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The Difference in Perceiving Racism in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

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ABSTRACT. Racism took a different turn in the 16th century, impacting this generation's society. Through racist beliefs and thoughts, people divided society into divisions. This study was based on racism and white people's historical oppression of black people. In this study, we examined two novels that help to analyze racism in society, and the impact of these novels on culture was also addressed. The study described slavery in the 19th century and the colonial times of Nigerian tribes. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* offered an American perspective on racism vs. the African setting of *Things Fall Apart*. During the 19th century, Nigerian people faced colonisation that impacted the culture and behaviour of indigenous people. In this study, different aspects of racism and the effects of racism on black people were examined. This study also showed that the British invasion forced marginalisation in every element of Igbo society, ranging from traditional values to religious and gender roles; this study aims to discuss the differences in the perspective of racism by analyzing *Things Fall Apart* and *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*. These two pieces of literature helped to develop better concepts and aspects of racism in the social setting and highlighted the racism between white and black people.

Keywords: Racism, White People, Black People, Marginalisation, Colonisation, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

1. INTRODUCTION

The study is focused on the concept of racism as described in different novels. Racism refers to discrimination based on culture, language, skin colour, religion, and others (Selvarajah et al., 2022). Many books are written on racism and its implications on society in the nineteenth century. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was written by Mark Twain and published in 1884 .

"Racism is a belief of human beings that divides society into separate divisions and increases dominance and violence in society, impacting human behaviour and lifestyle" (Bullard, 2018, p.123). Society is divided by class, caste, and religion, among other aspects, and some of these elements are viewed as superior and others as inferior. Through social action, political systems, or dominant practices, racism can occur anywhere. Through practising racism, higher-class people oppress lower-class people, and white people oppress black people.

Due to racism, indigenous people and other lower caste people have faced and are currently facing severe challenges in their lifestyles. Racism can increase class struggle in people and increase hurdles for women. "White higher-class people have traditionally thought that they are superior and others are inferior. In this case, higher-class people have power in

their hands and create a dominant society" (Carangio et al., 2021, p.54). White people often mistreat lower-class people and judge them as peccant.

Race was first used in the European language in the 16th century. The racist theory was developed in the 19th century to reduce the impact of oppression from society and increase freedom. The word racism is a recent invention and was first used in the 20th century. "Racism is used to understand oppression, male dominance, class conflicts, caste struggle, skin color issues, and human behavior in society" (Back and Solomos, 2020, p.13)

Twain's novel illustrates the class and caste struggle between two characters, Huck and Jim. Jim is a black man, and people assume he is a killer. This novel portrays the dominance of higher-class people and their treatment of servants. On the other hand, Achebe's novel focuses on the racism of the colonial era. Achebe created the novel to explain his anger regarding colonial racism and its impact on African culture, as it portrays the dominance of the British in Igbo society. Ultimately, Achebe wanted to educate people to improve their culture without adapting others' cultures to their lifestyles. The novel's main character, Okonkwo, is a strong man who fights for his culture and wants to eliminate missionaries.

Racist theory influences people to reduce the oppression from society. In 2004, Benjamin Isaac mentioned the historical development of racism in the community due to people's physical, mental, and occupational differences. In the past, higher-class people did not treat lower-class people as humans. In the 19th century, white people started anti-black and anti-indigenous racism. "This kind of behaviour impacted the lifestyle of lower-class and working-class people, as white people (i.e., consumers) had a relationship with black laborers to exploit them" (Jácome Neto, 2020, p.34).

In the 19th century, Givens and Ison (2022) stated that authors focused on racism and wrote novels to improve the education of lower-class people. During this era, many people died due to racism, and in turn, stories depicted the socio-cultural behavior of people. Slavery was increased in society due to the exemplary conduct of white people. Male dominance increased in the community, and females faced reduced societal freedom. Additionally, some higher-class people exacerbated issues in the life of poor people due to their economic condition and skin color. Oppression by higher-class people increased physical health issues, mental health issues, and family life issues in society.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF RACISM

Historical background of racism

Racism has been one of the most critical issues in society for years. The concept of racism refers to the difference between people based on different cultures, religions, skin colour and others. Before independence, when the British rulers dominated the countries, there was a division between people based on their culture and religion. The historical background of racism is present in this portion of the study. It is identified that in the period of reformation and Renaissance, Europeans started to come to increase contact with people in American Asia and Africa (Nuriddin et al. 2020, p.949). From that time, they judged the people in these countries based on their skin colour, culture and religion. Furthermore, the Europeans used to enslave the Africans officially just because they were black in skin tone and came from a different culture. It can be stated that racism started at that time, and it still exists in society.

According to Trawalter et al. (2020, p. 48), “racism was on the brain of people at the time, and people were used to hating a person who belongs to a different religion and culture”. The existence of racism in society has impacted the economic stability and employment growth of different countries at the time. The fight to diminish racism in society started in the 17th century. In the late 17th century, some laws and regulations were passed in English North America to support marriage between black and white. After that, discrimination because of people's skin colour was also punishable according to the laws in North America. Apart from that, the laws stated that black people wear inferior and unalterably alien, which was enough to support racism in society then. In addition to that, during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a number of writers were committed to the defence of flavoury and discussing racism and that races constituted separate species.

Racism theory is concerned with ²¹ the effects of racism on the race of people in nineteenth-century society. As a result, racism theory focuses on the reasons why one group of people in society tortured another group of people in society. “Thus, the main aspects were, among others, black skin colour, different language, different ethnicity, different nationality, and different culture” (Djemea, 2021, p. 38). Because of these reasons, one group of people used to despise another, and the division between these two groups of people is known as racism. Following independence from colonialism, a large number of people began to live in a different country, and racism began there. When people arrived from various countries with diverse cultures and languages. As a result, the challenge they had to face at the time.

In addition to that, the growth of nationalism has encouraged the enhancement of culture-coded variant racist thought among people. The ideology of racism became extreme in Germany when Hitler became the ruler. It is identified that Hitler and his cohorts attempted and exterminated an ethnic group in the country based on the ideology of racism. As per the point of view of Kirkinis et al. (2021, p.396) “the ideology of racism is based on a composite conglomerate of accent origin, religion, nationality, foreignness and visual features in Europe”. It is identified that there are some specific characteristics of the ideology of racism which define the concept of race in society. Hence the characteristics are skin colour, religion, ethnicity, culture, background and ancestry.

Theoretical review of racism

Using different theories is important in research studies for a better understanding of the topic and analysis of the collected information properly. Two particular theories are recommended in the proposal or discussed in these studies and the theoretical review of racism is presented. The suggested theories are the activist theory of racism and the colonialism theory. The activist theory of racism helps to understand the elements and characteristics of racism as well as different forms of precision impact on social changes. On the other hand, the colonialism theory helps to understand the connection between colonialism and racism. Furthermore, the activist theory of racism is one of the most significant theories that consists of different types of racism and its indicators.

According to the activist theory of racism, there are three types of racism such as cultural racism, individual racism and institutional racism. The concept of cultural racism refers to the discrimination among people based on their different cultures which is the general definition of racism. “It is mentioned while analysing the history of racism that discrimination and division among people faced on their different culture religion and accent is the ideology of racism” (Bowser, 2017, p. 230). Apart from that, individual racism refers to the beliefs of people in their heads about people of different skin colour or religion. Several actions by people justify individual racism which is developed by the environment and senses of people. In addition to that institutional racism refers to the maintenance and production of racial hierarchy in different institutes.

Along with that, the characteristic of institutional racism is the maintenance of racial hierarchy. There has been a great impact of racism on the social structure and it is identified that racism was one of the major social issues in the 19th century. The activist theory of racism has helped researchers to understand the concept of racism and its impact on society

researchers' Different novelists and writers have portrayed there through their writings about racism which also has helped to understand the components of racism.

There are some specific characteristics of colonialism such as legal and political domination, political and economic dependence, cultural and racial in equality, and exploitation of people” (Brown, 2022, p. 235). It can be identified that the characteristics of colonialism indicate the poor condition of society at the time when people had to be dominated by British rulers. Foreigners have dominated social, economic, political and environmental factors for about 200 years and in between that a growth of racism has been identified in society. It can be noticed that racism and cultural discrimination are one of the major characteristics of colonialism. Using the theory of colonialism help the researcher to understand the impact of racism and cultural discrimination also society.

²
Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia, stated until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned ... “until the colour of a man’s skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes; until the basic human rights are guaranteed to all, without regard to race. The African continent will not know peace” (Una.org.uk, 2018, p. 25). According to the specific statement, the major problem is the philosophy of people which holds one race superior and another inferior. It is important to change the perspective and philosophy of people about religion, culture and skin colour and until it does happen nothing will change. Although there are several rules and regulations against racism, it still exists in society .

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In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain depicts the three others in the story as three colonised individuals. The first other is the most obvious: “Jim, who is characterised as the voice of the African American. Twain describes the character of Jim as an intellectual individual even though he is an uneducated slave, using Jim’s voice as a breakthrough of hegemony” (Chifane & Chifane, 2018, p. 189). The clear vision of Jim’s character is portrayed when the doctor asks for help to extract the bullet from Tom’s leg. Jim sacrifices his freedom even though he is a runaway slave to help his friend. By having Uncle Silas and the others treat Jim with some kindness when captured again, Twain praises his actions. Huck addresses Jim’s kindness and intelligence even though he had not expected such behaviour from an African American. Throughout the novel, the struggles and challenges of the African American people are shown from the perspective of Jim.

3. RACISM IN THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Slavery in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

The Adventures of **Huckleberry Finn** is a famous literature novel published in 1885. This story is about a boy who is thirteen years old and named Huck Finn. In this story, Huck is described as leading a harsh life by his alcoholic father .

This story mainly illustrates social obstacles regarding hypocrisy and racism. Khalil & Jahan (2022, p.53) state that “hypocrisy and racism are the basic elements of the British Raj to show social discrimination more powerfully. In addition, a clear contrast also has become identified between what society wants Huck to do and what Huck thinks he should do”. The entire story of this novel contains the impact of racism and loathing toward different people. Apart from Huck, Jim is another character in this novel which is also described as being treated as an object in society. Huck is the only individual who can see the humanity in Jim because of his skin color .

It can be evaluated that there were many dilemmas that the author assessed in the book because Mark Twain utilized satirizing racism that was in the antebellum South and considered it based on the protagonist’s struggle that he was facing against it. It can also be assessed that unsympathetic characters like Pap and Miss Watson can be seen making racist remarks based on the surfaces of color .

Through the character of Jim, Twain has tried to show that the contemporary society of white people is constant by portraying the abuses suffered by Jim. Menaka & Sankar (2018, p.4) opined that “social abuse is a behavior or concept that divides the community and damages the relationship between people. Twain has made the character of Jim with a soft heart and loyalty to show that he is also a human being, not an enslaved person. As the high-class people of that contemporary society believed that only white skin people are allowed to live according to their desires, social discrimination appeared” (Gale, 2022, p.135). They believed black-skin-toned people were born to be considered their words and maintain slavery. Accompanied by the leading relationship between Jim and Huck reveals several questions about the societal system. In this regard, it can be mentioned :

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“Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and a body isn’t got no business doing wrong when he isn’t ignorant and knows better.” (Khalil & Jahan, 2021, p.1),

As observed by Khalil & Jahan (2021, p.1), the conflictual communication between cultured and natural lifestyles is the central theme in the scenario of slavery. Accompanied by the rising questions, Jim and Huck have become knowledgeable about the constantly growing slavery and domination in society for lower-class people. In addition, they also understand that

all morals, beliefs, and societal activities are not ethically correct. In chapter fifteen, Huck plays a trick on Jim by lying to him to prove this factor. Thus, after this incident, Huck felt terrible and wanted to say sorry but influenced by his society, he did not know how to apologize. In this story, Huck remains only concerned regarding his freedom and never shows his scrutiny regarding the ethics of slavery.

Dehumanisation

The concept of “dehumanization” is portrayed through the character of Huck, who elaborates on the influence of the social system. From his perspective, Mark Twain has reflected on the character's cultural undertones. The author uses racism as a leading tool in this novel by portraying it as pointless and silly. As Mastropierro & Conklin (2021, p. 33), “self-realization throughout the real situation has made a loud noise in this story.” Similarly, influenced by the events, Huck eventually burst out one moment as Someone stole my nigger! And it has been identified as a derogatory word. Huck has successfully shown a piece of care towards Jim, and it has been highlighted throughout different situations. It has allowed us to understand better how the people of that time had high levels of racism while also aiding in contemplating the action was making Huck’s perspective of others though he had a sort of care that was observed.

Prejudice

The main prejudice noticed throughout the novel is that black people cannot remain the same as white people. “In this regard, on numerous occasions, Huck comments regarding Jim's inability to understand several worlds’ works because of the impact of racism” (Alguzo, 2020, p: 47). Class division has been shown by addressing several social issues such as religion, child abuse, feuds, and slavery. To raise his voice for lower-class freedom, Twain also focused on religion and superstition to describe the boundaries of society.

Prejudice is one of the most significant social issues, and Twain discusses these social issues in the novel. He was accused just because of his black skin color, which was a prejudice that black people of color were not safe for society. Apart from that, the boy was not getting a sustainable job after graduating with the best five percent marks in his class because of his skin color; this has aided in observing the high level of prejudice the characters were subjected to as they were people of color. It also shows that racism was faced on the surface even though they were innocent.

Moral and intellectual education

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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is one of the most famous novels by Mark Twain in which he discusses different themes such as racism, prejudice, friendship, and others. “It is identified that Huck and Jim are the two main characters of the novel who met during their adventure and became best friends” (Clarke, 2020, p.45). Furthermore, at some point, they separate, but Huck starts to search for Jim instead of continuing his adventure. Hence, the actions of Huck and Jim teach us loyalty and integrity. After that, analyzing a conflictual relationship between a sophisticated lifestyle and a natural lifestyle is the novel's central theme, leading to the readers' moral and intellectual education.

“The novel explores that there are different problems in everyone’s life. There are differences between a sophisticated lifestyle and a natural lifestyle which teaches the struggle between free-thinking and society” (Peters, 2021, p.123). In addition, free thinking is essential for mental peace, and adventure is vital in life for being strong in the academic education from the novel. On the other hand, the behavior of Jim toward Huck teaches the readers about the values of friendship, loyalty, and respect. Hence, these are the primary moral lessons for the readers from the story of the specific novel.

Money only causes problems in every step of the novel. Focusing on the education of Huck, the book fits into the bildungsroman characteristics signifying individual character development. Huck's distrust of society due to being abused by his father builds purposive intent. Hucks disbelieves society, as it has failed to give him sufficient protection against abuse; hence, the correlation and trust in each other are noted through the character depiction. Appreciation of civilization and an increasing partnership with Jim teaches Huck to inquire about several things that he was introduced to previously, especially concerning racism. It can be seen that Huck uses such phrases as 'go-to hell' at times he asks about social rules and regulations.

Huck’s decisions eventually become more reliant on rational thinking than based on the social norm. The perception of society and other teachings evolves in the latter part of the novel, on the raft down the Mississippi River, far away from civilization. Through deep introspection, he concludes the study and remains unaffected by the hypocritical rules of society. Moral values and ideologies are asked at each turn of the novel. The actions and roles of each character are symbolic, having different layers of importance. Overall, ³*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has become a classic novel for changing people’s mindset against racism.

4. CONCLUSION

In the discussion of the results of racial discrimination, it is identified that people were recognized and treated according to their race, religion, colour, language, and culture before independence; the people's divisions were based on their religion or culture (Marchand et al., 2019). Furthermore, Europeans enslaved Africans because of their colors and because they belonged to another country. Racial discrimination still happens in different regions, but there are various ways to treat people. Chika Ana (2022) stated in the study of Green Book that a person, "Don Shirley," is confronting problems because of social rejection and prejudice from others. In the survey, Chika described that racial discrimination makes someone confused and depressed when an individual face that person who encourages the discrimination. It helps to elevate exacerbation in the community as defined in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

The main difference in perceiving racism lies in the differences in the writers' cultural backgrounds since Twain is a white American writer, and Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian black-skinned and Igbo. We have seen how this difference affects the protagonists' choices in the novels. In *The adventures of huckleberry Finn*, the protagonist is white; in *Things fall apart*, the protagonist is black, Igbo; the end of each novel. Twain ends his book by giving us a sense of hope. He ends it positively. Finn finally accepts Jim as human, and they become friends.

Achebe negatively ends his novel. The death of Okonkwo shows a dark or negative end. We can say that Okonkwo couldn't accept the white people because they invaded his country and forced his people to adopt a new culture and religion. So Okonkwo's death symbolizes the death of his own culture. Since Twain's culture is different, we can say that his kind (white people) didn't face racism as Achebe's kind (black people). Each has different perspectives on racism; in Twain's novel, racism is depicted in society. Achebe's novel is about colonized racism which has more effect on people's lives and mental health.

As discussed, the 19th century was a significant era for the people because it had been felt that there was enough racial discrimination and inequality among people. The racial exacerbation was at its peak for decades, and rulers tortured black people because of their colors and religions. In the 19th century, people decided to take action against British rulers and their cruelty. According to Young (2020), in the 19th century, people decided and encouraged their believers to raise their voices for independence. In the 19th century, the United Kingdom and other countries defended their rights and the elimination of racism. Leaders provide thought to the people so everyone can fight for their rights (Nye Jr, 2019).

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