

## FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY: DISRUPTING PATRIARCHY IN KRISTIN HANNAH'S "THE WOMEN"

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### Abstract

*The research explores women characters who face and struggle against patriarchy in Kristin Hannah's novel, "The Women" (2024). This study analyzes female subjectivity in the novel, focusing on the characters of Frances Frankie McGrath and her fellow nurses who perform heroically in the Vietnam War, equal to men, but patriarchal society ignores their struggle and contribution on the battlefield. The analysis process was carried out by reading Kristin Hannah's "The Women" as a piece of literary criticism, divided into two parts, thirty-five chapters, and 414 pages, which was originally published on February 6, 2024, by St. Martin's Press in the U.K. Additionally, the methodology of this study is qualitative, uses a descriptive research design, and objects that focus on patriarchy that occurs against female characters. The novel is in primary sources, and different articles, websites, and The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir are chosen as secondary sources for data collection. Furthermore, the study objects to address these gaps by investigating two key areas: First, it seeks to analyze the literary techniques employed by Hannah to portray female subjectivity and how these techniques contribute to a deeper understanding of the characters' inner lives. Second, it examines how "The Women" challenges and deconstructs patriarchal structures through its representation of female characters. Applying Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism to "The Women," researcher can explore how females struggle against patriarchy and resist for their existence in traditional patriarchal society. It gives the reader knowledge at a broad level that females are not suppressed in this modern era; now they are working equally to men. The results of this research show the patriarchy experienced by Frankie and her fellow nurses in the wartime environment; it also explores that women's subjectivity and struggle against patriarchy, aim to achieve their existence as intellectual, self-aware, and free individuals.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, female Subjectivity, Feminism, Women's Struggle, Existentialism, Vietnam War.

### Introduction and Background of the Study

Literature is a reflection of real life, like any literary work that is the product of the author's experiences in his life. An author may explain the experiences of his life or those he observes in others' lives. It depends upon literature that explains the life phenomena. It touches every field of life; different problems of life are explained through literature, including women's issues, thoughts, gender issues, political and public affairs, behaviors, and feelings. Literature helps the understandings of readers and researchers as well as other people (Albloly & Ahmed, 2015).

In the past, both men and women accepted the set patterns of the society that men are superior and they have all rights in public and private life, but women are always considered inferior. In history we can see rules and set patterns of many stereotypes, women always considered weaker physically, mentally, and emotionally. They were always labeled irresponsible and dependent on men, so they did not have the ability to make decisions in their lives and were ignored illogically. On the other hand, men were considered powerful, logical, rational, and physically and mentally strong, so they enjoyed rights in public and political life as they were labeled superior (Horton and Hunt, 1996).

Traditionally, in America, women were also labeled inferior to men and did not have equal rights in politics, education, and public affairs; their rights were limited in every field of life, so they were ignored. The industrial revolution changed the thoughts and forced women to get education and other rights in political and public life as women changed their lifestyles and started to survive and work outside of their homes.

The representation of women in the present era's literature shows many changes in political and social life at a broader level. This representation of women in contemporary works encounters the patriarchal society and makes women strong and powerful. This fictitious study is not only improving the understanding of students, but also students of the modern age are thinking critically about patriarchal structures and imbalances in society (Satriawan & Rahayu, 2020).

The humble and kind attitude of women makes them inferior to men. This inequality was committed by males against females, and they forced them into marriages, raids, robberies, and murders without any reason. Sexual harassment and violence are being done by the individuals who are in, physically and socially, strong positions, and sufferers frequently become passive, weak, and considered inferior (Turpin, 2007).

Everybody in this world ought to play an equal part in the society. Both men and women are entitled to engage in both public and private life without any limitation imposed by their sex. Nonetheless, men are considered superior to women in several societies. This implies that men are superior to women in speaking and controlling. Additionally, it is very common that women always face hardships, suffer, and are less powerful, victims of patriarchal norms and violence (Berdahl, 2007).

Numerous organizations, including women themselves, have fought to improve the status of women. Women struggle to express themselves in different fields. Female writers show the picture of women through literature, including novels, poetry, short stories, etc. In literary works, especially novels, different writers are able to show the real picture of contemporary women and give unique messages to society about the sacrifices of females in different circumstances for their existence. Kristin Hannah is one of them. Through the characters of the literary works, writers convey great messages to the community that really change the patriarchal and societal traditions and norms of society (Triyani, 2021).

According to Triyani (2021), the movement of feminism is completely for the equal rights of men and women. This movement purely works for the equal rights of women; this feminist movement's goal is to free women from their dependency on others, particularly men. Through this movement, women will avail chance to get education and other equal rights in politics and public affairs so they will be able to explore themselves freely; they will have the chance to fully realize their potential and existence. This will enhance their struggle and potential, and they will become stronger and more respectable like men so they will be able to make decisions freely.

The realization of women that they are living in a patriarchal society gives birth to feminism. This movement served initially when the survivors were fighting for their own human rights. At that time men considered themselves as the dominant figures of the patriarchal society, as their view of superiority and advantage of maleness allowed them to restrict women in every way. This action of superiority of men caused women to lose their existence and independence in patriarchal society.

Through the emergence of feminist criticism, women get support against the patriarchy and become subjective; this movement supports them to fight against the patriarchy and dominated society. With the help of feminist literary criticism, women who were considered inferior struggled for their equal rights with men and stood for their existence. This criticism means denying male superiority, and the picture of women in literature includes biographical and historical studies that explore the resistance of women for their rights and issues.

With the dominance of the patriarchal system and its governing every aspect of women's lives, women became submissive, and they were treated as inferior and victimized as 'other' in the society that gave birth to the patriarchal system. Feminism fights for women's equality in society and against the patriarchal system. A number of individuals, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Judith Sargent Murray, and Frances Wright, started the feminist movement in the 18th century. They fight against patriarchal norms of culture through their literary works. They struggle for the equal rights of men and women, their literary works as vehicles for their opposition to patriarchal systems that dehumanize and oppress women in patriarchal systems (Artana, 2018).

Feminist theory acknowledges that women always have been mistreated by men. They struggled for their existence and defended their rights for equitable treatment. Through this movement, male dominance will be destroyed, the patriarchal shadow will be extinguished, and everyone will be treated fairly in society (Kambarami, 2006).

In the present era, a lot of writers write novels in favor of female struggles. Scholars use feminist concepts to critique the unequal treatment of women in society. The author's creativity has the power to engage readers and bring attention to the issues that women encounter (Karimah, 2017). Existentialist feminism theory was described by Simone de Beauvoir, in which she expressed the ideas that in every time in history, women have always been mistreated and considered subordinate and suppressive, and every time they misbehaved by men in patriarchal society. She said that the existence of women in the universe is like 'other' in front of men. Above all, she depicts that the women who are aware and conscious about their position in this universe will be able to free themselves and will get equal human rights. She also suggests that women must resist being objects and must determine to free themselves from the patriarchal norms (Triyani, 2021).

According to Campbell (1993), in a number of the military regions, female soldiers participated actively all over the world. This study explores the picture of female soldiers in the Vietnam War and ruined the patriarchal norms and stereotypical views about the female soldiers, and it also demonstrated the importance of women's role in war and offered admirable lessons for bravery and resiliency. This also shows their struggle for existence and subjectivity.

War is a terrible and important event that is a recurring feature in modern civilization. From the ancient time period, war writers explored it in their works, and now in this era, this journey is still continuing. From ancient times till now, different writers doing this job. It is important to emphasize that research has shifted over time from focusing almost exclusively on white male troops to studying trauma and female perspectives. The perseverance, existence, and bravery of women serving in wartime who encounter male partners are really appreciable and admirable.

Even now, during military service, females face a lot of obstacles and challenges, including sexual threats, participation, discrimination, and existence/resistance. History is famed for enlightening the changes in gender norms in the military and other areas of life (Alwazzan, 2024).

Particularly as articulated by scholars such as Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, it focuses on the ways in which traumatic experiences disrupt individuals' psychological and emotional landscapes, often leading to a reconfiguration of identity and agency. It is asserted by Farr (2022) that, according to the feminist psychiatrist Judith Herman, power and connection play a role in trauma. This idea of connection and power makes a clear connection to the core ideas of feminist political movements. In "The Women," trauma operates not merely as an individual affliction but as a systemic force that permeates and shapes the lived realities of female characters. This framework illuminates how trauma, stemming from both personal and collective experiences under patriarchy, becomes a powerful site of resistance and transformation. According to Azmi (2018), the release of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* in 1996 brought trauma studies in literary criticism to a wider audience.

In recent literary discourse, the exploration of female subjectivity and the deconstruction of patriarchal frameworks have emerged as critical areas of inquiry. Kristin Hannah's "The Women" provides a compelling narrative that intricately weaves these themes together, offering a nuanced examination of how women's experiences challenge and disrupt entrenched patriarchal norms. Applying existentialism theory to this text enriches our understanding by highlighting how this influences female subjectivity and serves as a catalyst for resisting patriarchal oppression.

Kristin Hannah's narrative vividly portrays the impact of patriarchal violence and systemic oppression on women's lives, illustrating how these forces inflict psychological and emotional wounds. The text delves into the complexities of female subjectivity as shaped by existentialism theory, portraying women's struggles to reclaim their identities and voices in a society that seeks to silence and marginalize them. By applying this theory, researchers can analyze how the experiences of struggle depicted in the novel disrupt traditional patriarchal structures and propel female characters towards acts of resistance and self-definition. It is asserted by Sultana (2011) that the term patriarchy describes the dominance of men in both public and private domains. Feminists use the term "patriarchy" in this sense to identify the power dynamics between men and women and to identify the underlying factors that lead to women's subjugation.

In essence, Kristin Hannah's "The Women" offers a profound exploration of female subjectivity through the lens of existentialism theory, presenting a narrative that both exposes the damaging effects of patriarchy and illuminates the transformative potential of women's resistance. This intersectional analysis enhances our appreciation of how resistance and patriarchy intersect and how literature can serve as a potent medium for advocating social change.

In a recent study of *The Women* (2024), the researcher uses Simone De Beauvoir's existentialist feminism in relation to Kristin Hannah's *The Women* (2024). This novel was formerly studied but with a different research theoretical framework. Furthermore, this novel, *The Women*, has never been analyzed as a feminine perspective. As a result, this study can raise awareness and describe how existentialism is practiced in patriarchal contemporary society.

This novel portrays the picture of the ladies who are subjugated and suppressed by the patriarchal system. They are suppressed by the society in which women have no respect and only men are superior. A female character, Frankie, plays a vital role for her family and for her state, but there is no reward for her because she is female. This analysis enlightens the existentialism defined in



*The Women* (2024). To study existentialism in Hannah's novel *The Women*, the researcher applies the angle of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism.

### Research Statement

In Kristin Hannah's *The Women*, the portrayal of female subjectivity is central to the narrative, as it explores how women experience and express their individual identities in a patriarchal society. Despite the growing interest in feminist literature, there is limited scholarly attention to the specific ways in which Hannah's novel employs literary techniques to convey female subjectivity. Furthermore, while *The Women* is recognized for its critique of patriarchal norms, a detailed analysis of how the novel disrupts traditional gender roles and societal expectations remains underexplored.

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating two key areas: First, it seeks to analyze the literary techniques employed by Hannah to portray female subjectivity and how these techniques contribute to a deeper understanding of the characters' inner lives. Second, it examines how *The Women* challenges and deconstructs patriarchal structures through its representation of female characters, focusing on how these characters resist and disrupt patriarchal expectations. By addressing these aspects, this research will provide a nuanced understanding of the novel's contribution to feminist discourse and its role in critiquing and disrupting patriarchal conventions.

### Research Questions

- ◆ How does Kristin Hannah portray female subjectivity in *The Women*, and what literary techniques are used to express it?
- ◆ In what ways does *The Women* challenges traditional patriarchal structures through its representation of female characters including "Frances Frankie McGrath"?

### Research Objectives

- ◆ To analyze the literary techniques employed by Kristin Hannah in *The Women* for portraying female subjectivity.
- ◆ To identify how *The Women* uses narrative strategies to express and develop the inner lives of female characters.

### Significance of the Study

This research has significance as we examine the character of young girl Frankie McGrath, who is the protagonist of the novel by Kristin Hannah, *The Women* (2024). Additionally, it is significant as it contributes to feminist literary studies by offering a nuanced examination of how Kristin Hannah's *The Women* portrays female subjectivity. By analyzing the literary techniques used to depict the inner lives of female characters, the study enhances our understanding of how literature can convey complex feminist themes and perspectives.

Additionally, the research highlights the novel's role in challenging and disrupting traditional patriarchal structures. This exploration provides insights into how literature can serve as a tool for questioning and subverting deep-rooted gender norms and societal expectations.

The study also enriches interpretative frameworks within literary criticism by showcasing how narrative strategies, such as internal monologue and dialogue, "*women can be heroes*" (*The Women*, page#10), can be employed to reflect and challenge societal attitudes towards gender. Furthermore, while not explicitly stated, the research may raise awareness about intersectional dimensions of female subjectivity, leading to a more inclusive and comprehensive analysis of feminist literature.

Finally, through this analysis, researchers can explore how females struggle against patriarchy and resist for their existence in traditional patriarchal society. With the application of existentialist

feminist literary theory, researchers can give the knowledge to readers at a broader level that females are not suppressed in this modern era; now they are working equally to men. Applying Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism to the literary work *The Women*, researchers can enhance the knowledge of people, and it also makes a great contribution to literature.

### Research Design

The research is significant as the methodology of this study is qualitative and uses a descriptive research design. *The Women* by Kristin Hannah is in primary sources, and different articles, websites, and *The Second Sex* by Simon De Beauvoir are chosen as secondary sources for data collection. It aims to give information based on different attributes and the thematic analysis. The study will employ the existentialist feminism theory of Simone de Beauvoir on Kristin Hannah's masterpiece '*The Women*.' Information and facts are collected not in numbers but in pictures, words, and sentences in the novel *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. This approach will be used to explore how the female characters in Hannah's *The Women* experience and survive in a patriarchal environment.

The methodology will involve a close reading of the text to identify and examine the issues of women and their struggle for existence in a challenging society. Focus will be placed on how trauma and stress from patriarchal society influence the female characters' experiences, identities, and interactions. Key scenes, dialogues, and internal monologues will be analyzed for evidence of the impact of patriarchy and male superiority and responses to it.

Character analysis will focus on identifying challenges and experiences faced by female characters and examining how these experiences relate to patriarchal oppression. The study will investigate the coping mechanisms used by the characters in response to struggle and how these mechanisms reflect resistance to patriarchal norms and contribute to the characters' attempts to reclaim their subjectivity.

The researcher has read each chapter of *The Women* twice or three times. The researcher gathered data from the novel based on the literature review theory, marking relevant sections. The researcher analyzed the story's characters, storyline, setting, and conflict to understand the main character's battle for her existence and rights and her struggle against a patriarchal lifestyle.

Thematic analysis will address the connections between existentialist feminism and patriarchy in the novel. This includes exploring how the existentialist approach functions as a tool for critiquing and disrupting patriarchal structures and assessing how the portrayal of female subjectivity challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Additionally, the study will examine how the character's experiences of existence and struggle under stress and trauma in Warfield lead to the reconstruction of their identities and how this process disrupts patriarchal norms.

Finally, the study will situate the novel within its historical and cultural context to understand how these elements influence the depiction of existentialism, female subjectivity, and patriarchal disruption. Textual evidence will be collected from the novel, including quotations, passages, and character interactions relevant to Frankie's stress under patriarchy, existence, women's struggle for their rights, and patriarchal critique. Concepts from existentialist theory will be applied to this data to interpret the impact of patriarchy on female subjectivity and the ways in which the novel challenges patriarchal norms in the culture.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study, applying Simone De Beauvoir's existentialist feminism theory to Kristin Hannah's *The Women*, is designed to investigate how female subjectivity is portrayed and how patriarchal structures are disrupted. This framework integrates

core concepts of existentialism theory to understand the novel's depiction, Frankie's resistance for existence, identity and her fight for subjectivity within patriarchal living style.

In *The Women*, Beauvoir's existentialism theory will be applied to examine how the female character's experiences of objectivity such as emotional abuse, violence, or societal oppression—shape their identities and influence their interactions within a patriarchal society. The framework will explore how these traumatic experiences are represented in the narrative and how they affect the character's sense of self and agency.

Additionally, the framework will address how the character's struggle for identity in patriarchal stress and trauma of war, serves as a means to critique and subvert patriarchal structures. By investigating the ways in which patriarchy influences the characters' resistance against traditional gender roles and societal expectations, the study will reveal how the novel challenges and disrupts patriarchal norms through its portrayal of female subjectivity. The intersectional dimensions of theory will also be considered, exploring how factors such as race, class, and sexuality intersect with gender-based living style and impact the characters' experiences and resistance to patriarchy. This theoretical framework will guide the analysis of how female subjectivity is represented in *The Women* and how it functions as a tool for disrupting patriarchal structures, providing a comprehensive understanding of the novel's feminist critique.

#### **Female Subjectivity in Kristin Hannah's "*The Women*"**

Kristin Hannah's *The Women* is a clear picture of the Vietnam War. It narrates the story of the people who contribute to the war for their state, especially the women who joined the war area and worked with men for their existence and their rights. The story tells about the women's subjectivity and their disruption of patriarchy for their equal rights to men. The women who participated there most were nurses, paramedics, and soldiers. In the war field they struggled very much equally with their male partners. Especially, *The Women* is the story of those women who contributed in Vietnam but whose struggle was always ignored. The novel tells how they were suppressed and their works were always forgotten, and there was no reverence for their struggle in patriarchal society.

The novel's story is purely about a young girl, Frances Frankie McGrath, who always wishes to do something extraordinary to become a hero. She always thinks about achieving her goals and wishes her picture was at the heroes' wall in the office of her father, with her ancestors' pictures, who served as brave soldiers and became heroes, so she decided to join the army as a nurse, and finally, with this courage, she joined the hospital of Vietnam in the war zone.

The story starts in Coronado Island, California, in May 1966. At beginning researcher analyzes how all the members of the family are enjoying a dinner party in favor of a young man, a soldier, Finley McGrath, who is ready to join the army for his state after graduating from the academy. He will nearly be part of the army that is surviving in the Vietnam War. Everyone is looking very happy and feeling proud because one of their family members will serve in the war as his forefathers did. All were eagerly waiting to welcome Finley to the party, a brave soldier who is the brother of the protagonist, Frankie McGrath. Frankie, her friends, and all other participants in the party are there to appreciate his thinking and his determination, loyalty, bravery, and sacrifices for his country. After a long wait, Finley appears. Every mouth was quiet. Finley's father broke the ice and said,

*"A toast to Finley and his grand adventure. We are proud of you, Son!" (The Women, 2024. Chapter 1, Pg. # 08)*

The above-mentioned quotation clearly portrays the picture of patriarchal society that all are there in the party to welcome a young man who is ready to leave for war bravely. Because in their family every male member wants to become a hero, everyone is determined to join the war area, and the society also allows them. Through the novel, Kristin Hannah portrays the picture of that society: that society is with the approval of males that they can participate in different areas freely, but women are always marginalized, and only they can listen and tell the stories of bravery and success of their males.

When everyone is there to say goodbye to a young man, Frankie is in the office of her father, and her friend Rye Walsh enters the office and asks why there is no picture of a female on the picture board. Frankie replies that this is the “heroes’ wall.” This reply clearly depicts that women are suppressed in patriarchal norms and women are not allowed to become heroes.

As the novel is a story of the Vietnam War, Hannah, as a writer and re-presenter of women's rights, explores that in the society women are marginalized; they are not allowed to participate in such works, which are only associated with men. In the novel she tells that men are there to perform extraordinary feats, but women are only for getting marriages and housemaids.

The heroes wall in the office of Conner McGrath, Frankie’s father, clearly shows that only men are superior because on the heroes wall were only males’ pictures; there was no picture of a woman. This is a sign of a patriarchal society. This shows that women are always marginalized; they are not allowed to participate in different fields of life, and their struggles are always ignored. The quote above is the statement of the head of the family, Conner McGrath, Finley’s father, who declares that they are feeling proud that their son is going to join the Army in Vietnam, but his daughter, Frankie, is desiring the same—to join the Army—but she is not allowed because she is a woman. As Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work, *The Second Sex*, asserts that women are not born but rather become. In Frankie’s, the researcher clearly understands Beauvoir’s statement. The female figure in society is not determined by biological, psychological, or economic factors; rather, it is a product of civilization as a whole. The socio-political context of human society shapes and enforces gender roles. Simone de Beauvoir defined gender as a social construct. Similarly, a person's gender identity is shaped by their childhood experiences. Gender is a personal choice that can evolve over time. Gender is a limited process that can be influenced by both social actions and individual choices.

As mentioned above, existentialist subjectivity does not reject "objective truth" in favor of human biases and experiences. Existentialist subjectivity acknowledges individuals' personal experiences, inner lives, and consciousness as they seek truth. Finding the truth requires personal experience and conviction. Sartre asserts that individuals shape their own identities through deliberate planning. Man makes a conscious decision using his "will." When an individual makes a decision, it affects all of humanity. This is because every person is an individual, and the decision of one is the decision of all. This approach enables individuals to completely grow as humanists. The researcher relates existentialism to *The Women* through the character of Frankie, a young lady of teenage age who makes decisions as an individual and disrupts patriarchy. The protagonists of the novel clearly banished all barriers of patriarchal society.

Researcher analysis that at the end of the party in the evening, Frankie thinks about Rye’s comments;

*“Women can be heroes” (The Women, 2024. Pg. # 10)*

Frankie is living in society where women’s job only to be a good house wife, to raise well-mannered children and keep a lovely home as she has learnt in Catholic high school. But after these comments



she determined to change her life style. Frankie thinks about her future again and again and she decides to become a hero. She struggles to banish old patriarchal rules in the society. She wants to go in war area for her resistance, equal rights and for her existence.

Additionally, researcher picks the point which show females subjectivity in patriarchal society as Frances Frankie McGrath realizes her status in society and determines to struggle for herself and her state like men of her family are struggling in war area, she felt a kind of reawakening and says;

*"I could serve my country," (The Women, 2024. Pg. # 15)*

The above quotation is when Frankie, the central character of the novel, voiced her desire to fight on the battlefield for her state, but she declined. Frankie's thoughts disrupt the patriarchal lifestyle and thinking. Social restrictions prevent women from challenging social norms, resulting in negative attitudes towards them. Her father questioned her military abilities due to the belief that women are not physically capable of fighting on the front lines; fighting in war is only for males. This attitude reflects gender stereotypes that undermine women's potential contributions during wartime.

Frankie's revolutionary thoughts urge her to disrupt patriarchy and do something extra for her country and her future, so she thinks with closed eyes again and again and imagines telling her parents that she is ready to join the army to go to Vietnam. This is a very clear way Frankie depicts the picture of contemporary women who are challenging the patriarchal norms and working equal to men for their existence, equal rights, and position. Following lines from the text when Frankie imagines writing a letter to her brother who is in the Vietnam area, she expresses her thoughts in these words:

*"Finley: Drumroll, please I've joined the navy and will be shipping out to Vietnam! See you soon!" (The Women, 2024. Pg. # 16)*

Through the emergence of feminist criticism, women get support against the patriarchy and become subjective; this movement supports them to fight against the patriarchy and dominated society. With the help of feminist literary criticism, women who were considered inferior struggle for their equal rights with men and stand for their existence. This criticism means denying male superiority, and the picture of women in literature includes biographical and historical studies that explore the resistance of women for their rights and issues.

The statement above mentioned demonstrates Frankie's bravery, but because gender norms prevent women from participating outside of their usual roles, she has difficulty realizing her goals. This way of viewing restricts Frankie's career options and undercuts her desire to become a warrior, as a nurse and hero. She is no doubt a brave and courageous woman. She realizes her actual status in society, but her thinking again and again about telling her parents and brother that she is going to Vietnam shows the patriarchal norms that she was oppressed by and could not survive without the permission of her father and brother. Through this researcher realizes the domination of males in American society, which Kristin Hannah tries to describe in *The Women*. Furthermore, Frankie's remarks show her courage and revolutionary thoughts and struggle for her existence.

*"If she did it now, they could be over there together. In-country. She could earn her place on the hero's wall, and not for marrying well. For serving lives in wartime. Her parents would be so proud of her, as proud as they'd been of Finley" (The Women, 2024. Pg. # 16)*

As Simone de Beauvoir said, the existence of women in the universe is like others in front of men. Above all, she depicts that the women who are aware and conscious about their position in this

universe will be able to free themselves and will get their human rights. He also suggests that women must reject being objects and must determine to free themselves from the patriarchal norms (Collins, 2017).

The above declared arguments challenge social norms that prohibit women from actively engaging in the struggle. She declared her determination to participate in war, similar to her brother Finley, she thinks that she will be there equal to her brother in war area, in response to systematic oppression that limited women's roles in the home and non-militant realms. Frankie challenges with her family and society and highlights her awareness of unfairness and willingness to take action. Additionally, as De Beauvoir talks about the realization of women and their intellectual and modernity, Hannah describes same thing through Frankie's character.

Frankie challenges traditional patriarchal set patterns for women as she rejects well married life and wishes to become hero as her forefathers. She also accepts appreciation from her father like Finley was appreciated at the time of departure for Vietnam.

Researcher analyses that Frankie's participation and her decision is not valuable in front her family but she is determined to resist against patriarchy and she fights for her position. Her family don't allow her because she is women and it is against the social norms that females participate in war and other areas of life equal to men. (Simons et al., 1979) contend that women's oppression derives from their unequal treatment with males. Men are regarded subjects in the community, whereas women are viewed as objects (others). She noted that the process began with biological elements such as reproductive duties, hormone imbalances, and female organ weakness, which were paired with patriarchal history to relegate women to domestic and reproductive responsibilities, unknowing that they had been designated as unconscious. Furthermore, she suggests that women should rise for their position and should work equal to men in every field of life.

In Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*, (2024) the central character, Frances Frankie McGrath, demonstrates resistance against injustice and struggle for female's rights. Her struggle could be evaluated in next lines;

*Frankie took a deep breath and said, "I joined the army Nurse Corps. The ANC. I'm now Second Lieutenant McGrath. I'm going to Vietnam. I'll get to be with Finley for part of his tour!" (The Women, 2024. Pg. # 19)*

Patriarchy always marginalized women and considered them inferior to men. Traditional patriarchal rules try to suppress their struggle against patriarchy. But subjective and intellectual women always stand against male dominance; they fight for their position, equal rights, and status. Feminists constantly promote women to fight against patriarchy; De Beauvoir is one of them who speaks in favor of women's rights. The researcher, in the lens of existentialism theory, explores the bravery and determination of female characters and their resistance in the novel. Francis's remarks clearly portray her disruption.

*Frankie frowned. Why weren't thy congratulating her? "McGraths and Alexander always serve," she said. "You were thrilled when Finley volunteered." (The Women, 2024)*

Above quotation shows how Frankie challenges her family and society as well, she is not willing to follow traditional lifestyle so she questions patriarchy. Actually Kristin Hannah explores her thinking through the character of Frankie that men always appreciated in every field of life and women are considered their slaves to stay at home and not to work equal to men. She clearly

depicts the picture of western society through her works. Frankie's question to her father strictly shocked him as he abruptly said;

*"The Men serve," Dad said sharply, "The men" (The Women, 2024)*

In the novel *The Women*, Frankie's resistance to patriarchy highlights the establishment's resistance to obtaining their rights. Resistance to patriarchy allows women to assert themselves as intellectuals and pursue their own goals. This provides valuable insight into human resilience and the pursuit of understanding during adversity. Additionally, her parents' remarks defend patriarchal life style but Frankie tries her best to get rid of traditional social customs and struggles to retain equal position in society.

The novel totally based on Vietnam War and narrates the story of women who served in Vietnam war especially nursing staff who work equally to their male partners but they were marginalized and their services forgotten by society. The women who served in war faced same challenges as men but they did not rewarded. Novel's story portrays that men's services appreciated by the society but female's struggles were banished. Frankie and other her female companions faced challenges and war hardships can be clearly examined through the text.

*"At first all she saw was the horror" (The Women, 2024)*

Frankie became nervous and looked very emotional when she saw deaths all-around of young soldiers and children because she had served in war before that. She witnessed dead bodies very close to her first time, so she became panicked.

During her services in war area Frankie tries to save many victims but all were in worst condition so realizes that no one is with you forever when she witnessed many dead bodies there she says;

*"War was full of goodbyes" (The Women, 2024)*

In the worst situation of wartime, Frankie struggles most and becomes panicked during the surgery. She requires the help of her companion nurses; she closes her eyes and imagines their company. At the time when she imagines, she realizes that nothing is permanent in this world, and especially in Vietnam. Bombing noise environment proves painful, and it damages Frankie's senses, as she says,

*"The noise was excruciating and heightened Frankie's sense that hell had broken loose here." (The Women, 2024)*

Similarly, the story shows violence and injustice by the people of patriarchal society when Frances Frankie McGrath resists for her existence, and she does not obey traditional rules in the society. She opposes her family and state as well and goes to Vietnam, but when she comes back to her country, society banishes her services and gives her no regard. Researchers critically analyze the slogans against that of how Kristin Hannah tries to depict the picture of a marginalized state.

*"We don't want you baby killers here" (The Women, 2024)*

Protesters at the airport do not want Frankie to stay in their country. They are protesting to banish her because she opposes the system and traditional rules. Additionally, relating the text to Beauvoir's existentialism theory, female subjugation is due to the mistreatment of males; they are constantly treated as inferior to men. Men were always treated as subjects and superior to women in the society, while women were always rejected and measured as objects. The process of social inequality starts with biological facts because society marks females only to produce children and look after their houses.

Kristin Hannah's novel shows inequality described by De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. As the researcher analyzes the text, proceeding arguments clearly illustrate the reaction of society to a female in regard to her services; she performs equal to men in war areas.

Furthermore, Frankie McGrath faces numerous challenges before going to the war zone, during the Vietnam conflict, and after the war, at the airport and coming back home. She breaks all hurdles and traditional barriers in the way of her struggle; she challenges social norms and patriarchal traditional rules. Frankie and her companion nurses face hardships with their male partners; they face sexual harassment, inferiority, carelessness, and marginalization, but they do not give up resistance for women's existence in the society. They practically participated in public and political affairs, and in war they faced all horrifying circumstances with bravery. Frances Frankie McGrath's arguments are vibrant evidence of her determination and loyalty;

*"Tomorrow would be better" (The Women, 2024)*

The above quote from the text of *The Women* shows that Frankie feels unhappy when she thinks about the behavior of society, and her parents also criticize her services, participation in war, and her bravery. Researcher analysis that in spite of all this criticism, she performs courageously and remains steadfast as she disrupts patriarchy and constantly struggles for female subjectivity with this hope that tomorrow will be a new day and all will accept her in the society and will appreciate her bravery, her resistance, and her struggle for the nation of her state. Additionally, the response of her state and her parents affects her identity. She wants her parents to be proud, but similar to other people in society, they also neglect her efforts.

Additionally, in view of the above arguments, Frankie encounters cruelty and injustice from the state and her family as well; she constantly resists the system and disrupts patriarchy. She struggles while having nightmares and depression. Her participation in the Vietnam War and bravery show how she disrupts patriarchy and tries to maintain female subjectivity so she does not follow traditional patriarchal lifestyles. Although everyone in the society neglects her services, she continuously struggles for her freedom and subjectivity.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, existentialist feminism theory expresses the idea that in every time in history, women have always been mistreated and considered subordinate and suppressive. She says that the existence of women in the universe is like others in front of men. Above all, she depicts that the women who are aware and conscious about their position in this universe will be able to free themselves and will get their human rights equal to men. She also suggests that women must reject being objects and must determine to free themselves from the patriarchal norms.

Based on the above arguments, applying De Beauvoir's theory of existentialism to Kristin Hannah's *The Women* (2024), the researcher examines that Frankie is the example of a new/modern woman who is aware of her status in society, and she resists the patriarchal system as she feels sad for a short time and remains in stress, but she thinks about her future, she doesn't care about society's response, and she starts nursing again after coming back from Vietnam. Although she has experienced how society ignores her, she is conscious about her position, so she follows De Beauvoir's suggestion and fights for her existence.

### Conclusion

In American history 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time when the industrial revolution brought about significant changes in practically every element of human life. Norms and ideals shifted regularly, and social and economic movement created uncertainty. This time also saw significant improvements in the position of American women. It is now time for the assumption that the proper realm for women is at home to be confronted with women's growing realization of their equal rights with men. The researcher understands that the presence of women is an intriguing subject in the sense of the world of humans. Their presence as humanity performing biological mother and reproductive functions has kept them out of public view. Furthermore, because it is associated with



the recognition that women are physically and mentally distinct from males, their absence from the public realm facilitates and justifies the segregation of women into the home and men into productive labor. As previously noted, the idea of the "sexual domain" in nineteenth-century America is formed in the intricate virtue of a so-called "cult of real femininity." As a result, the majority of American women have little regard for their unique rights in achieving their own existence. The worst part is that they have no interest in the reform movement to alter their position and function in society, which is a result of the way they were created.

Seemingly, the revival has caused great displeasure among certain women. They are a small group of well-educated middle and upper-class women who see that the notion of authentic femininity is a kind of men's unequal treatment against women's rights. Some blame themselves, some want to preserve the values and broaden the scope of femininity, and some question the norm. Furthermore, drawing a comparison with the subject of abolishment of slavery for black people and women, the women's liberation movement elevated the advocacy of women's rights in a larger sense as the feminism issue of the day. In reaction to such social stress and anguish, women who are largely extremist or militant are driven to organize a battle under the name of the victimized gender via social and political activity against antifeminist males and females.

The current research examines Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* through the lenses of De Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism, specifically focusing on the character of Frankie. The researcher analyzes the data to explore female subjectivity, disrupting patriarchy in the novel. Through the story of *The Women*, Hannah depicts the picture of the Vietnam War and its impacts on humanity, especially on females. In a recent study, existentialist feminism has great significance as the researcher examines the theory to understand women's position in society and females' struggle to get their rights in patriarchal society. This study will really promote the contribution of Simone de Beauvoir in the movement of women for their struggle. As Simone de Beauvoir, in her seminal work, *The Second Sex*, asserts that women are not born but rather become. The female figure in society is not determined by biological, psychological, or economic factors; rather, it is a product of civilization as a whole. The socio-political context of human society shapes and enforces gender roles. Simone de Beauvoir defined gender as a social construct. Similarly, a person's gender identity is shaped by their childhood experiences. Gender is a personal choice that can evolve over time. Gender is a limited process that can be influenced by both social actions and individual choices. By analyzing the literary techniques used to depict the inner lives of female characters, the study enhances our understanding of how literature can convey complex feminist themes and perspectives.

Additionally, the research highlights the novel's role in challenging and disrupting traditional patriarchal structures. This exploration provides insights into how literature can serve as a tool for questioning and subverting deep-rooted gender norms and societal expectations.

The study also enriches interpretative frameworks within literary criticism by showcasing how narrative strategies, such as internal monologue and dialogue, "women can be heroes" (*The Women*, page #10), can be employed to reflect and challenge societal attitudes towards gender. Moreover, the research may raise awareness about intersectional dimensions of female subjectivity, leading to a more inclusive and comprehensive analysis of feminist literature.

Furthermore, through this analysis, researchers can explore how females struggle against patriarchy and resist for their existence in traditional patriarchal society. Applying existentialist feminist literary theory to the novel researcher can give the knowledge, at a broader level, that females are not suppressed in this modern era; now they are working equally to men.

In the context of female subjectivity, *The Women* (2024) portrays the picture of the Vietnam War and the central character, Frankie's struggle to participate in the war equal to her brother, finely. Frankie is actively resisting patriarchy to get her position equal to male soldiers. She resists her parents' decision and goes to Vietnam, where she helps injured soldiers, especially women and children, as a brave nurse. She closely watches dead bodies and wounds. She also faces harassment by her male colleagues, but she holds all challenges and struggles for existence and to maintain her subjective position in society.

Meanwhile, upon her coming back home, she faces numerous challenges while everyone curses her. In spite of welcoming and appreciating her courage, her family also rejects her participation as a brave soldier, but she doesn't give up her mission and continues her struggle for equality. She has a hope that tomorrow will be a new day.

This story emphasizes the necessity of women's subjectivity and struggle in the face of patriarchy. Women helped each other in both resistance and daily survival throughout history. This novel's female protagonists, particularly Frankie and other female nurses, challenge patriarchal society's expectations of their gender roles. Women demonstrated their courage and capacity to actively participate in the resistance against patriarchy and gender discrimination.

Thematic analysis addresses the connections between existentialist feminism and patriarchy in the novel. This includes exploring how the existentialist approach functions as a tool for critiquing and disrupting patriarchal structures and assessing how the portrayal of female subjectivity challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Additionally, the study examines how the character's experiences of existence and struggle under stress and trauma in Warfield lead to the reconstruction of their identities and how this process disrupts patriarchal norms.

The theoretical framework addresses how the character's struggle for identity in patriarchal stress and trauma of war serves as a means to critique and subvert patriarchal structures. By investigating the ways in which patriarchy influences the characters' resistance against traditional gender roles and societal expectations, the study reveals how the novel challenges and disrupts patriarchal norms through its portrayal of female subjectivity. The intersectional dimensions of theory are also considered, exploring how factors such as race, class, and sexuality intersect with gender-based living style and impact the characters' experiences and resistance to patriarchy.

These results can serve as a springboard for further investigation into the ways in which war and conflict impact women and as a spur for changes meant to build a more equitable and inclusive society. Female struggle may result in equality in gender norms.

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*Thank you...*