joke.

## ***Cognitive Manifestation***

### Low Self-Evaluation

People who suffer from depression often see themselves as lacking in some aspect of their abilities, performances, intellect, health, strength, personal beauty, popularity, or financial resources. They feel that their confidence has been undermined.

### Negative Expectations

Patients that suffer from depression are often pessimists. There is no way that things will get any better in the future. They believe there is no hope for them in the future and often believe that they have reached the end of their paths in life.

### Self-Blame and Self-Criticism

Patients suffering from depression often point the finger at themselves and engage in self-criticism when they cannot attain the same level of success as others. Depressed people sometimes point the finger at themselves as though they are the root of every problem in their surroundings.

### Indecisiveness

Patients suffering from depression often report that they lack the motivation to think about what kind of decisions they should be making while they are making such decisions.

### Distortion of Body Image

Patients suffering from depression often report having a distorted perception of their bodies. For instance, if they walk past a mirror, their mind is preoccupied with the idea that they are becoming fat, boring, or unattractive.

## ***Motivational Manifestation***

### Paralysis of the Will

People who are depressed often lose the motivation to do good things in their lives. They will not engage in anything that has the potential to provide them pleasure but

does not already do so for them. They no longer have any interest in engaging in any activity.

## Avoidance, Escapist, and Withdrawal Wishes

Patients suffering from depression are more likely to deviate from their usual activities. Some depressed patients who do nothing but lay in bed all day frequently feel that they need to cover themselves to hide from people who come to see them.

## Suicidal Wishes

Patients suffering from depression often express a desire to end their own lives. It might take the shape of a passive wish, such as "I wish I were dead," or an active desire to end one's life, as in "I want to kill myself." Both of these are examples of this kind of behavior.

## Increased Dependency

Depression often increases a person's dependence on others. They need to rely on the assistance of others. They want someone else to do their duties and find solutions to their issues.

## ***Vegetative and Physical Manifestation***

### Loss of Appetite

Patients suffering from depression often report having lost their appetite. They have to be coaxed into eating at times, or they have to force themselves to eat.

### Sleep Disturbance

The most obvious sign of depression is that it makes it difficult to relax or fall asleep. Patients who suffer from depression often discover that they cannot get back to sleep after waking up after four or five hours of proper rest.

### Loss of Libido

Loss of libido is associated with a decrease in hunger and a lack of interest in the company of other people. Patients suffering from depression have less desire to engage in sexual activity. Patients with depression report decreased sexual desire and did not react to sexual stimulation.

### Fatigability

Patients who suffer from depression often express frustration that they "fatigue more readily than normal" and have difficulty mustering the energy to engage in any activity. There is a connection between the sleep disruption that the patients experienced and the exhaustion that they felt.

## ***Delusion***

### Delusion of Worthlessness

Patients who suffer from depression often accept that they are unable to do anything important, are pointless and feel as if they should have never been created in the first place.

### Crime and Punishment

Some depressed individuals think that they have committed a dreadful crime and so deserve or anticipate being punished for it.

### Nihilistic Delusions

Patients who suffer from depression may at times imagine that they have died. Delusions may be conveyed in such a way as these statements: "It is of no use. Nothing is left. There is no one else on the planet. Everybody died last night".

### Somatic Delusions

Patients who are depressed often have the mistaken belief that their physical health will continue to deteriorate or that they have a chronic illness from which there is no cure. They consider themselves to be abnormal in some way. Patients could have certain thoughts and might express them in these terms. "My mind is blank, and there is a complete blockage in my head." I am unable to eat. The flavor on my tongue is very repulsive.

## Poverty

The delusion of being impoverished may be communicated by words such as "all of my money has vanished." On what am I going to subsist? Who is going to go grocery shopping for my kids? However, the illusion of poverty is not examined in the book by Beck titled *Depression: Causes and Treatments*. This is because it is difficult to differentiate the hallucination of poverty from true poverty.

## *Hallucinations*

Some of the people who were depressed hallucinated. People who are depressed often report hearing voices in their heads that criticize them. Sometimes, they may also see the deceased individuals, or they will hear the voices of the dead people as they say something.

## **METHOD**

Descriptive qualitative analysis used for this research. Instead of a number, the information is collected in words that describe it quickly. The goal of descriptive research is to explain a phenomenon accurately based on how the research is done.

Qualitative research is a way to find out and understand what a social or human problem means to different people or groups. During the research process, new questions and ways of doing things arise. Most of the time, data is collected where the participant is. Inductive data analysis builds from specifics to general themes, and the researcher decides the data's meaning. The structure of the final written report can be changed. People who do this kind of research believe that there is a way to find meaning and that it is important to show how complicated a situation is (Creswell, 2014).

It is clear that qualitative research is used to determine how research is done and how data is collected so that the researcher can figure out what the data mean. Qualitative research can also be considered an unfolding model that takes place in a natural setting and lets the researcher get much information by being very involved in the real events (Williams, 2007). The researcher might draw the following conclusion about the meaning of qualitative research based on the statement: the meaning of qualitative research is connected to the description method, which implies that the objective of qualitative research is to describe phenomena properly.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Gender Discrimination against Woman Experienced by Kim Ji-Young**

For many South Korean women, the experience of being a woman in South Korean culture is unpleasant. It is not uncommon for women to be treated unfairly in societies where men are seen as superior and women are expected to offer their subordinates respect, devotion, and obedience (Hyun, 2001). The gender sphere theory by Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan discusses the different kinds of discrimination that the main character, Kim Ji-Young, faces because of her gender. This discussion includes discrimination in both the private and public spheres.

### ***Gender Discrimination in Private Sphere***

## Kim Ji-Young as a Daughter

### Extract 1:

*"Their grandmother wasn't scolding them just because they were too old for formula or because she was worried there wouldn't be enough formula for the baby. The combination of her tone, expression, angle of head tilt, position of shoulders and her breathing send them a message that was hard to summaries in one sentence, but if Ji-Young tried anyway, it went something like this: **How dare you try to take something that belongs to my precious grandson!** Her grandson and his things were valuable and to be cherished; she wasn't going to let just anybody touch them, and Ji-Young ranked below this 'anybody.' Eunyong probably had the same impression." (Joo, 2016, p. 12)*

When Ji-Young was a kid, she adored the formula of her younger brother. She would lick the bits of food that fell on the floor. She sometimes got a tablespoon of the formula from her mother, which tasted very good and nutty. Her grandmother banged her head so hard that powdered formula flew out her lips and nostrils at an early age in her memory. That she and her elder sister Eun-Young would consume their baby brother's formula was a source of great pain to her grandma Koh Boon-Soon. Upon more reflection, she concluded that she was not giving the formula to them because they were too old, because she feared that someone would take something that belongs to her grandson.

## Kim Ji-Young as a Wife

### Extract 5:

*"**She's all grown-up, but she doesn't really know much about keeping a home.**" ... The two mothers went on for quite a while about **how their daughters only studied and worked without ever helping out around the house.** "Everyone fumbles in the beginning. **You get better with practice. Jiyoung will handle it well,**" Daehyun's mother concluded." (Joo, 2016, p. 68)*

Ji-Young's mother jokingly said that her daughter was unable to keep the house neat and tidy since she was constantly studying and had little spare time. She also joked that it was Ji-Young's fault since she couldn't leave a household task undone. Ji-Young mother-in-law agreed with her mother that Ji-Young are poor housekeeper.

In the joke, Ji-Young was mocked for her inability to properly care for a home before her marriage, despite the fact that it had been assumed that she would be able to handle the responsibilities of running a household as soon as she got married. However, she was expected to be able to do so.

The mother-in-law of Ji-Young had concluded that her daughter-in-law would do a fine job, but she had not once considered the fact that Dae-Hyun is a good at housekeeper as well because he had been living by himself for years. Dae-Hyun was better at taking care of home tasks than Ji-Young was because Ji-Young has only ever known life beneath her parents' home.

## **Gender Discrimination in Public Sphere**

## Kim Ji-Young as a Student

### Extract 11:

*"According to Hyejin, business management departments sometimes get unofficial recruitment requests either through the department office itself or individual professors, **but only male students are recommended.**" (Joo, 2016, p. 51)*

Based on the quote above, male students would be preferred above female students when it comes to recommending new personnel to the company. It's not a matter of competence, but of gender.

Kim Ji-Young as an Employee

Extract 14:

*"The women take on all the cumbersome, minor tasks without being asked, while guys never do. Doesn't matter if they're new or the youngest—they never do anything they're not told to do. But why do women simply take things upon themselves?" (Joo, 2016, p.60)*

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that in a company there are unwritten rules for female employees to perform small tasks without being asked, such as making drinks, buying them, etc. Meanwhile, this does not apply to male employees, whether they are new or senior employees.

## Kim Ji-Young Symptoms of Depression

Emotional Manifestation

Extract 19:

*"He had found her staring off into space or crying over sad songs, but Daehyun figured she was just exhausted from taking care of the baby. She was basically a cheerful person, full of laughter, who often made Daehyun laugh by doing impressions of celebrities. So Daehyun shrugged off Ji-Young's imitation of her mother, gave her a hug and went to work" (Joo, 2016, p. 5)*

One of the depression symptoms that emerged is her crying spell starting to get worse because Ji-Young's characteristics are her contagious joy and laughter that makes her husband laugh whenever she makes impressions of celebrities but now even when she is just listening to sad songs, she will cry and daydream.

Cognitive Manifestation

Extract 20:

*"I suffered deathly pain having our child. My routine, my career, my dreams, my entire life, myself—I gave it all up to raise our child. And I've become a vermin. **What do I do now?**" (Joo, 2016, p. 5)*

From the quote above, it can be seen that Ji-Young has this kind of indecisiveness where she starts to wonder about what to do. In the cognitive theory of depression, it is said that if depressed people decide, they often find that they lack the drive to think about what choices should be made because of their condition.

Vegetative and Physical Manifestation

Extract 21:

*"Her odd behavior continued sporadically. She'd send him a text message riddled with cute emoticons she never normally used, or **make dishes like oxbone soup or glass noodles that she neither enjoyed nor was good at.**" (Joo, 2016, p. 7)*

Even though Kim Ji-Young didn't enjoy it, as seen by the quotation above, she started making beef bone soup and *japchae*.

Hallucination

Extract 23:

*"Daehyun laughed at his wife, who was talking like a much older woman. "What's up with you? **You sound like your mom.**" "Take a light jacket with you, Jung seoba-*



*ahng. There's a chill in the mornings and evenings." Even then, he thought she was just joking around." (Joo, 2016, p. 4-5)*

After giving birth and caring for her kid, Ji-Young starts to change into a number of different persons in the first chapter of the book. Ji-Young changes her personality like her mother. First Ji-Young imitates her mother, like the way her mother talked or the signature right-eye wink when her mother usually does whenever her mother asks for a favor and the elongated last syllable of "Jung Seobang."

The first question was analyzed using the gender sphere theory put out by Pilcher and Whelehan. Ji-Young experienced gender discrimination as a wife and a daughter in the private sphere. When Ji-Young and her elder sister were young girls, they received different treatment from their younger brother. In contrast to their older brother, who was always given better things and could take the lead in everything, the women had to share everything and were often given the leftovers from their brother's meals. Even though Ji-Young was supposed to run the household and raise children, no one had discussed her husband's obligations as a good husband. She was subjected to much greater sexism in the public sphere because she was a woman. She was made to feel inferior to her male peers, and one of them almost assaulted her. Her father gave her the responsibility for the occurrence, claiming that she was dressed inappropriately and attended a school that was too far away. Ji-Young was also limited by society's restrictions placed on women, which prevented her from succeeding in a professional position. Even though she did better than one of her male coworkers, she was not offered the same pay or opportunities.

The second discussion determined that Ji-Young's mental health was damaged by her living in a culture that discriminates based on gender, which developed some symptoms of depression. The researcher used Beck & Brad cognitive theory of depression to analyze the symptoms that Kim Ji-Young shows. Ji-Young experienced emotional manifestation like her character was changed from being cheerful and always friendly to becoming a more reserved, gloomy, and closed person because she almost became a victim of sexual harassment by her friend. Also, after Ji-Young gets married and has a daughter, her crying spell starts to get worse. Second symptom of depression that Ji-Young experienced is vegetative and physical manifestation, like she had trouble sleeping and was stressed. Last is Hallucination, Ji-Young started to imitate some dead people like the way they talk and know about their story.

Throughout "Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982," author Cho Nam-Joo included scenarios in which Ji-Young encounters forms of gender discrimination. After the researcher analyzes Ji-Young's character changes, the researcher suspects that Kim Ji-Young may suffer from depression as she developed some of the symptoms of depression based on the cognitive theory of depression by Beck & Brad (2009), which are emotional manifestation, vegetative and physical manifestation and hallucinations.

Depressive symptoms are connected to women's experiences of gender discrimination, according to the research results. Stepanikova et al. (2020) explored the relationship between gender discrimination and depressive symptoms in women and discovered that there is, in fact, a connection between the two. They claimed that compared to women who did not experience gender discrimination, depression symptoms were considerably more common among women who reported experiencing such discrimination. Also, stress response may mediate the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and mental health.

The story that Kim Ji-Young went through is representative of what the majority of women go through, particularly in the Asian Region, which still has a society that is dominated by patriarchy. This bears no resemblance to the messages that have been spread via K-dramas and Korean movies, which have, up until this point, swayed the opinions of people all over the globe. If no one from our age begins to appreciate the role of women and promote gender equality, then this patriarchal situation will continue to be replicated in every generation after ours. Education inside the home is one method of accomplishing this goal. What is communicated to a kid by an adult will significantly impact the child later in life, including the child's perception of the importance of gender equality. If not, there will always be another Kim Ji-Young, who will constantly generate controversy since it is believed to be a symbol of women's fight in the middle of the gender discriminatory policies of South Korea. If not, there will always be another Kim Ji-Young.

This novel inspires female readers to become more confident in using their voices and speaking out for themselves while confronting issues of gender inequity and harassment in today's society. In addition, it encourages people to seek the assistance of professionals when coping with feelings of despair and the stresses of everyday life. The social network surrounding a woman is a significant factor in determining whether or not she may suffer from mental illness or depression. It begins with the distribution of responsibilities and roles in child care, means of subsistence, and the organization of household duties. It may help everyone avoid mental stress, and there is no need to blame each other for the patriarchal family situations of others. However, the essential thing is that we learn to accept reality and try to cope with mental illness as people, families, and communities.

Kim Ji-Young and other women need respect and trust. Men and women enjoy equal rights. If women want to be recognized, dependable, liked, and appreciated, society has no difficulty. It will tremendously encourage men and women to have an equal role in the home and society if males exhibit an empathetic attitude toward women's feelings.

## CONCLUSION

After identifying gender discrimination that Kim Ji-Young experienced as a South Korean woman and how it linked to her mental condition. The researcher found that Kim Ji-Young received gender-based discrimination in the private sphere as a daughter and a wife. Also, in the public sphere, as a student and an employee. The practice of gender-based discrimination that she experienced then caused her to emerge four symptoms of depression, which are; emotional manifestation, cognitive Manifestation, vegetative and physical manifestation, and hallucination as a stress response.

Ji-Young changed her behavior because she is stressed out about being treated differently than her male peers. It is important to note that the lack of research into the link between gender discrimination and depressive symptoms could make it a little harder to conclude this research.

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