

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into the introduction of the study. This chapter consists of the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Race and gender serve as fundamental dimensions of oppression, shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities within society (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 1713). Racial categories are used to justify unequal access to resources, opportunities, and rights, creating a hierarchy that privileges certain racial groups over others (Banaji et al., 2021, p. 2). Additionally, Banaji et al. (2021, p. 2) state that race oppression or systemic racism encompasses the systematic and structural discrimination against individuals based on their race or ethnicity. This form of oppression manifests through institutional practices, cultural norms, and individual actions that devalue and marginalise racial minorities (Feagin & Ducey, 2018, p. 87).

Racial oppression is deeply rooted in historical legacies of colonisation, slavery, and segregation, which have left enduring impacts on the social, economic, and political structures of contemporary society. It is reinforced by laws, policies, and social norms that continue to disadvantage racial minorities, often resulting in unequal access to education, healthcare, and legal protections. This institutionalised form of racism has led to the systematic exclusion of marginalised racial groups from positions of power and influence, while simultaneously reinforcing negative stereotypes and harmful narratives that perpetuate racial inequality (Elias & Paradies, 2021, p. 46). Furthermore, Wilder (2020, p. 13) underscore that media representations often reinforce racial hierarchies, portraying people of colour, particularly Black individuals, in negative or stereotypical roles.

Similarly, gender oppression refers to the unequal treatment and subjugation of individuals based on their gender, which affects women and gender minorities such as transgender individuals and non-binary people (Page et al., 2022, p. 2). Women around the world face various kinds of discrimination simply because they are women. Gender oppression manifests through systems that reinforce patriarchal norms and limit opportunities for women and disadvantage them, for example, in the workplace (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p. 151). This form of oppression is deeply rooted in historical systems of patriarchy, which have traditionally placed men in positions of power and authority while relegating women and gender minorities to subordinate roles. Gender oppression is sustained by cultural norms and societal expectations that prescribe specific roles for men and women, often limiting women's access to education, career advancement, and political participation. Modern gender-based oppression also includes violence and harassment that reinforce traditional gender roles (Bates, 2021, p. 154). Gender violence, such as domestic abuse and sexual harassment, remains a significant issue across the globe, as women continue to be disproportionately affected by these forms of violence.

While race and gender are two distinct social categories in life, instead of operating independently, they intersect one another. Crenshaw (1989, p. 139) coined the term intersectionality to describe how different forms of discrimination, such as race and gender, overlap and create unique dynamics of oppression that cannot be understood by examining each axis of identity in isolation. This concept highlights that individuals are often shaped by multiple factors simultaneously in complex ways. For instance, a Black woman may face not only racism but also sexism, and the combination of these forms of oppression creates unique challenges that are different from White women or Black men. Intersectionality acknowledges that societal systems of power and inequality do not act independently, but rather intersect to shape individuals' experiences in multifaceted ways (Rosette et al., 2018, p. 3). Else-Quest & Hyde (2016, p. 156) underscore the importance of intersectionality in understanding the complexities of how multiple social identities interact with one another. Furthermore, a study by Moradi & Grzanka (2017, p. 14) highlights that intersectionality moves beyond the limitations of single-axis

discrimination, offering a more comprehensive view of how social identities interact. This nuanced understanding of identity acknowledges that marginalised individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of inequality in ways that cannot be fully addressed through singular approaches.

In response to the intersectionality of race and gender oppression, marginalised individuals have developed varied forms of resistance to challenge these structures that disadvantage them (hooks, 2015, p. 27). Resistance is an essential dimension for those who experience intersecting oppressions. Resistance can manifest in various forms, from activism to quieter acts of resistance and self-affirmation (hooks, 2015, p. 59). The act of resistance serves as a survival strategy and a form of self-affirmation, enabling marginalised individuals to create spaces for themselves within oppressive structures.

The novel *All the Fighting Parts* by Hannah V. Sawyerr was published in 2023. According to Eklund (2024), the novel is a finalist for the 2024 William C. Morris Award, which honours outstanding debut books for young adults. It also received an honour in the 2024 Walter Dean Myers Awards for Outstanding Children's Literature, a significant award recognising diverse authors and themes in young adult literature Eklund (2024). In the novel, the protagonist Amina Conteh, a young Black girl, navigates the challenges of growing up in a society that marginalises her based on race and gender. The novel explores the intersections of race and gender oppression through Amina's personal experiences. The novel also captures the impact these layers of oppression have on Amina's resistance. Throughout the narrative, Amina grapples with the limitations imposed on her as she attempts to reclaim her voice in a world that constantly tries to keep her silenced.

The writer chose intersectionality because it addresses the interconnecting nature of social identities as multifaced oppression is still ongoing in today's society, such as race and gender. The writer chose to analyse *All the Fighting Parts* because it provides a poignant and insightful look at how race and gender

oppression intersect with each other and their impact on Amina's resistance, making it an ideal text for an intersectional feminist analysis.

Several previous studies inspired the writing process of conducting this study, providing a better understanding of the framework of this study. The first previous study is entitled "*Intersecting Oppression of Gender and Race in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye and God Help the Child*" by Nurhayati (2019). This previous study explores the intersectionality of race and gender, specifically focusing on how the characters Pecola and Bride struggle under the intersection of White beauty standards and racial identity. The second previous study entitled "*Veiled Chronicles of Race and Gender: Re-Conceptualizing Intersectionality in American Fiction*" by Riaz et al. (2021) explores the intersection of race and gender as social constructs in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*.

The third previous study entitled "*Analyzing Jane Eyre: Intersectionality and the 21st Century Adaptions*" by Mrenmoi (2022). This previous study employs a comparative analysis of the original novel and two film adaptations in portraying the intersectionality of race, colonial background, and gender experienced by Bertha. The fourth previous study, "*Understanding Intersectionality through Tequila Leila's Experience in 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*" (2019) by Wandira et al. (2023) This previous study focuses on analysing the intersectionality of gender, class, and religion experienced by the character Tequila Leila overlaps in a patriarchal and oppressive Turkish society. The last previous study, "*Examining Intersectionality Through Amina Bonsu's Narrative in Evaristo's Fusion Fiction Novel, Girl, Woman, Other*" by Anagha et al. (2024). This previous study analyses the character Amma's experiences, highlighting how the novel portrays systematic oppression and intersectionality as key tools for understanding the realities of Black women's lives.

This study fills an important gap in intersectional analysis by focusing on *All the Fighting Parts*. This novel addresses the experiences of a young Black female protagonist in a contemporary context. Unlike previous studies that focus

on older works, this study explores how race and gender oppression intersect in young adult fiction, providing new insights into how these themes shape the identity and self-worth of Black girls. While earlier studies focus on adult characters navigating these intersections, this study uniquely contributes to the field by examining the specific challenges faced by younger protagonists, expanding the scope of intersectional analysis. This nuanced approach distinguishes the study from previous ones by highlighting the intersections of race and gender oppression and the resistance of young Black girls.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the use of intersectional feminism, there are two research questions in this study, as follows:

1. What are the intersectionality of race and gender experienced by Amina Conteh as portrayed in *All the Fighting Parts*?
2. How does Amina Conteh's resistance toward the intersectionality of race and gender in *All the Fighting Parts*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify and analyse the intersectionality of race and gender experienced by Amina in *All the Fighting Parts*.
2. To examine Amina's resistance toward the intersectionality of race and gender within the novel *All the Fighting Parts*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in both its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study aims to expand the application of intersectionality theory by analysing the intersectionality of race and gender oppression to shape the experiences of a young Black female protagonist in contemporary literature, thereby enriching the discourse on intersectionality in young adult fiction. Practically, it is hoped that the study will provide valuable insights for readers by highlighting the nuanced ways in which race and gender

oppression affect the identity and resistance of young Black girls. This understanding could inform more inclusive educational practices aimed at addressing the specific challenges marginalised youth face in society today.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study involves applying Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory to analyse the intersectionality of race and gender oppression in *All the Fighting Parts* by Hannah V. Sawyerr, particularly focusing on the protagonist, Amina Conteh. bell hooks' *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (2015) will be applied to analyse Amina's resistance towards the intersectionality of race and gender. The resistance data from the novel *All the Fighting Parts* only focuses on Amina's personal, social, institutional, and collective resistance. The study is limited to race and gender oppression and their intersections, excluding other forms of oppression. Additionally, the limitation of the study is that it focuses only on Amina's experiences within the novel through key incidents, character dialogues and interactions, and narratives that illustrate race and gender oppression and how these oppressions shape Amina's resistance.