

**SOCIAL INJUSTICES AND EXPLOITATION OF ARABIC WOMEN THAT DEPICT  
GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THREE SELECTED LITERARY WORKS OF THE  
NAWAL EL SAADAWI**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper sought to analyse social injustices and exploitation of Arab women which is one of the problems that have remained constant in the Arabic society. Nawaal El Saadawi narrative accounts of this problem have progressed to accompany social, political and cultural shifts domestically and internationally. The study applied the theory of narrative construction as propounded by (Ricouer, 1984, Labov and Waletzky, 1967). A qualitative research design was adopted in the study. Textual analysis was used as the method of analyzing the selected texts. Purposive sampling was used in selecting these texts, to form the target population of the study. Data was collected through checklists. The findings of the study revealed that social exploitation and injustices are depicted in terms of patriarchy and patriarchal dominance; gender discrimination and gender role; female oppression; sexual harassment, abuse and rape; prostitution and extramarital relations. The study recommends that for a more liberal society that would ensure both genders are treated equally and the political system should come up with reforms that ensure gender equality in the society. It is hoped that the study adds knowledge to the present discourse on Arabic literature, studies on women and gender.

**Keywords:** Social Injustices, Arabic Women, Gender Inequalities, Nawal El Saadawi.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper focused on how social injustices and exploitation of Arabic women depict gender inequalities in three selected literary works of the Nawal El Saadawi. The Arab literary works such as the novel and poems have become a progressively significant platform to discuss social, political and national ideologies ranging from questions of national identity to poverty, urbanization, migration, corruption and gender and sexuality among others. Since, the rising of Arab literature, Arab female writers have taken an advantage to present counter-narratives that emanate from an attempt to level the ground of inequality experienced by women in modern Arab societies. Arabic women writers have become the voices that are speaking about cultural, social, political and economic shifts in the Arab world and elsewhere, especially the West. The issue of social injustices and exploitation of women is one of the problems that have remained constant in the Arabic society. Social injustices are represented within the framework of gendered oppression, sexuality, suppression and violence. This is due to the patriarchal structure that is deeply entrenched in the cultural, social, political and economic apparatuses of the public and the private domains of the Arabic society.

This paper focused on social injustices and exploitation of Arabic women in three selected literary works of Nawal el Saadawi which were *Woman at Point Zero* (1975); *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1977) and *A Daughter of Isis* (1999). Nawal El-Saadawi is an Egyptian writer and physician who was born in rural Egypt on (1931). Nawal El-Saadawi (1931- ) was born into a traditional society ruled by outdated customs and false interpretations of religious scripts, wherein women are born inferior to men. Saadawi's writings are influenced by mother's violation as a woman and her own experience as a girl. Her experience in her Arabic society affected her personal development and her perception of Muslim tradition, Egyptian social conventions and the customs of Arab society at large. Like most of Arabic women writers Saadawi challenges and defy the order of oppression hegemony (Male dominance). Sadaawi through imagination and fiction envisions ways of resistance, hope and emancipation of Arabic woman. For instance, the role of women in Egypt has changed throughout history, from ancient to modern times. Women were considered nearly equal to men in Egyptian society, regardless of marital status (El-Saadawi, 1995). However, in order to limit women's contact with men as tradition, practices such as veiling and gender segregation at schools, work, and recreation have become common. Nawal El Sadaawi also argues that 'the root of oppression of women lies in the global postmodern capitalist system, which is supported by religious fundamentalism'.

Some Arab women writers that share common concerns about Arabic women in their text include Yazbek (2012), Al-Tahawy (1993) and Alawiya Sobh (1955). They both employ methods of subversion of the dominant patriarchal narratives to forge their own counter narratives and bring change to their lived experiences. The three authors use the novel as a literary genre resembling everyday life and speech and from narrative conceived as a construction or build up. In their novels they show how Arabic women are struggling with oppression. It is against this background that the current study was set to explore social injustices and exploitation of Arabic women in the in three selected literary works of Nawal El Saadawi. The study aimed to show the ways in which Saadawi talk's about social injustices and exploitation of Arabic Women and the ways in which she brings out subversion of these relations through her selected literary works. The study contributes to the present discourse within Arabic society in the wake of the Arab Spring and Arabic literature. This was done by focusing on Nawal El Saadawi literary work that depicts a connection between religion, politics and sexual exploitation.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the theory of narrative construction as propounded by (Labov and Waletzky, 1967 and Ricouer, 1984). The study applied this theory because Nawaal's El Saadawi literary text are inform of narrative comprehension of her own childhood to adulthood human experiences. The theory is about the narrative construction of reality. The theory emphasizes on analysis of the relation between language and reality. That is, how language is used as an expression of realities. The theory emphasizes how human subjects construct their social realities. Some of the key tenets of theory of narrative construction include: narrative diachronicity and particularity.

The first tenet is on narrative diachronicity. The view emphasizes that a narrative is an account of events occurring over time. It is irreducibly durative. It may be characterizable in seemingly nontemporal terms (as a tragedy or a farce), but such terms only summarize what are quintessentially patterns of events occurring over time. The time in this sense is abstract. Language is used in representations of narratives. Some of important aspects that are important aspects of narrative representation and sequenced durability include: flashbacks and flash-forwards, temporal synecdoche, and so on. Narrative comprises an ensemble of ways of constructing and representing the sequential, diachronic order of human events, of which the sequencing of clauses in spoken or written "stories" is only one device." The tenet of narrative diachronicity was applied in the analysis of how Nawaal El Saadawii represents the events of social injustices and exploitation of Arabic women through her own experiences.

The second tenet of narrative constructive theory is particularity. This is the view that narratives take as their ostensive reference particular happenings. Particularity achieves its emblematic status by its embeddedness in a story that is in some sense generic. That is, in a given story its suggestiveness lies in emblematic nature of particulars and its relevance to a more inclusive narrative type. This tenet was applied in the analysis of different social injustices and exploitation of women in the selected text of Nawaals El Saadawi. The researchers explored how Nawaal El Sadaawi accounts for the problems that Arabic women face through the accounts that constitute a narrative and a putative story that contains them. The study applied the narrative constructive theory to explore social injustices and exploitation of the Arabic women in Naawals El Saadawi's texts as dominant metanarratives that are elaborated inside specific structures of powers.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative procedures adopt an interpretive approach to data and help to explore any issue in depth (Cresswell, 2012). Qualitative research also involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realities, studied through sustained contact with people in their natural environments, generating rich, descriptive data that helps us to understand their experiences and attitudes. Therefore, this approach is appropriate for interpreting social injustices and exploitation of Arab woman in three selected literary works of Nawal El Saadawi.

Purpose sampling was used to select excerpts on the issues of social injustices and exploitation of an Arabic woman from *Woman at Point Zero* (1975); *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1977) and *A Daughter of Isis* (1999). The study used both primary and secondary sources. Primary ones were Nawal El Sadaawi three selected texts, published thesis, scholarly journals, articles, manuscripts and archives. While the secondary sources consisted of: news reports, internet, encyclopedia, dissertations, and biographies, among others. Textual analysis was used to analyze shared themes among the three selected texts among the social injustices were gender violence and oppression.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on key indicators of social injustices and exploitation of Arab woman that depict gender inequalities in three selected literary works of the Nawal El Saadawi. The specific texts that the study focused on is *Woman at Point Zero* (1975); *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world* (1977) and *A Daughter of Isis* (1999). The textual analysis carried out

indicates that El-Saadawi literary texts take a feminist orientation by critically representing sensitive aspects of man-woman relation and on the status of Arab Muslim women.

#### **4.1. Social injustices and exploitation of the Arab woman in ‘*Woman at point zero*’**

This section analyses the social injustices and exploitation of Arab woman in ‘*Woman at point zero*’ that depict gender inequalities in terms of Patriarchy and patriarchal dominance and Gender discrimination and gender role.

##### **4.1.1. Patriarchy and patriarchal dominance in ‘*Woman at point zero*’**

The theme of patriarchy and patriarchal dominance reveal gender inequalities in the three selected texts. In ‘*Woman at point zero*’ the theme of patriarchy and patriarchal dominance can easily be traced in her father’s preference of himself to his children. This is clearly shown through flashback by Firdaus in the extract below:

*“In winter my father used to shift my straw mat and my pillow to the small room facing north, and occupy my corner in the oven room.” (p.17)*

The extract above clearly shows Firdaus father’s dominance through at family level. This is further illustrated in provision of the basic needs of the family. Firdaus recalls that when there is very little food in the house, the father eats and the rest of the family keeps watching. Firdaus, father was a lying, greedy man who beat his wife and took food from the mouths of his children.

Moreover, Firdaus’s father uses his patriarchal power to exploit his family members in doing unpaid work. This shows that being the father of the family entitles him to have all the advantages of patriarchy. He dominates all the other members, who fear his power.

Fear is a theme that has been used to advance the subject of patriarchy and patriarchal dominance. In the novel, fear is experienced by women. Firdaus points out how fearful female company employees are of losing their job because they fear becoming prostitutes. Firdaus in her narration clearly points out how women were afraid of men, their power, and their ability to hurt. Firdaus as a woman and wife experienced humiliation through rape and abuse which pushes her to become a prostitute. Firdaus ironically explains that the life of a prostitute is better than a “moral” woman’s life. Moreover, by killing Marzouk through a stab, Firdaus realizes that she also kills her fear as shown in the extract below:

*‘She fears nothing, and, therefore, she is finally free’.*

Thus, the moment Firdaus stabs Marzouk is also significant because for the first time, Firdaus sees fear in a man’s eyes. This fear is also mirrored in the eyes of the prince she meets after she kills Marzouk. The theme of fear in women clearly shows how women in the society lived under the mercies of men. Patriarchy and patriarchal dominance is also shown through oppression. Oppression and social injustices is shown when the male of a certain family uses the power entitled to him by patriarchy to be unjust and an oppressor. The male characters in the novel clearly depict dominance and power. For instance, Firdaus uncle uses her childhood innocence to satisfy his sexual desires as shown in the extract below:

*“my uncle’s hand moving slowly from behind the book he was reading to touch my leg. The next moment I could feel it travelling up my thigh with a cautious, stealthy, trembling movement”.* (p. 14)

The above extract clearly shows sexual harassment from male relatives who are supposedly guardians to the young girls. As much as Firdaus uncle empowers her with the reading skills that help her get an insight into the world; he uses her instead of guarding her against any type of exploitation. Moreover, we see Firdaus uncle forcing her to marry an old ugly miserly widower (Sheikh Mahmoud), a man 40 years older than she. This was to happen against Firdaus will since she runs away, but she gets frightened being in the streets alone and returns to her uncle’s house the same day. Shortly after this, she is married to Sheikh Mahmoud.

The street life is another area that shows patriarchy and patriarchal dominance. While living the street life, Firdaus meets a man named Bayoumi, who owns a coffee shop. Bayoumi at first appeared as a kind and a calm man since he offered accommodation to Firdaus and even promised to offer her with a job. However, this was a lie and when Firdaus tries to live Bayoumi rapes her and sells her body to his friends. Rape in this text reveals social injustices and oppression on women. Women have been depicted as powerless and weak throughout the text.

Marzouk is another man who shows the theme patriarchy and patriarchal dominance. Firdaus while at the firm falls in love with a coworker named Ibrahim who promises he loves her too, but he was only after having sex with her. Firdaus discovers this when Ibrahim gets engaged to the chairman’s daughter. The engagement of Ibrahim leaves her heartbroken that she concludes that all men are liars and users and she returned to prostitution, now a hardened businesswoman, and becomes extremely successful. This is where she meets Marzouk, a powerful and dangerous pimp. Oppression is depicted when Marzouk forces Firdaus into making him her pimp and takes most of her earnings. Moreover, Marzouk also rapes and beats her. He portrays patriarchy when he takes Firdaus greatest share of income as a prostitute under the pretense of protecting her.

It is clear that in the novel *‘Woman at point zero’* men have been depicted as practicing patriarchy and patriarchal dominance. Some of the men analyzed in the text include Firdaus father, Firdaus uncle, Firdaus husband (Sheik Mahmoud), Bayoumi and Marzouk. All this men have been depicted as being mean and violent as they use power to intimidate women.

#### **4.1.2 Gender discrimination and gender role in *‘Woman at point zero’***

Gender discrimination and gender role is another theme that depicts gender inequalities in *‘Woman at point zero’*. In many instances the novel shows women working for free. For instance, Firdaus and her mother work for free. By the virtue of them being women they do a heavy load of work and prevent them from experiencing the sense of freedom offered only to the patriarchal power. In terms of gender roles Firdaus father makes her work hard for nothing in return to the extent that she sometimes sleeps without having any food even when she was still a child. Firdaus uncle on the other hand uses her for the sexual pleasure, serving and for doing all the household work with himself; a matter that destroys her physically and psychologically. Firdaus, while working as a prostitute, is forced to give up a big share of her earnings to Marzouk just because she is a woman, who has no right to be free in the patriarchal society. Gender discrimination is also shown at place of work where even decent women were



forced into sex for pay rises. The experience of Firdaus with Bayoumi also show gender discrimination and gender roles where Bayoumi uses her as an unpaid house maid, enslaves her for his sexual pleasure and finally allows his friends to use her too.

#### 4.1.3 Oppression in ‘*Woman at point zero*’

Oppression seems to be the repercussion of all the themes in ‘*Woman at point zero*’. In the text, Firdaus faced all kinds of social injustice and oppression throughout her life which pushes her to commit murder and be prosecuted to death. Through oppression Firdaus uncle forces her to a bad marriage in order to gain money for himself; a matter that destroys her physically and psychologically. This is clearly shown when she keeps on escaping from the abuse of her old ugly, miser husband, who severely beats her, leaving marks of humiliation and shame on her face.

Women are looked at as sex objects. While at Bayoumi house Firdaus at one point finds his friend of him on top of her. Firdaus insisted that he was not Bayoumi and the man replied as in the extract below:

*“What difference does it make? Bayoumi and I are one.” (p. 50)*

The above reply clearly shows men think they have a right to sex and hence they can exploit women the way they want. This is also shown when Firdaus falls in love with Ibrahim who lies to her that she is in love with her while the fact is she was only after using her for free sexual pleasure. Firdaus life is surrounded with injustices and oppression from the men she meets incidence after the other. Even after selling her body she is not paid for it. Worse still, sexual harassment, abuse, and rape are present all the time in her life right from Firdaus uncle; Firdaus husband (Sheik Mahmoud) Bayoumi, Bayoumi’s friends and Marzouk. Her sexual oppression started with her uncle and continued through her bad husband, who forces her to do sex. Sexual abuse has been done through Bayoumi, Marzuk, Ibrahim, and every man she encounters in the streets, including the policeman.

The text also shows that women are used for men’s pleasure unpaid when getting married or paid when working as prostitute. This incidence makes Firdaus to move back to prostitution after she had quit after Di'aa who was initially one of her sex clients and a journalist who made her realize she needed to respect herself. The society has actually turned good women into prostitutes and views life from a materialistic point of view. For instance, when pushed to the limits Firdaus prefer prostitution to a life where you lack freedom. And moreover she gets surprised at how women were exploited by their bosses for a mere pay rise at the company where she had secured a job. Firdaus, thus concludes that she would rather be a prostitute and get paid some money which could give her some value.

Firdaus preference of prostitution demonstrates a case where women are reduced to their body as shown in the theory of patriarchy. Such a society where patriarchy dominates gives men the power to practice patriarchy through sex, humiliation and use of women’s bodies for sexual desires. As it is clearly shown Firdaus seems to be searching for self-worth especially when she meets Shariffa at the Nile who points out Firdaus failed to value herself highly enough and allowed men to determine her value (Saadawi 77).

#### **4.2 Social injustices and exploitation of the Arab woman in “*The hidden face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*”**

The textual analysis of “*The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*” shows the circumstances that led to violently unjust situation by examining historical roles of Arab women in religion and literature. The data analyzed reveal instance of injustices--such as clitoridectomy, gender discrimination, and lack of human rights.

##### **4.2.1 Female Oppression in *The hidden face of Eve, Women in the Arab world***

A textual analysis of ‘*The hidden face of EVE, Women in the Arab world*’ clearly shows the oppression of women in the Muslim world. El Saadawi through literary styles shows how violence and injustice have permeated her society. The text reflects incidences of all the horrors that Arab woman undergo including the most heinous ones, without yielding to the usual patriarchal arguments seeking to justify such atrocities. The plot of the book reveals pain and suffering that Islamic woman go through.

‘*The hidden face of Eve, Women in the Arab world*’ is divided into four major sections: The Mutilated Half, Women in History, The Arab Woman, and Breaking Through. The textual analysis of “The Mutilated Half” is a personal account of growing up into womanhood in the Islamic world. The author vividly ranges over a host of topics, from sexual aggression against female children and the circumcision of young girls, to prostitution, sexual relationships, marriage and divorce. First, “The Mutilated Half,” clearly shows oppression against female children and El Saadawi sites her own case of circumcision, and the development. “The Mutilated Half” is an account of a six-year-old girl who underwent clitoridectomy (also known as women circumcision). This custom was believed to be a mechanism that would tame uncontrollable sexual passion among women. El Saadawi through vivid description clearly shows how horrific and painful the process of clitoridectomy is.

‘*The Mutilated Half*’ is the most striking and shocking account that reveal aggression against the Arab woman. The text describes sexual definition of women in Muslim countries and prejudices based on gender. The author gives description of feelings of a young girl which was subjected to clitoridectomy. El sadaawi has shown female oppression through female circumcision that shows lack of rights and helplessness of women in Egypt. Moreover, the text clearly reveal that the process of clitoridectomy takes place in the presence of the girl’s mother and strangers as shown below:

*“right in the midst of these strangers, talking to them and smiling at them, as though they had not participated in slaughtering her daughter just a few moments ago” (p.14).*

The extract shows how deeply women in Egypt are affected by these prejudices. Female circumcision is taken as a usual practice as women do not resist. The custom of clitoridectomy is also meant to make women passive and subjective by conforming to the norms of the society around them. The following extract shows the role of clitoridectomy in the society:

*Once a woman’s clitoris is removed, she “will have a bright and happy face, and is more welcome to her husband, if her pleasure is complete” (p. 81).*

The above extract clearly shows that female circumcision prepares a woman for her husband and the pain she undergoes during the surgery does not matter at all or her desires are not a priority. The text clearly shows that the clitoridectomy process is a lifetime trauma that is widespread in Egypt among educated and uneducated families. El Sadaawi explains that the tragedy of women in Arab world is that they are born “of a special sex, the female sex” (Saadawi, 2007, p.15). Women are not able to resist horrible traditions which exist as they do not have the needed moral qualities. Women have been raised with the idea of dominant character of men, thus they could not even think about disobedience.

The text shows that the problem of gender discrimination in Arab world is not due to lack of education of people and their restriction but adherence to customs. In the text, El Sadaawi explains that her parents had good background of education:

*“fortunate enough to have very good education by the standards of those days” (El Saadawi (2007).*

The above extract clearly shows education could not stop the society from following all rules which were accepted hundreds years ago by their uneducated ancestors.

“Women in History” and “The Arab Woman” clearly show female oppression as depicted by the roles that women in the society. El sadaawi makes reference to the ancient Middle Eastern culture. The major roles given to women as depicted in the text are women as goddesses, women as matriarchs, and women as political leaders. For instance, while accounting the role of women in Arab history. Eve is represented as the first goddess of knowledge and later she was succeeded by the pharaonic Isis—the author discusses the role of women in Arab history. The data above clearly shows that in ancient times women were treated fairly, and they occupied positions on merit, just as their male counterparts before patriarchy took over and changed how society defined women. For instance, Eve has been presented as goddesses which are a high prestigious position in the society as shown in the extract below:

*“positions occupied by some goddesses were symbolic of the relatively higher prestige enjoyed by women in Arab tribal society, and a reflection of the vestiges of matriarchal society that still lived on and were prominent in some of the tribes” (El Saadawi, 2015, p. 259).*

The text also highlights deficiencies of the patriarchal family. Throughout the text El Saadawi observes that the patriarchal system is built on exploitation of cheap, free, or slave labor especially as performed by the Arabic women. This was a phenomenon that occurred due to the systemic socio-economic conditions set deliberately that were meant to silence women. For instance, the extract below shows how women lost independence in spite their efforts to fight for their rights. The extract below further shows women’s effort to exist in a patriarchal system as purported by El Saadawi:

*“It was mostly a losing battle, ending in the complete predominance of the patriarchal system” (p. 263)*



The extract above shows that women have made efforts to fight against the oppressive system. El Sadaawi clearly shows that the exploitative and private system is the main contributors to the decline of women's social status in the Arab world. El Sadaawi in "*The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*" critically asserts a class perspective on women in patriarchal societies. The text has clearly depicted the oppression of women, the exploitation and social pressures to which women are exposed to. However, Sadaawi is quick to point out that these problems are not characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or countries of the 'Third World' alone.

El Sadaawi also shows female oppression through lack of human rights. The book highlights how women were deprived of rights and they had to be in the shade of their husbands, very often not being allowed even to speak without permission. Women have been forced by women into cheap labor. The writer vividly shows the state of the woman in the world but even worse in Arab countries. Women have been depicted as having very few rights which are unfortunately connected with the peculiarities of religion and culture. The writer gives hope about women in the society when the society changed but unfortunately as much as the era of tolerance and humanism, the modern age did not bring much relief to the woman.

#### **4.3 Social injustices and exploitation of the Arab woman in 'Daughter of Isis'**

The social injustices in '*A Daughter of Isis*' have been represented in form of an autobiography. First, El Sadaawi introduces us to her young life. El Saadawi through vivid description sensuously presents the trauma she went through as a woman in her childhood since she was a woman. The trauma of female genital mutilation at six years old is vividly presented and the grasping of suitors at age 10. She explains how at age 6 she went through female circumcision as shown below:

*'When I was six, the daya (midwife) came along holding a razor in her hands, pulled out my clitoris from between my thighs, and cut it off. She said it was the will of God and she had done his will'*

El Sadaawi recounts the issue of female circumcision in a very sad tone. In the same novel towards the end she talks of her circumcision again fifty six years later. The author vividly remembers this ordeal that happened in 1937, where at the age of six her clitoris was cut off as painfully described in the extract above. El Sadaawi narration clearly shows this was a deep wound in her body that has never healed. It is no wonder in her fight against injustices imposed to women El Saadawi does not provide and understand the justification of her circumcision. Consequently, El Sadaawi develops a weapon to fight against the injustices that an Arab woman suffered in the society. The autobiography had the role of supporting El sadaawi arguments as shown in the extract below:

*"Throughout the years of my life I wrote trying in vain to abolish the distance between the image and the original for letters, words on paper, are not the body, can never be the body with which I live."*

El sadaawi in her autobiography has basically focused on sexual discrimination and how the society perceives women in the society and in Arabic world. The writer has clearly shown that the Muslim religion is not bad but some barbaric cultures were imposed on women hence exposing them to social injustices. El Sadaawi uses her own mother in the text to represent women. El Sadaawi expresses her deep love for her mother Zaynab. She fondly remembers her mother as a caring and loving person. She also narrates what it was like to be a good wife to your husband using her own mother. She explains that her mother taught her how to read and write and rescued her when she was 10 from an arranged early marriage.

Gender discrimination is also explained in the text. This is a society that valued boys than girls. El Sadaawi explains that growing up in a typical traditional Egyptian family, she experienced gender discrimination. The author narrates that the boys were at liberty to do whatever they pleased and that they had more freedom than the girls. El Sadaawi expresses that she could not understand why boys were permitted to do some things yet girls were not allowed to do the same as shown in the extract below where she tried to uncover her belly:

*“I used to pull down the starps from my shoulders, uncover my chest and my belly, but aunt Ni’mat would raise her hand and slap me. Her sharp voice pierced my ear. ‘Shame on you’ I would point to my brother and say ‘Why him?’. And back would come the answer. He is a boy and you are a girl’. This voice bored repeatedly to my ears from the day I was born. My mouth swallowed it with the seas water and I choked. He is a boy and you are a girl’. I could feel the tang of salt burn my throat. It was bitterness as though the blue of the sea had turned into crystals of pure salt, as though the sun was burning my skin. All the colors, the blue, the green, the golden, turned grey or black’.*

The extract below clearly shows the anger that El Sadaawi grew up with. She clearly does not understand why her brother would walk with a bare chest while she was told to hide hers. She argues that she was younger than her brother, her chest was flat like her brother’s yet she was told hers was a stigma and a shame that ought to be hidden from people’s eyes. This made the author so resentful with anger and it irritated her but she had to learn to live with it.

In this vain, in her autobiography El Saadawi takes time to explain the importance of education and schooling of both boys and girls. The narration is vividly done when she affirms her role as al rawi (the story teller). She narrates that in order to attend secondary school; she lived with relatives in what she came to view as “The House of Desolation.” Through flashback she recounts her life by naming several household members as characters appearing in her fiction such as her paternal grandmother and Sittil Hajja.

The writer show the plight of women when she fuses the pain she went through as a woman with humor as shown in the extract below:

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*“When I was six years old I learnt these three words by heart and they were like one sentence: ‘God, calamity, marriage.*

The extract below though humorous clearly shows how hard it was for Egyptian and Arab women to grow in the society. First, the issue of being married off was horrific as described by El Sadaawi. She recounts that:

*In order to discourage suitors, I had to discolour my teeth with eggplant and upsetting a tray of coffee.*

The above extract illustrates the resourceful determination of a child facing spinsterhood at age 11. El Sadaawi had to develop her own means to rebel and fight against this society that was forcing young girls into marriage. El Saadawi is grateful to her mother for not forcing her into marriage which was a great inspiration to her. She also appreciates her both parents for encouraging her in the arts and literature as shown below:

*‘starred as Isis in a play, enjoyed sports, and dreamed of owning a piano which, many years later, which I was able to buy my daughter.’*

El Sadaawi through narration show how women were treated as objects and that their main gender role was to give birth to children. This, she clearly shows when she talks about her family. She narrates about growing up with relatives from both her maternal and paternal side. She narrates that she had eight siblings and that her mother was married off while young and gave birth her first child at fourteen (El Sadaawi’s brother). She explains further:

*‘By the time my mother was twenty four; she was carrying her sixth child’*

The Narration on El Sadaawi’s mother clearly shows how girls in this society start families at a very tender age. One assumes that a fourteen year girl is a teenager who should be in school rather than raising children. Thus, the text clearly demonstrates social injustices to girls and more over they are married off to old men.

It is therefore clear that girls were denied a right to education by being married of at tender age. El Sadaawis shows the pros and cons of being married while a teenager. She narrates about her maternal grandmother (Amna) in chapter four. She presents her as a devout Muslim, as a woman, who was very religious and always had her prayer beads. However, like all women, Amna was married off at a tender age and the repercussion of early marriage was reflected on her body as shown in the extract below:

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*'My grandmother Amna was forty four but looked seventy, with her shrunken body, her wrinkled complexion drained of all its blood'.*

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper investigated a representation of social injustices and exploitation of Arab woman in three selected literary works of El Sadaawi. The study attempted to show how social injustices and exploitation of Arabic women depict gender inequalities in three selected literary works of the Nawal El Saadawi. The study revealed a society that deeply rooted in patriarchy and patriarchal society. All the literary texts under the study revealed Arab women live in a patriarchal institution in marriage and family life. The novels presents Arab Muslim woman as a passive powerless creature, but also introduces her to western concepts that can liberate her. The study has revealed gender inequality as advanced through the theme of gender discrimination and gender role; social injustice and oppression; sexual harassment, abuse and rape; prostitution; extramarital relations; and intellectual freedom as shown in *Woman at Point Zero (1975)*; *The Hidden Face of Eve (1977)* and *A Daughter of Isis (1999)*. The overall observation is that misinterpretation of religion beliefs and a patriarchy system are the key causes of female oppression in Arabic world. The study concludes that women could be empowered from an oppressive society through education, power, unity and women liberation movements.

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