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Muslim English Literature



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The Dark Sides of Immigrants in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*

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Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of immigration on immigrants, especially Muslim women or Muslimah, by engaging with a postcolonial study working within the framework of gender and immigration and using a close textual analysis. The researchers use a qualitative research method to reveal the reasons Moroccan women decide to illegally immigrate to Spain in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005), investigated to reveal what it means to be Muslimah immigrants crossing the Moroccan sea to live in Spain. The data collected is in the form of quotes, narratives, and discourse from the primary text and the secondary sources. The storyline of this novel revolves around unlawful (illegal) immigrants from Morocco to Spain. This novel is about the struggles of four Moroccan immigrants who have no place and space to live either in their homeland or in the host land. In this study, the theme of 'immigrant Muslimah' leads researchers to the conclusion that the novel uses the dark sides of being immigrants who have the desire to reject white officers and politicians who tend to blame immigrant Muslimah as a problem instead of the victim of global transitional capitalism and 'patriarchism'.

Keywords: *Gender and Immigration, Moroccan Immigrants, Muslimah Immigrants, Post-colonialism Study.*

Introduction

Immigration occurs when a citizen moves across or within the state and has an intention of staying for a long period of time. In other words, these individuals (immigrants) are translocating to another place from their origin. Immigration happens in a large-scale movement of people who have the same intention to live or even change citizenship to the chosen country. According to Kahar, the large number of migrations that occur are primarily due to natural disasters, prolonged conflicts and wars, and poverty. Parreño-Castellano et al., (2021) stated that the start of the economic crisis caused a change in the cycle, affecting both potential immigrant and settled migrant populations. In addition, immigration is also one of the impacts of colonization. Colonial boundaries led to the establishment of territorial entities within which individuals were classified to belong (Abuya, 2021). Abuya added that along with movement restrictions inside certain



zones, racial and ethnic identities began to emerge. In immigration, there are two types of immigrants: legal and illegal immigrants. The legal immigrants who come with documents and permits from the authorities to live in the country and have the required documents can easily settle in a country. Therefore, legal immigrants, or authorized immigrants, have wider access to be able to work in the country they have intended to. Compared to those who lack official documents, these immigrants do indeed have a better quality of life (Massey, 1987). On the other hand, illegal immigrants are individuals who are undocumented. Illegal immigration occurs when migrants do not register legally. They usually carry out the immigration process in a rather extreme way. Thus, illegal immigrants are often found to have lower rates of jobs.

Manalu (2021) stated that, based on general immigration provisions, each country has the authority to allow or prohibit someone from entering or leaving a country. Thus, according to Indra as quoted by Syahrin (2018), immigrants should have the same ideology as the country. Besides, the purpose of their activities should also be clear, and they have to give benefits to society. Thus, individuals who do not register with the authorities in a country will be a big problem. International migration that results from conflict in the country of origin and causes people to move to a safer location is a global issue that contributes to the problem of illegal immigration (Nugroho, 2019). Immigration activities are often a problem that is quite complicated in many countries which also become the main conflict in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* written by Laila Lalami whose setting is in Spain, a country on the European continent which has relatively high immigration. By the end of 1994, immigrants made up just over one percent of the population in Spain. This transformed Spain from a country of emigration to a country of immigration (Petmesidou & Papatheodorou, 2006). Most of the immigrants who settled in Spain came from North Africa, and since 1985, illegal immigrants in Spain have become an unresolved problem (Rahim & Rani, 2010). For example, people from Morocco, a country from the North African continent, often become illegal immigrants in Spain. Located close to Spain and seeing so many opportunities to live a better life, two Moroccan women characters are willing to cross the sea to fulfill their hopes and desires.

Through the immigration conflict, Lalami poured the Moroccan's dream into the characters from each chapter and through the character's perspective and fate toward immigratory life. In the novel, the two women characters carry out illegal immigration to get a better life, and thus economic problems are the main cause of illegal immigration.

"But isn't there some way to get a visa?" Halima asked. Hanan shrugged. "You have to have a full-time job, a bank account, a ticket, a place to stay—it's complicated." "There must be some other way," Halima said. "You mean, go illegally?" Halima shrugged—She had to do something for her future today. (*Hope and other dangerous pursuits*, 44).

On the dialog above, Halima—one of the women who has done illegal immigration—asked her friend to get a visa, but she was denied because she did not have enough money or a proper life. Because of the limitation, she was determined to carry out illegal immigration. Being undocumented in someone's country must have been followed with risks and dangers. Illegal immigrants cannot live comfortably for fear that their real



identity will be revealed. Illegal immigrants cannot just wander around in the country they live in because, if they are found by the authorities, it is either they are allowed to stay for a while or deported back to their country. The illegality of the citizen is always related to the lives of those who can be categorized as 'poor.'

Schrover et al. (2008) stated that this is because when they become unauthorized citizens, they avoid dealing with the authorities as much as possible by maintaining a very simple life, low exposure, and accepting low incomes and inadequate types of work. In the end, illegal immigrants who do not have sufficient documents have limitations in their activities and work. Due to limited opportunities to work, they are unable to work legally, such as the case with Faten, one of the characters in the novel. Faten, who was getting tragic harassment since she arrived at the border, became a woman who satisfies the lust of men to earn money and live the life she wanted in Spain.

In this novel, immigration can be seen as a metaphorical word. The characters have different hopes and desires to be able to live a more decent life in a place that has great expectations. They are determined to undertake a dangerous journey to reach their goal. As in the immigration process, the characters have one goal: to get to the Spanish border. Furthermore, they continue their journey again when the immigrants can survive the border. That is the journey of life, in which, in the end, they have to experience various bad events. Lalami takes a challenge to show the audience through various complicated events.

This study focuses on discussing the impact of immigration on immigrants, especially women, by using a qualitative method with a postcolonial study approach and working within the framework of gender and immigration. Therefore, the researchers examined several questions. First, how is the relationship between Morocco and Spain, which is the setting in this novel. Second, what are the factors that push the characters in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous* to migrate illegally. Third, why are women always used as objects of sexual harassment in the world of immigration.

Method

The method employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing a literature review approach to explore the impact of immigration on women, particularly within the framework of gender and immigration. This approach is informed by the works of theorists such as Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose concepts on gender performativity and subalternity, respectively, provide a robust analytical lens for this study.

Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong 2000) define qualitative methodology as a research procedure aimed at producing descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observable people and actions within a society. This approach emphasizes a holistic understanding of the background and individuals involved. According to Creswell (in Raco 2010:7), a qualitative research method is an approach used to investigate and understand central phenomena. The literature review process involves a thorough examination of previous studies and relevant literature to gather comprehensive information on the subject matter.

This study operates within the gender and immigration framework, focusing on how gender dynamics intersect with immigration experiences as portrayed in Laila Lalami's *"Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits."* Judith Butler's concept of gender



performativity is utilized to analyze how gender roles and identities are constructed and performed in the context of immigration. Butler argues that gender is not an inherent identity but rather a set of repeated actions and performances shaped by societal norms (Butler, 1990).

In addition, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the subaltern is employed to understand the marginalization of immigrant women. Spivak's theory highlights the ways in which marginalized groups, particularly women, are silenced and excluded from dominant discourses (Spivak, 1988).

Two relevant articles that support the methodology of this research. First, "Gender and Migration: Feminist Interventions" by Eleonore Kofman, et al. This article discusses the intersection of gender and migration, emphasizing the importance of feminist perspectives in understanding the unique experiences of migrant women. It supports the use of gender theory in migration studies (Kofman et al., 2000). Second, "The Impact of Migration on Gender Roles and Relations: A Comparative Approach" by Mirjana Morokvašić. This article explores how migration affects gender roles and relations, providing a comparative analysis that is relevant to understanding the dynamics presented in Lalami's novel (Morokvašić, 1984).

Data for this study is collected from various sources, including direct quotes, sentences, and discourses from Lalami's novel, as well as relevant literature and previous research. This data is analyzed to uncover the underlying reasons why Moroccan women decide to emigrate illegally to Spain and the specific challenges they face. The focus is on the nuanced experiences of female characters in the novel, which reflect broader issues of gender and immigration. The qualitative research method, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Butler and Spivak, provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the intersection of gender and immigration. This study aims to reveal the complexities and challenges faced by immigrant women, as depicted in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, and contribute to the broader discourse on gender and migration studies.

Results and Discussions

Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits by Laila Lalami is a novel about four Moroccan illegal immigrant characters named Murad, Aziz, Faten, and Halima. The four characters in this novel decide to take a perilous journey to find a better life in Spain. The characters embark on a journey that has little chance of survival, armed with desires and pressure from various sides. Each character has their own reasoning for why illegal immigration is wrong and dangerous. The activity of migrating to one country without legal documentation led to several wrong decisions and actions. The researchers focused on the disadvantages the four characters have been through without legal citizenship. Furthermore, illegal immigration is usually tied to conflicts and problems between two or more countries. Immigration has always been a hot and distinctive topic to address. This novel is set in two countries that are likely two different universes: Morocco and Spain.

Historical Relations between Morocco and Spain



Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is set in two countries: Morocco and Spain. The plot of this story revolves around unlawful (illegal) immigrants from Morocco to Spain. The historical relationship between the two countries is particularly intriguing and crucial to analyze because the two countries play a vital role in Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. Morocco is an African country that was colonized by France and Spain (Alfiani, 2017). The country has an area of 446,300 square kilometers. Islam is the majority religion in Morocco because around 90 percent of the country's total population are Muslims. The total population of the country is 29.9 million people. Morocco is a country that has a very long coastline, namely from the Straits of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea, Ceuta and Melilla, as well as Western Sahara and Mauritania in the South (Pasaribu, 2015).

Morocco is also often referred to as the Maghreb because it is the westernmost region of the North African countries. In the past, the Maghreb region covered the northern African region, which is now the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya (Ahmad, 2022). Morocco has played a big role in the history of spreading Islam in North Africa and as the gateway for Islam to Spain and Europe. In 710 AD, Musa bin Nusair, the Governor of North Africa, oversaw the process of bringing Islam to Europe during the Umayyad era. He sent his confidant named Tharif to the southernmost islands of the European continent. The peninsula that Tharif explored is called Tarifa, which is now the name of a city in Spain. The city is one of the settings in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* by Laila Lalami.

"Murad can make out the town where they're headed. Tarifa. The mainland points to the Moorish invasion in 711. Murad used to regale tourists with anecdotes about how Tariq Ibn Ziyad had led a powerful Moor army across the Straits and, upon landing in Gibraltar, ordered all the boats burned. He'd told his soldiers that they could march forth and defeat the enemy or turn back and die a coward's death. The men had followed their general, toppled the Visigoths, and established an empire that ruled over Spain for more than seven hundred years." (*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, 5)

In the dialog above, Laila Lalami uses the figure of speech of allusion by linking the plot in her novel to well-known historical events. Murad said that the Moors had expanded into Spain in 711 A.D, led by Tariq bin Ziyad. Moors is a term that refers to Muslim people who come from Morocco (DetikNews, 2014). Tariq bin Ziyad was not an Arab but came from a Barbarian tribe that lived in Morocco (Mustikawati, 2015). The Romans gave the moniker "barbarian" to people who lived outside of their borders, such as those on the African coast. When the Umayyads conquered Africa, Tariq bin Ziyad's tribe was among the Barbarian tribes that converted to Islam (Rizqa, 2021). Tariq landed near a large mountain that later became known as Jabal Tariq (Gibraltar). After landing at Gibraltar, Thariq ordered the burning of their boats to ensure that their troops had only one option: go ahead and win or die (Hijazi, 2015). The Moors successfully conquered the Visigoths, establishing a rule that lasted for more than seven centuries in Spain (Al-Andalus). Moorish leadership in Spain contributed to leaving a rich cultural heritage in architecture, art, science, and technology (Hughes, 2023). This historical connection has left strong cultural and historical ties between Morocco and Spain.



"Only instead of a fleet, here we are in an inflatable boat—not just Moors, but a motley mix of people from the ex-colonies, without guns or armor, without a charismatic leader. (Hope and Other Dangerous, 6)"

From the quote above, a character named Murad states that history will repeat itself. He likened himself to Thariq bin Ziyad, a Moroccan who wanted to reconquer Spain. The purpose of conquest here is not to use a sword or warlike Tariq bin Ziyad but to conquer Spain to seek better fortunes in life. In addition, the quote above illustrates the contrast between the historic conquest by the Moors in 711 and the situation faced by current immigrants trying to cross the Strait of Gibraltar as well. In history, the Moors crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with a strong and organized fleet led by a charismatic leader like Tariq bin Ziyad. They had a clear purpose and were equipped with weapons and armor to face the battle. In contrast, today's immigrants cross the strait in fragile, unseaworthy rubber boats. They are not equipped with weapons or armor but only with hope and deep fear. There is no charismatic leader leading their journey. The desire to survive and seek a better life unites the immigrants rather than military command or strategic vision.

Spain is a country in the southernmost region of Europe (O'Callaghan, 2024). It is bordered by the Bay of Biscay and France to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the east, the Atlantic Ocean (Strait of Gibraltar) to the south, and Portugal to the west. Spain's southern border is only 14 kilometers from Africa. This can be seen from the following quote:

"He wondered how fourteen kilometers could separate not just two countries but two universes. (Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits, 5)"

This quote illustrates how vastly different life is between Morocco and Spain. Despite being only 14 kilometers apart, Morocco and Spain represent two very different worlds in terms of quality of life, economic opportunities, and social welfare. Spain, which is part of the European Union, generally has better job opportunities, infrastructure, and living standards compared to Morocco. For immigrants, crossing the Strait of Gibraltar is not only a physical change of place but also entering a world of very different challenges and opportunities. In addition, this quote also shows the different economic and social disparities between developed and developing countries. This gap encourages many people to seek a better life in other countries, especially in Europe. The Strait of Gibraltar symbolizes the border between poverty as well as prosperity and between limitations and opportunities.

In this novel, illegal immigrants from Morocco bound for Spain will land on the coast of Tarifa. Tarifa itself is a small city in southern Europe (Kompasiana, 2013). This city is only 14 km from North Africa, namely from the city of Tangier, Morocco. This geographical proximity is a reasonable reason to migrate. For Moroccan immigrants, Spain is a gateway to other European countries where there are greater economic opportunities than in their home countries. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, France, Spain, and Germany fought for control of Morocco, which the French eventually took over, and Spain took over a small portion of the rest (Tiah, 2022). As a result, Morocco and Spain share a tight relationship. While the Moors conquered Spain in 711 AD, Spaniards colonized sections of Morocco in the twentieth century. Therefore, in this case, Spain is a colonial country with greater and better features than other colonial



countries. This has increased the number of opportunities for both legal and illegal African immigrants to enter the European Union, including Spain.

Factors that Motivate the Main Character to Migrate to Spain

Immigrants are a frequently debated topic in social life. There are numerous reasons for an individual or group to pursue immigration. Some do it for reasons of war and security. The most common factor, though, is poverty. They are looking for a new location where they can obtain a good career and raise their level of living. European countries are the most popular destinations for immigration. Jean Claude remarked in a speech to members of the European Parliament that member states must acknowledge that Europe has become a safe haven as well as a symbol of hope for refugees (Tanringangka, 2021).

Immigrants, predominantly originating from conflict zones in the Middle East, arrived in large numbers on European territory. Europe is a land that promises prosperity for immigrants. They fled to find security, prosperity, and new hope (Ibrohim, 2022). The immigrants, who are predominantly Muslims, do not choose to immigrate to neighboring countries that still share the same religion as Islam. They instead prefer European countries that have religions and cultures that are very different from theirs. This is done because even though fellow Muslims still have differences, like between Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims, they do this to avoid conflict among fellow Muslims. Apart from that, another reason is because of the policies of European countries that are friendly to immigrants, such as Germany, which has even increased its budget to handle immigrants. Just like Germany, Spain is a country that accepts many immigrants, especially from African countries. Spain needs a lot of labor from Africa, including Morocco, which is known to be diligent. Besides, the wages for labor from Africa are much lower than the wages for labor in Spain. Meanwhile, countries in North Africa, such as Morocco, have a large workforce that requires a foreign exchange to manage natural resources and create jobs (Rahim, 2010).

Two major elements influence a person's proclivity to relocate or immigrate: push factors and pull factors. The driving force is poverty in the origin area, defined as a minimum amount of income, the desire to increase income, and an unsatisfactory status in the origin area (Naidah, 2011). Furthermore, lack of jobs, overcrowding, a scarcity of natural resources, the desire to enhance living conditions, ongoing education, political differences, negative social relations, religious reasons, unsuitable geographical conditions, and equity are driving factors for immigration residents (Kompas.com, 2020). Meanwhile, six factors attract someone to immigration, quoted from the book "Population Theory" by Agustina Bidart. First, there is an opportunity to enter a suitable job market. Second, there is an opportunity to get a better income. Third, there is an opportunity to get a college education. Fourth, because of pleasurable environmental and living conditions, such as weather, housing, schools, and other community facilities. Fifth, there is attraction from people who are expected to shelter. Finally, as an attraction for people from rural or small towns, there are activities in big cities, places of entertainment, and cultural centers (Zulfikar, 2021).

The first chapter, entitled "The Trip" in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, opens with the story of Moroccan illegal immigrants traveling by sea by boat



to Tarifa, Morocco. The trip was deliberately made at night to avoid immigration officers guarding the border. "Tonight the sea appears calm, with only a slight wind now and then. The captain has ordered all the lights turned off, but with the moon up and the sky clear, Murad can still see around him." (*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, 5). The excerpt is significant for several reasons, and its analysis can shed light on the novel's themes and the broader context of illegal immigration. The description of the sea being calm with only a slight wind sets a deceptive sense of tranquility. This calmness contrasts sharply with the inherent danger and unpredictability of their journey. It symbolizes the fragile hope that immigrants cling to, even as they face enormous risks. The calm sea may also reflect a temporary peace in Murad's mind, a fleeting moment of calm before the potential chaos that lies ahead. The captain's order to turn off all lights is a deliberate attempt to avoid detection by immigration officers. This decision highlights the clandestine nature of their voyage and the constant fear of being caught. The darkness represents not only physical concealment but also the uncertainty and the perilous path of illegal immigration. It signifies the lengths to which people will go to escape their current circumstances and seek better opportunities, despite the danger involved. The moonlight and clear sky provide enough illumination for Murad to see his surroundings, despite the absence of artificial lights. This detail can be seen as a metaphor for the clarity of purpose and the hope that drives these immigrants. Natural light offers a sliver of visibility and guidance, suggesting that even in the darkest situations, there is a faint hope that guides individuals toward their goals. Murad's ability to see around him despite the darkness can be interpreted as his awareness and alertness. It shows his cautious optimism and his readiness to face whatever comes next. This perspective is crucial as it allows the readers to empathize with Murad and the other immigrants, understanding their fears, hopes, and determination. This excerpt from *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* provides a rich basis for discussing the novel's themes of hope, danger, and the human aspects of illegal immigration. By analyzing the calm sea, the darkness, and Murad's perspective, the readers gain insight into the complex emotions and experiences of the characters. The passage underscores the precarious balance between aspiration and risk that defines the journey of many immigrants, making it a poignant and significant part of the narrative.

This novel is separated into two chapters that are before and after the introductory portion (The Trip). Each chapter is divided into four sub-chapters. The four sub-chapters then examine various individuals and problems. Even though Murad is the main character, there are three other main characters: Aziz, Halima, and Faten. Despite the fact that each character comes from a different background, their purpose is the same: illegal immigration to Spain. The following are the main reasons for the four figures immigrating to Spain.

Poverty

Poverty is the primary motivator for a population to migrate. Poverty is defined as the inability to meet the bare necessities of life, which include both food and non-food demands (Kompas.com, 2020). There are various causes of poverty in a country or region, according to Alcian. First, limited work and a low-earning, low-labor force will result in lower income and higher poverty. Second, the level of education remains poor, which is directly tied to unemployment and, as a result, the burden of dependents,



which will exacerbate poverty. Last but not least, income is not keeping pace with rising spending on community needs (Hermawan, 2018).

The characters in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* are people who come from the lower middle class. First is Faten, who is a poor girl who lives with her mother in a very small apartment. Previously, they lived in a slum in Morocco and then moved to Rabat. Faten's appearance was extremely simple. After she lived in Spain and worked as an Odalisque. *"It had been just as hard to get used to the heels as to the short skirts. Before this, back at home, it was always flats or sneakers, an ankle-length skirt, and a secondhand sweater."* (*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, 76) It is different from her best friend, Noura, who comes from a respectable family because her father is a government official. In terms of food, the Faten family is lacking. Even when celebrating led, her mother can only cook sober food, unlike others who cook various kinds of dishes, either meat or cakes. *"At home with her mother, meals had been simple—fava beans and olive oil, rghaif and tea, bread and olives, couscous on Fridays, whatever her mother could afford to buy. Now that Faten could buy anything she wanted, she didn't know how to make the dishes she'd craved as a teenager."* (*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, 84). However, after Faten lived in Spain, she could buy whatever food she wanted to buy.

Meanwhile, Murad also has the same difficult economic conditions as Faten. In Morocco, he lives with his mother, two younger siblings, and his uncle. His father had died, so he became the backbone of his family. *"My father is dead; may God have mercy on him. My mother doesn't have any money. If it weren't for my uncle and my sister, we'd be out on the street."* (*Hope and Others Dangerous Pursuits*, 63) Even to immigrate to Spain, Murad had to borrow money from one of his uncles of 20,000 dirhams. *"Murad tried to bargain, too, but in the end he still had to borrow almost 20,000 dirhams from one of his uncles, and the loan was on his mind again. He'll pay his uncle back as soon as he can get a job."* (*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, 6)

As we can witness from the novel, Murad is an unemployed man. *"These days, though, the guides outnumber the tourists, and Murad was unable to find a job."* (*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, 57). As the deeper research has been done, the researchers found that Morocco is a developing country that faces problems related to its domestic conditions. These problems include the problem of poverty, increasing unemployment, low intellectual levels, and unequal distribution of income. Meroko is also a country in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region that does not have oil like other countries in the Middle East. The non-oil-exporting Mena region has a low average national income and poor economic growth, with minimal expansion of formal sector jobs, resulting in substantial unemployment (Pasaribu, 2015). The services and tourism sectors account for up to 70% of Morocco's economy.

Limited Career Opportunities in the Place of Origin and A Desire to Improve Living Conditions

The second reason the characters in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* by Laila Lalami immigrate is that they do not have proper work in Morocco due to a lack of job prospects. This results in a huge number of unemployed people in Morocco. Unemployment refers to those who do not have a job either voluntarily (they might have gotten a permanent job, but for whatever reason did not take one) or because they are



compelled to, notably those who wish to work permanently but cannot find one (Hermawan, 2018). Unemployment and poverty are two things that are inextricably linked. The poverty rate will rise if more individuals or people in a country do not have jobs. A low level of education is also one of the causes of unemployment.

Unemployment is a major issue in Morocco. Morocco's unemployment rate is relatively high and is steadily increasing. Only approximately half of Moroccans are employed. This is a pressing issue that jeopardizes the economy's vitality, the country's competitiveness, and the well-being of the Moroccan people. Slow economic growth and constrained government funding also make unemployment worse, while bureaucracy, corruption, and unfair competition make it difficult for the private sector to create long-term jobs (Pasaribu, 2015).

In the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* by Laila Lalami, Murad is told that he does not have the job he expected. He is a graduate majoring in English education. Apart from that, he can also speak Spanish fluently. The passage, "*He'll find a real job, where he can use his training. He has a degree in English, and, in addition, he speaks Spanish fluently, unlike some of the harraga*" (Lalami, 6), which underscores Murad's belief that his skills set him apart and should guarantee him a better future, yet the economic environment fails to support this belief. After graduation, he only worked as a tour guide. With his bachelor's degree, he should be able to get a more decent job and a higher income. Frustrated by the lack of career opportunities that match his qualifications, Murad decides to emigrate to Spain, hoping to secure a better job and support his family. This reflects the real conditions in Morocco, where many educated individuals face high unemployment and limited job prospects, driving them to seek better opportunities abroad despite the risks involved.

Like Murad, Aziz does not have a decent job in Morocco. In addition, in Morocco, he has a pretty difficult life. He also has a wife whom he has to provide for. "*And you think Spain's going to be great? It's all just hard work and ghurba and loneliness.*" "*At least he'll make a living,*" Zohra said. Aziz was surprised to hear her jump in with the very words he'd used to persuade her a few weeks earlier." (Lalami, 46) Because Aziz was unemployed, Zohra's family did not initially approve of their relationship. "*They had been nagging Zohra about his joblessness, and their comments had grown more persistent after she'd managed to find a job at a soda factory.*" (Lalami, 46). This excerpt highlights the socioeconomic pressures that drive individuals like Murad and Aziz to immigrate, emphasizing the lack of decent job opportunities and the desire to provide for their families. Murad and Aziz, despite their education and capabilities, are unable to secure jobs that match their qualifications in Morocco, reflecting a high unemployment rate among educated youth. Aziz's difficult life and his responsibility to provide for his wife underscore the economic hardships many Moroccans face, pushing them to seek employment abroad. Family pressure and societal expectations, as seen in Zohra's family's disapproval of Aziz due to his joblessness, further exacerbate the need for men to find sustainable income sources, compelling them toward migration.

Despite acknowledging potential hardships in Spain, such as hard work, alienation, and loneliness, the prospect of making a living is perceived as a significant improvement over their current situation. This hope for better living conditions for themselves and their families justifies the risks associated with illegal immigration. The decision of



Murad and Aziz to immigrate is thus driven by unemployment, economic hardship, and societal pressures, reflecting a broader global issue where individuals are compelled to migrate due to lack of equitable economic opportunities in their home countries. This scenario underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of migration to create sustainable solutions for economic development and employment.

Poor Social Relationships

Apart from poverty, unemployment, and a desire to improve their standard of living, the characters in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* immigrate to Spain due to poor social connections in Morocco. The final reason is related to Faten and Halima's personalities. Faten immigrated to Spain because she was involved in a case in Morocco criticizing King Hasan. She is also a member of a campus Islamic organization. She escaped to Spain as an illegal immigrant on the advice of the priest. "*She'd had the misfortune of making a derogatory comment about King Hassan within earshot of a snitch but had, rather miraculously, escaped arrest, thanks to a friendly tip. So when her imam suggested she leave the country, she had not argued with him. She had done as she was told.*" (Lalami, 76). If Faten is required to stay in Morocco, authorities will detain her for her criticism of King Hassan. Aside from that, she has a strained connection with Larbi, the father of her best friend, Noura. Larbi disliked Faten's amicable relationship with her daughter because he believed Faten had a detrimental impact on his daughter.

Halimah, like Faten, had bad social relations in her home nation of Morocco. Halimah's family is experiencing difficulties. Maati, her husband, was frequently violent toward her. Furthermore, their domestic life encountered financial challenges. As a result, Halima is forced to work a second job to cover household expenditures. "*Halima had taken janitorial jobs two days a week and made extra money by selling embroidery to neighbors and friends.*" (Lalami, 34) Because her spouse continued to beat her, she decided to divorce and flee to Spain with her children.

The causes discussed above, namely poverty, unemployment and the desire to raise living conditions, and having terrible social interactions, are the motivations for the protagonists in Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. Immigrants from all over the world share these common experiences. According to this theory, immigrants are constantly associated with bad things like conflict and other social difficulties.

Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits' four characters engage in illegal immigration. To avoid attracting attention from other people or immigration officers, they boarded a boat and set sail at night. Undocumented immigrants, often known as the dark immigrants, are individuals or groups that enter a country without authorization or stay in a country for a period of time that exceeds the time limit for obtaining a residency permit (Jayanti, 2019). Someone who decides to become an illegal immigrant mainly owing to financial constraints, being unable to meet the standards for legal immigration or getting legitimate travel documents, and the destination country's unwillingness to welcome immigrants.

The theme of immigration explored in Laila Lalami's work, "*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*," is also tied to the title. There are two keywords in the title: 'hope' and 'risk endeavors.' 'Hope' is the first. 'Hope,' according to the Cambridge definition,



involves wishing for something to happen or come true. Typically, these aspirations are for positive things to happen in a person's life. Meanwhile, if it is related to Laila Lalami's work about immigration, the term 'hope' refers to the character in the novel who immigrates from Morocco to Spain in search of a better life. In "*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*" by Laila Lalami, the phrase "dangerous pursuits" carries significant weight. It encapsulates both the perilous journey illegal immigrants undertake and the risks they face if apprehended by authorities. The term "dangerous pursuits" implies not only the physical and legal dangers involved in their attempt to cross borders but also the socio-economic and emotional hardships that drive these individuals to take such risks.

In the context of the novel, the journey to Spain represents the hazardous physical pursuit as the immigrants navigate treacherous waters to evade border patrols. If caught, they risk deportation, imprisonment, or worse. This is mirrored in real-world scenarios where immigrants face similar dangers and uncertainties while seeking better opportunities. Studies and articles on illegal immigration, such as those examining the impact on economies and the socio-cultural issues arising from it, highlight the broader implications of these dangerous pursuits. For instance, the *Journal of North African Studies* discusses the socio-economic factors prompting immigration and the cultural and psychological stress involved (Ingenta Connect) (Police1).

Moreover, the term can also refer to the metaphorical pursuit of a better life, which is fraught with its own set of dangers. Immigrants like Murad and Aziz are driven by limited career opportunities and the desire to improve their living conditions, reflective of the real conditions in Morocco, where many educated individuals struggle to find suitable employment. Their dangerous pursuit is thus both a literal journey and a figurative struggle against systemic and personal obstacles. This dual interpretation of "dangerous pursuits" underlines the complex interplay of hope and hazard, making the title of Lalami's novel deeply resonant with the experiences of immigrants both in fiction and reality.

Sexual Harassment of Female Immigrants

The world of immigration is likened to a coin that has two sides. There are good things on the one hand, but also bad things that follow. Especially for illegal immigrants, those who are classified as undocumented people do not have the freedom to live life as immigrants. Migration is a stressful, non-normative life occurrence that necessitates a process of readaptation on a human level from a psychosocial perspective (Berry, 1997, accessed in Garcia, 2002). As a result, illegal immigrants have to experience traumatic events that have a big impact on their future lives. Traumatic incidents can take the form of violence at work or in daily life, sexual harassment, discrimination, and even death. The novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* provides many examples of the dark side of the world of immigration, one of which is sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment can be interpreted as inappropriate behavior directed at the victim (regarding sexual activity), which results in discomfort. For more details, according to the Indonesian women's national commission, sexual harassment is an act that targets the victim's sexual organs or sexuality through physical or non-physical contact. This includes whistling, flirting, remarks with sexual nuances, showing



pornographic materials, sexual desires, touching the victim's body, and movements or gestures of a sexual nature that cause discomfort, offend, or feel demeaned, to the point of causing health and safety problems (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan, 2012 accessed on Izzaturrohmah & Khaerani, 2018). According to P. A. Johnson et al. (2018), a form of discrimination known as sexual harassment involves unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and verbal and nonverbal gender harassment. Limited space for illegal immigrants makes them do anything to stay alive in the country they live in. Such as happened by one of the characters named Faten. The discussion of this material is focused on the chapter 'The Odalisque.' Faten received inappropriate treatment from one of the Spanish Guardia Civil who was on guard after she arrived at the Spanish border. Such as written, on page 83, "...The guard had taken her to one of the private exam rooms, away from everyone else. He lifted her skirt and thrust into her with savage abandon." (Lalami, 83). In the research conducted by Esposito et al. (2020), Esposito, Matos, and Bosworth interviewed several immigrant women. Their experiences include compelled marriage, domestic abuse, rape, and limitations on their freedom and right to self-determination due to gendered norms and prescriptions. Immigrants, especially immigrant women, do not receive legal protection that can protect and benefit them as citizens.

Immigrants are often considered people who are uneducated and have weak physical and psychological conditions. Because of that, people without conscience take the opportunity to satisfy their desires. It can be said that these people are tricking the victim by carrying out the 'trade-off' process. The immigrant who is a victim of harassment is given convenience in passing the checking process at the border. Here the researchers include snippets of stories from page 83, "...Later, in the holding cell, she saw one of the guards staring at her. She didn't need to speak Spanish to understand that he'd wanted to make her a deal." (Lalami, 83). Faten cannot do anything except accept that treatment to make it easy for her. Unfortunately, disappointing things like this also happen in the real world, as in the research conducted by Putra and his research partners, who examined efforts to protect the law for workers.

According to Putra (Putra et al., 2022) there has been sexual harassment by labor and security personnel. Sexual harassment cannot be underestimated, and as a result of this traumatic event, the victim needs time, money, and long preparation to recover from that dreadful shadow. Victims of sexual harassment will experience a negative impact both physically and psychologically. In addition, this negative condition will also last for a long time (long-term effects). According to Collier, the victim of sexual harassment may feel threatened with their identity and have low self-esteem as a result. Dwiyantri (2014) stated that sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual behavior or a person's tendency to interact in such behavior, whether it be verbal (psychological) or physical, as perceived by the victim to be insulting, embarrassing, or intimidating. This can have another impact on the victim. In the results of their interviews with 3 victims of sexual harassment, Izzaturrohmah and Khaerani stated that the victims experienced various negative impacts. The negative impact of sexual harassment on a victim makes the victim enter the world of free sex (Izzaturrohmah & Khaerani, 2018).

Similar to what happened to Faten, she decided to become 'The Odalisque' or what can be said as a prostitute. According to Kalmar (2019), the odalisque was



understood by female slaves in a harem in the East, utilized by artists in the 19th-20th centuries, and depicted in a nude or semi-naked state. "Over the years that followed, she'd had time to hear all the fantasies, those that, had she finished her degree, she might have referred to disdainfully as odalisque dreams. Now they were just a part of a repertoire she'd learned by heart and had to put up with if she wanted to make a living." (Lalami, 83). The limitation to do everything big such as working in the authorized office and having a big wage to fulfill her living, makes Faten take the faster path that plunges her into a dark world.

The economic conditions and the bad effects of the events that happened to her when she first arrived in Spain, feeling humiliated, and having no value anymore made Faten give up her entire body for men. The odalisque (odalik in Turkish) can be interpreted as a female slave who is often used as a sexual object and can be taken as a wife. As Faten experienced, the title 'The Odalisque' represents part of her life story. The few possibilities that Faten decided to work like that, other than because of the aftermath of her past, were because there would not be as many people watching her as compared to working in the morning. Faten, who is an illegal immigrant, of course, has a particular document record at the immigration office. Illegal immigrants cannot be exposed to the outside world too much because if they are found to have no official document records, they will be further investigated by the authorities. Being an undocumented citizen with a traumatic past that led her into the wrong way, Faten then decided to leave the world she was in.

Conclusion

The theme of immigrant Muslimah in this study leads the researchers to the conclusion that Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* contains a dark side or difficulties experienced by women who wanted to immigrate to Spain in the 1990s. The female characters discussed in this novel commit illegal acts of apostasy, which means they ensnare the border without official documents. They are willing to sail the seas to fulfill the hopes and desires that they think they will not be able to get if they only wait for opportunities in their home country, Morocco. Compared to Morocco, migrating to the nearest country, Spain is certainly a hope and opportunity for them to get a better job and life. In the end, illegal immigrants who do not have official documents have certain limitations in their activities and work. Due to limited job opportunities, they are also unable to work legally or start a legal business.

Despite the significant risks involved, the characters in Lalami's novel embark on illegal immigration due to economic desperation and the lure of better opportunities. This study underscores how gender plays a critical role in shaping the experiences of immigrant women, who often face additional layers of vulnerability and exploitation. The application of Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory of the subaltern helps elucidate how these women navigate their identities and agency within oppressive structures.

The study also delves into the socio-economic factors that propel individuals to undertake such dangerous journeys. Economic instability, lack of opportunities, and the desire for a better future are recurring themes that resonate with many real-life



scenarios. The characters' experiences in the novel reflect broader issues of systemic inequality and the harsh realities of undocumented life in a foreign country.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on immigration by shedding light on the specific challenges encountered by female immigrants. It calls for a nuanced understanding of immigration issues that consider gender dynamics and the historical context influencing migration. By exploring the personal and societal dimensions of the characters' journeys, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on the complex interplay between gender, immigration, and postcolonial legacies.

In conclusion, Lalami's novel serves as a powerful narrative that humanizes the plight of immigrants and underscores the need for empathy and policy reforms. This study not only enhances our understanding of the immigrant experience but also urges policymakers and society at large to address the root causes of illegal immigration and the specific vulnerabilities faced by Muslim women or Muslimah. Through detailed analysis, this research advocates for a more inclusive and equitable approach to immigration policies, one that recognizes the humanity and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their legal status.

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