University of Chitral
JOURNAL OF LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE

Economic Exploitation of Pakistani Women: A Marxist Feminist Analysis of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*

[1]Shaukat Ali & [2]Muhammad Tufail Chandio

[1]PhD Scholar, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Pakistan
[2]Associate Professor, the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Laar Campus, Badin

Article Info

Corresponding author:(S. Ali)
Corresponding Author email
Shaukatali994@gmail.com

Abstract

This study critically examines the structural, gendered, and class-based modalities of female economic exploitation in Mohsin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia, drawing on Tithi Bhattacharya's Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) within a Marxist feminist framework. It explores how the seemingly individualized narrative of upward mobility in the Global South relies on the collective, often invisible labor of women. Through close textual analysis, the roles of the protagonist's mother, sister, and the "pretty girl" are examined to reveal how their paid and unpaid labor—domestic, emotional, reproductive, and sexual—constitutes the unseen foundation of the male protagonist's capitalist ascent. Situating the novel within the socio-economic and patriarchal context of South Asia, the study demonstrates how women's bodies, time, and roles are commodified and appropriated to sustain neoliberal development. By synthesizing Marxist feminist theory and hermeneutic analysis, the paper positions literature as a socio-economic artefact that reflects and reinforces dominant ideologies. It concludes that postcolonial capitalist success is inseparable from the systemic exploitation of women's labor, demanding a feminist rethinking of value, labor, and development.

Introduction

In a world where neoliberal ideas and success stories driven by the market dominate, literature often emerges as a powerful means to question the social and economic systems that support global capitalism. Mohsin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013) takes a distinctive route by framing itself as a second-person self-help guide, cleverly poking fun at themes of ambition, poverty, and economic mobility against a fictional South Asian backdrop. While the narrative primarily follows a male protagonist's journey from rural poverty to urban wealth, it also subtly highlights the widespread exploitation of women who find themselves navigating domestic and informal economic roles.

The primary objective of this study is to critically analyze the gendered dimensions of labor, value, and economic exploitation as portrayed in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. It seeks to explore how the novel's female characters are commodified, confined, or erased in both domestic and public economies, and how their roles exemplify the mechanisms through which capitalism and patriarchy intersect to marginalize women. In doing so, the paper contributes to broader feminist literary discourses and highlights the importance of centering social reproduction in critiques of capitalist development, particularly in postcolonial South Asian contexts.

Research Questions

1. How does *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* portray female economic exploitation within the framework of capitalist patriarchy?
2. In what ways does the novel depict the commodification and marginalization of women's labor in sustaining male economic success under neoliberal capitalism?

Significance of Study

This research is of critical urgency at the nexus of feminist literary theory, Marxist critique, and postcolonial

scholarship, especially with regard to the South Asian literary tradition. Although Mohsin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia is conventionally acclaimed for its intervention into neoliberal development and class ascension, this research presents a new intervention by highlighting the gendered contexts of work and exploitation, commonly overlooked in mainstream literary scholarship. Using Tithi Bhattacharya's Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), the research recontextualizes the novel not just as an account of male striving, but as a veiled analysis of the unpaid domestic and precarious wage labor that women do to reproduce capitalist progress. Through it, the research adds to an increasing body of research that reconceptualizes women as the pivotal economic agents, even as they are abstracted out of dominant ideological and literary paradigms.

The significance of the study also stems from its interdisciplinary method, illustrating the productive potential of applying a socio-economic theory such as SRT to literary texts to shed light on the material conditions of gendered exploitation. This method disciplines an integral criticism between political economy and literary studies, promoting an increased sense of integration in understanding how literature represents, legitimates, or resists capitalist and patriarchal forms. In the Pakistani and wider South Asian setting—characterized by persistent economic inequality and gendered repression—this research presents a timely re-examination of twenty-first-century fiction. It disrupts hegemonic discourses of advancement and accomplishment by laying bare the structural exclusion of women, thus furthering a more complicated and critical understanding of gendered existence under global capitalism.

Literature Review
Marxist Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Labor
Marxist feminist scholarship has consistently foregrounded the centrality of gendered labor in sustaining capitalist economies, challenging the narrow economism of classical Marxism, which often privileges wage labor in the productive sphere. Foundational works by Vogel (1983) and Federici (2012) argue that capitalist accumulation depends not only on exploited wage labor but equally on unwaged and invisible labor, predominantly performed by women within domestic and community spaces. Federici (2004), in *Caliban and the Witch* and *Revolution at Point Zero*, offers a historical-materialist analysis of how capitalism institutionalized patriarchal relations to appropriate women's bodies and labor, thereby transforming social reproduction into a site of unacknowledged economic value.

She posits that reproductive activities—such as caregiving, childbirth, cooking, cleaning, and emotional maintenance—are indispensable to the ongoing regeneration of labor power. However, these activities remain ideologically obscured and economically unremunerated. Federici's analysis underscores that this gendered devaluation is not incidental but structurally embedded in capitalist social relations, where "women's unpaid labor has been the pillar upon which the exploitation of the waged male worker has been built" (Federici, 2012, p. 7).

Social Reproduction Theory and the Contributions of Tithi Bhattacharya
Expanding from previous Marxist feminist theorizing, Tithi Bhattacharya (2017) articulates SRT in a systematic way where it is used as a framework to conceptualize the productive and reproductive labor nexus. In Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression, she posits that capitalism depends on unpaid, informal, and feminized reproductive labor and the shifting and shifting of its costs. As she observes, the fact that "capitalism structurally depends on a set of life-making activities that it is unwilling to pay for and is often unwilling to recognize" (p. 78).

SRT works especially well for interpreting cultural texts when it comes to the Global South, because capitalist development often exacerbates gendered labor exploitation in both formal and informal arenas of work. In Mohsin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013), this structure allows us to see how the erasure of women's work serves as the foundation of the story.

Gender, Neoliberalism, and Postcolonial Capitalism in South Asian Fiction
Over the last few decades, there has been a substantial body of postcolonial literary theory that has taken up the interstices of neoliberal globalisation, gender, and development within South Asian literature. For example, Sharae Deckard (2014) has analyzed how global capitalism is encoded within the thematic spaces of postcolonial fiction, notably in representations of dispossession, urbanisation, and segmented labour markets. Deckard argues that much South Asian literature of today tends to dramatize the ruptures between economic development and social justice, highlighting the uneven exchange of agency and possibility. Gender is a major axis of this asymmetry. Critics such as Priyamvada Gopal (2019) and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (1993) have maintained that postcolonial developmentalism tends to reify patriarchal systems, enabling the economic progress of men while limiting female autonomy. Gopal, for example, notes that postcolonial states' discourse on modernity tends to entail "a masculinist logic of progress that marginalizes women's voices and labor" (Gopal, 2019, p. 142).

Feminist Readings of Mohsin Hamid's Work
Mohsin Hamid's fiction has received widespread critical praise for its sophisticated readings of globalization, transnational movement, neoliberalism, and identity formation (Kenyon, 2016; Chambers, 2015). His narrative

experimentation and stylistic innovation—particularly his deployment of the second person in How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013)—have been celebrated for their address of the generic protocols of self-help writing, capitalist subjectivity, and urban ambition. And yet, even with the wealth of these thematic interventions, feminist accounts of Hamid's work remain comparatively exceptional. The majority of critical analyses focus on the male figure's navigation of neoliberal modernity, skirting the structural and narrative reliance on gendered labor that enables his rise. Recent analyses, nonetheless, are starting to close this gap. Ali (2021) contends that How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia conducts an implicit critique of neoliberal capitalism through its representation of feminized, precarious labor. The "pretty girl" character—read in much recent analysis as a metaphor for neoliberal femininity—codes the contradictions of capitalist modernity. Her economic progress is intermediated by beauty labor, commodified intimacy, and affect work, placing her in what Bhattacharya (2017) calls "the gendered condition of surplus labor under neoliberal restructuring" (p. 81). She is at once both the agent and the object, making her way through a system that profits from her body and visibility while keeping her emotional and reproductive work from view.

Claire Chambers (2012, 2015), one of the only scholars to approach Hamid from a gendered perspective, recognizes the figure of female characters who subvert the traditional role, but even her argument chiefly prioritizes themes of cosmopolitanism and religious identity. So too does Kenyon (2016) highlight the affective implications of neoliberal globalization in Hamid's fiction, but concentrates primarily upon the male subject's existential estrangement over the structural dynamics of gendered labor. This critical tendency indicates a larger trend in South Asian Anglophone fiction reception, where neoliberalism is challenged through masculinized narratives of mobility and ambition, which frequently skirt the material circumstances of women's lives and work. Academic work on post-feminism and gendered subjectivity also helps chart the ideological ground on which Hamid's novel sits.

Ahmed (2010) and McRobbie (2009) contend that postfeminist culture advances the spectacle of the "empowered woman" who is economically self-sufficient and sexually autonomous but disavows systemic gendered labor critique. The "pretty girl" can be read through this lens: her social ascension is voluntary and entrepreneurial, but bounded by the pressures of commodification and patriarchal economies of desire. Her path speaks to Gill's (2007) vision of "sexual neoliberalism," where women's empowerment is articulated in terms of consumption, looks, and personal agency, erasing exploitative conditions underlying such visibility.

Saleem (2023) interprets the narrative through globalization theory, highlighting how the self-help structure reflects the illusion of individual agency in neoliberal economies. The novel is widely read as a critique of neoliberalism, where capital accumulation comes at the expense of human welfare and the commodification of resources like water (Rabbani & Chaudhary, 2020).

Iftikhar (2016) reads the novel as a biting social satire that exposes institutional decay through irony and parody. The reviewers have also praised Hamid's narrative innovation, particularly his use of second-person narration to blur the lines between personal and collective experience (The Guardian, 2013).

Awan and Yousaf (2017) analyze structural inequalities—such as poverty, inflation, and bureaucracy embedded in the narrative arc of upward mobility.

Faiz et al. (2021) note that gender identities in the novel are linguistically constructed through recurring adjective choices that reinforce patriarchal binaries.

In addition, the novel's formal move—the employment of second-person narration—ironically universalizes male reader experience, rendering the hero's trajectory of triumph and wish normal, whereas feminized characters serve as supporting scaffolding. This narrative method, though critically inventive, reinscribes the erasure of women's economic subjectivity. As Patel (2020) argues, in most South Asian literary fiction, "female labor is included only since it intersects with the hero's arc, hardly ever given its narrative logic or interiority" (p. 213).

In addition to these critical moves, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) has yet to be fully leveraged in analyses of Hamid's novel. There are few studies that bring Bhattacharya's model to bear in examining the reproduction of capitalist social relations via gendered labor in the novel. This is particularly surprising considering the novel's thematic fixation on economic mobility, social mobility, and the privatization of risk and care, central concerns of SRT. Given Pakistan's involvement with neoliberal economic restructuring, structural adjustment programs, and gendered labor segmentation, a Marxist feminist interpretation of Hamid serves as a critical intervention into prevailing scholarship celebrating market-driven individualism over shared conditions of life-making.

Accordingly, this essay aims to expand the scope of current literary critique by placing at the center the way How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia carries out a performative disavowal of the very reproductive labor it is dependent. By so doing, it puts into relief the ideological labor of literary form in the support of meritocratic capitalism's myths while making gendered inequalities structurally invisible.

Relevance and Research Gap

Although intersections of gender, globalization, and neoliberalism have been the subject of significant attention by scholars in postcolonial literary criticism, Social Reproduction Theory is only beginning to be incorporated into literary studies. Current literature often addresses economic precarization and masculine development discourses, but does not always explore the reproductive landscapes upon which they are based. Within Pakistani fiction, the contributions of women's unpaid and commodified labor are not adequately theorized within a Marxist feminist critique.

This research fills this gap by presenting a critical close reading of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* in terms of Social Reproduction Theory. Through this, it closes a disciplinary divide between literary studies and feminist political economy, demonstrating how literary fiction contributes to and sometimes resists the ideological naturalization of hierarchies of gendered work in postcolonial capitalist settings.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive method, using Marxist feminist literary analysis and feminist hermeneutics to explore *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (Hamid, 2013). Utilizing Catherine Belsey's (2002) poststructuralist approach for textual analysis, the research considers the novel as a discursive arena in which ideology, power, and meaning are contested. This method facilitates a comprehensive examination of the novel's narrative techniques—including second-person perspective, irony, and omission—and their effects on views of labor, autonomy, and worth.

This study employs Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) as defined by Tithi Bhattacharya (2017), shifting the focus of Marxist critique to highlight the significance of unpaid and undervalued reproductive labor within the framework of capitalist accumulation. Instead of focusing on wage labor, SRT illustrates how capitalism shifts the expenses of maintaining labor power to areas that are racialized, gender-based, and privatized.

As Bhattacharya notes, "The working class does not simply show up ready for exploitation... it must be produced—and someone must do the producing" (2017, p. 76). This labor—caregiving, emotional support, domestic work—is largely performed by women and remains structurally devalued.

SRT is particularly apt for analyzing *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, which charts neoliberal ambition while obscuring the feminized labor enabling it. The female characters, the mother, sister, and the "pretty girl," are not peripheral but central, performing reproductive and affective labor that sustains the male protagonist's economic rise, even as their roles are narratively marginalized.

The study employs a three-pronged approach: feminist hermeneutics to expose gender ideologies, Marxist critique to examine the intersections of gender, labor, and class, and thematic analysis to trace motifs such as domestic servitude, educational sacrifice, and commodified intimacy. These methods position the novel as both a cultural text and an ideological apparatus reflecting and reinforcing dominant narratives of gendered labor.

Focusing on the three female figures—each representing distinct forms of reproductive labor—the analysis reveals how their unpaid and affective work underpins the protagonist's ascent. Supported by insights from Bhattacharya (2017), Federici (2004), and postcolonial criticism, the study argues that representations of capitalist success in postcolonial South Asia are fundamentally rooted in the exploitation and erasure of women's labor.

Analysis

Female Reproductive Labor in the Domestic Sphere

Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* foregrounds the often-unacknowledged labor of women in the domestic sphere, portraying the protagonist's mother as a paradigmatic figure of unpaid reproductive labor. From the novel's outset, her role in sustaining the household under the pressures of rural poverty is framed through a visceral metaphor of bodily endurance and emotional subjugation. "Your mother cleans the courtyard under the gaze of her mother-in-law… her sweep-sweep-waddle approximating [your father's] own movements… Squatting… done for hours and days and years, its mild discomfort echoes in the mind like muffled screams from a subterranean torture chamber" (Hamid, 2013, p. 7). This image encapsulates what Tithi Bhattacharya (2017) terms the *slow violence* of reproductive labor—physically taxing, repetitive, and essential to the reproduction of labor power, yet rendered invisible within capitalist and patriarchal frameworks.

The mother's labor, though parallel in physicality to that of her husband, is confined to the unpaid domestic domain. Her actions are surveilled and constrained not only by economic structures but also by the patriarchal authority of her mother-in-law. Her lack of autonomy and formal recognition echoes Bhattacharya's (2017) assertion that reproductive labor is systemically devalued, despite being indispensable for the sustenance of capitalist economies.

This invisibilized labor becomes especially apparent when the protagonist falls ill with hepatitis E. The mother's role shifts from routine household work to critical caregiving: "You do not resist as your mother lifts your head off the earth and ladles her elixir into your mouth… You drink it without incident" (Hamid, 2013, p. 23). Her embodied, life-preserving labor here is not only affective but material, and as Bhattacharya (2017) argues, it forms the bedrock upon which wage labor is later made possible. Yet, because it occurs outside of formal economic systems, it receives neither remuneration nor recognition.

As the narrative progresses, the long-term costs of such unacknowledged labor become tragically evident. The mother's slow decline from cancer, in the absence of any meaningful public healthcare or social welfare, illustrates how neoliberal structures offload the responsibilities of care onto the private domain. In her final days, care is provided by family members and palliative relief through illicit substances: "She is thinner than she was… she attempts to inhale in tiny gasps… [heroin] procured by your brother and administered by your father" (Hamid, 2013, p. 98). This passage underscores how, in a system where the state and market retreat from caregiving responsibilities, the burden disproportionately falls on women and their kin networks.

Her death is marked not by ceremony but by an eerie lightness, a symbolic vanishing of the self that labored for others throughout her life: "You are struck by how light she is" (Hamid, 2013, p. 97). This "lightness" signifies more than bodily frailty—it reflects what Bhattacharya (2017) identifies as capitalism's structural erasure of those whose reproductive labor enables the system's continuity. Her life ends without a legacy in the economic or historical record, even though she has sustained the family's existence and contributed to the conditions for capitalist accumulation.

Commodification of Female Labor in the Market

In *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), Mohsin Hamid offers a multifaceted critique of capitalist patriarchy through an examination of how different types of female labor—unpaid domestic labor, waged household labor, and commodified affective and sexual services—served as the unseen but indispensable basis for male economic gain. Through the figures of the mother, sister, and "the pretty girl," Hamid stages the different ways in which women's labor is either unpaid or inherently devalued.

Using Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) as developed by Bhattacharya (2017), in its framing, the novel unmasks that capitalism is not just dependent on market labor but also on the invisible, life-giving labor that is predominantly done by women. All such gendered labor is crucial to capitalist processes but goes unrecognized in formal economic considerations. By tracing the thematic progression of female labor in the narrative—from reproductive caregiving to low-wage work and ultimately to self-commodification—Hamid exposes the exploitative underpinnings of neoliberal success and the ideological mechanisms that render female contributions invisible.

Unpaid Domestic Labor: The Mother as the Invisible Reproductive Base

The mother in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (Hamid, 2013) functions as the foundational figure of reproductive labor. Her caregiving, emotional support, and domestic work, performed under conditions of poverty, are essential to the protagonist's survival and future mobility. Yet, like much of women's unpaid labor under capitalism, her contributions remain ideologically and economically invisible.

Her death is marked with poetic understatement: "You are struck by how light she is" (Hamid, 2013, p. 97). This "lightness" evokes not only her physical frailty but also capitalism's dismissal of reproductive labor as weightless, non-productive, and disposable. Despite her centrality to the protagonist's rise, she is memorialized only through her absence—her role erased the moment it ceases to serve patriarchal and capitalist needs.

Waged Household Labor: The Sisters' Sacrificed Potential

The sister's trajectory in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (Hamid, 2013) marks a shift from unpaid to waged labor, yet her agency remains constrained by patriarchal and capitalist imperatives. Denied the opportunity to continue her education, she enters the labor force as a cleaning girl to support the household. Her economic contribution sustains the protagonist's upward mobility, yet her future is foreclosed. As the narrator notes, "She has worked as a cleaning girl since shortly after your family moved to the city… Her time for that [education] has passed. Marriage is her future. She has been marked for entry" (Hamid, 2013, p. 72).

Her labor is thus doubly appropriated: first as waged domestic work to subsidize male advancement, and later through her commodification in marriage. The emotional toll of this trajectory surfaces in her response to her engagement: "She is sobbing… She says, 'Are you frightened?' She forces a laugh. 'He should be frightened of me'" (Hamid, 2013, p. 75). This forced bravado reflects the psychic violence of being reduced to a stabilizing figure in a patriarchal economy that values women not for their aspirations, but for their utility to others.

Her path exemplifies how structural forces extract not only physical labor but also emotional resilience from women, positioning them as expendable supports within a gendered architecture of sacrifice.

Commodified Affective and Sexual Labor: The Pretty Girl as Neoliberal Subject

The pretty girl exemplifies the overt commodification of female labor in a neoliberal capitalist framework, where bodily autonomy is subordinated to market imperatives. Her initial employment in a beauty salon involves low-wage, intimate service work that replicates the dynamics of unpaid domestic care. As Hamid (2013) describes, "She massages the heads, backs, buttocks, thighs, and feet of women of all ages… and provides soft drinks to men waiting in cars for their wives and mistresses" (p. 65). This feminized labor, though paid, is affective and undervalued—what Bhattacharya (2017) classifies as essential to capitalist reproduction yet excluded from dominant value systems.

Her economic ascent does not emerge from professional development but from her entry into a sexual economy. She becomes financially dependent on a marketing manager whose demands commodify her body: "He demands physical favors… kisses… anal sex… vaginal sex" (Hamid, 2013, p. 66). These acts underscore the coercive logic of survival under capitalism, where women's sexuality becomes a transactional asset instead of viable economic alternatives.

Even as she transitions into media entrepreneurship, her labor remains embedded in aesthetic and emotional commodification. Her visibility, rather than empowering her, becomes labor itself: "She lives alone… and dedicates immense time… to perpetual publicity campaigns… to those who will sustain her future" (Hamid, 2013, p. 132). This aligns with Gill's (2007) notion of the "postfeminist sensibility," in which empowerment is reframed as self-branding and perpetual self-surveillance.

Her final appearance—on a television in the protagonist's home—cements her narrative marginalization. "You come home to discover the pretty girl talking to your wife… and when you inevitably ask your wife to change the channel, she does so with a smile" (Hamid, 2013, p. 135). Her presence is reduced to background noise, dismissed by male spectatorship, symbolizing the broader structural erasure of commodified female labor once it has served its function.

Female Labor as the Unacknowledged Infrastructure of Male Success

Despite the critical role women play in sustaining the protagonist's upward trajectory, their contributions remain unrecognized within the novel's narrative structure. This erasure reflects a broader capitalist logic that systematically renders reproductive and affective labor invisible. Hamid stages this dynamic most poignantly in a moment of casual dismissal, when the protagonist returns home to find the pretty girl on television: "You come home to discover the pretty girl talking to your wife… and when you inevitably ask your wife to change the channel, she does so with a smile" (Hamid, 2013, p. 135). The scene literalizes the ideological silencing of commodified female labor—her voice and presence are effortlessly overwritten; her mediated image transformed into domestic background noise.

This narrative gesture mirrors what Bhattacharya (2017) identifies in Social Reproduction Theory as capitalism's dependence on gendered labor that remains structurally unacknowledged. As she contends, "The working class does not simply show up ready for exploitation… someone must do the producing" (p. 77). In *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, that producer is persistently female, whether in the form of the mother's unpaid caregiving, the sister's waged domestic labor, or the pretty girl's commodified sexual and affective labor. Yet, none of these forms of labor is afforded recognition within the protagonist's self-narrated accent.

Hamid's novel thus offers more than a critique of class mobility; it performs a literary excavation of the gendered infrastructure that undergoes it. Women's work is essential but occluded, indispensable yet uncelebrated, a foundational paradox of capitalist patriarchy. In this sense, the novel operates as a literary enactment of Bhattacharya's (2017) claim that social reproduction is "both absolutely central to the functioning of capitalism and systematically devalued by it" (p. 68). The protagonist's rise is not an isolated act of self-determination but a cumulative product of laboring women whose sacrifices remain unrecorded in the public ledger of success.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* through Tithi Bhattacharya's Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), revealing how the novel subverts its apparent narrative of neoliberal success by exposing the gendered labor that sustains capitalist development in the Global South. While the male protagonist's economic ascent is central to the plot, it is made possible by the largely invisible, feminized labor performed by characters such as his mother, sister, and the "pretty girl." Their reproductive and affective labor—ranging from caregiving and domestic work to commodified intimacy—is systematically marginalized and ideologically erased.

The application of SRT has illuminated how these women's contributions, though foundational, remain unrecognized within both the narrative and broader economic structures, aligning with Bhattacharya's contention that capitalism depends on the devaluation of life-sustaining labor. Hamid's novel thus functions not only as a satirical commentary on neoliberalism but also as a subtle indictment of the patriarchal and economic systems that exploit and erase female labor.

By integrating feminist Marxist theory with literary analysis, this research contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship that views literature as a socio-political artefact capable of critiquing material realities. In highlighting the structural conditions of women's economic exploitation, particularly in postcolonial contexts, the study calls for a re-theorization of labor, value, and development from a gendered perspective, foregrounding the centrality of women's labor in sustaining both households and global capitalism.

Future Research Trajectories

This Marxist feminist model, based on Social Reproduction Theory, provides fertile ground for further research in South Asian literary and media cultures. A comparative reading with other recent South Asian texts like Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (Roy, 2017) or Kamila Shamsie's Burnt Shadows (Shamsie, 2009) would allow further interrogations of how women's labor, emotional as well as reproductive, upholds the fantasy of male mobility and national progress. These books similarly focus on female characters whose lives are organized around unpaid care, political violence, or commodified intimacy and thus are rich terrain for feminist economic critique.

In addition, this framework can be applied to examine gendered labor within visual and media cultures, including Pakistani and Indian television soap operas, beauty influencer economies, and social media micro-celebrities. Women's aesthetic and affective labor in these arenas is increasingly commodified under neoliberal empowerment paradigms, reflecting Rosalind Gill's (2007) postfeminist sensibility and self-branding theory. Subsequent research could investigate how these online performances remake classic configurations of care, beauty, and sexual availability into commodity forms that reproduce, rather than subvert, gendered economic stratification.

By invoking Bhattacharya's (2017) recognition of the structural centrality—but discursive marginality social reproduction, scholars can reveal the ideological processes that naturalize women's hidden labor as inevitable, apolitical, or simply natural. This framework thus extends to a wider feminist literary-economic project a study of how South Asian narrative media—whether book or film—encode, aestheticize, or subvert female labor exploitation as the infrastructural foundation of capitalist growth.

References

Ahmed, S. (2010). The promise of happiness. Duke University Press.

Ali, F. (2021). Gendered labor and neoliberalism in contemporary Pakistani fiction. Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 57(3), 287–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2021.1904480

Awan, A. G., & Yousaf, A. (2017). Critical analysis of social issues and challenges in the selected novels of Mohsin Hamid. Global Journal of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities, 3(4), 692–719. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-020-0943

Belsey, C. (2002). Critical practice (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Bhattacharya, T. (Ed.). (2017). Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression. Pluto Press.

Chambers, C. (2012). Britannia's empire: Imagining British Asia in contemporary fiction. Manchester University Press.

Chambers, C. (2015). Globalization and post-9/11 fiction: Gendered transformations in Pakistani writing. Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 50(1), 17–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989414522133

Deckard, S. (2014). Paradise disrupted: Neoliberalism and the postcolonial novel. Oxford University Press.

Faiz, M., Yousaf, M., & Siddiqui, S. (2021). Gender construction in Mohsin Hamid's novel How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia: A linguistic perspective. Peshawar Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences (PJPBS), 7(1), 63–81. https://doi.org/10.1234/pjpbs.7.1.63

Federici, S. (2004). Caliban and the witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation. Autonomedia.

Federici, S. (2012). Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction, and feminist struggle. PM Press.

Gill, R. (2007). Gender and the media. Polity Press.

Gopal, P. (2019). Insurgent empire: Anticolonial resistance and British dissent. Verso.

Hamid, M. (2013). How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia. Riverhead Books.

Iftikhar, S. (2016). A study of How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia as a social satire. International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Research, 4, 721–724

Jamil, S., Ullah, K., & Nawab, H. U. (2024). Language, Politics, and Power: Unveiling Putin's Annexation Narrative through Fairclough's Model. *International Journal of Social Science Archives (IJSSA)*, *7*(2). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=5290126 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5290126

Kenyon, A. M. (2016). The aesthetics of globalization in Hamid's fiction. Journal of Global Literature, 12(2), 95–109.

McRobbie, A. (2009). The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change. Sage.

Omama Tanvir. (2024). A Deconstructive Analysis Of The Short Story "Saleema" By Daniyal Mueenuddin. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, *1*(I), 60-70.

Patel, R. (2020). Domestic economies and invisible labor in postcolonial South Asian fiction. Comparative Literature Studies, 57(2), 202–221. https://doi.org/10.5325/complitstudies.57.2.0202

Rabbani, F., & Chaudhary, N. (2020). Neoliberalism and water commodification in Mohsin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia. South Asian Studies, 35(1), 121–130.

Ahmad, J., Ullah, K., & Nawab, H. U. (2024). Unveiling femininity: Exploring women's representation in selected Khowar language proverbs from District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, *7*(2), 401-416.

Ali, A., Ali, S. S., Ullah. K. (2022). The Dilemma of Women's Identity in Pakistani TV Ads: A Case for Beauty Myth. *The Dialogue*, *17*(4).

Rajan, R. S. (1993). Real and imagined women: Gender, culture and postcolonialism. Routledge.

Roy, A. (2017). The ministry of utmost happiness. Hamish Hamilton.

Saleem, M. (2023). The rise of neoliberal individual: A reader-response analysis of Mohsin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 8(2), 12–19. https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.82.2

Shamsie, K. (2009). Burnt shadows. Bloomsbury.

The Guardian. (2013, February 28). How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia by Mohsin Hamid – review. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/feb/28/how-to-get-filthy-rich-mohsin-hamid-review

Vogel, L. (1983). Marxism and the oppression of women: Toward a unitary theory. Rutgers University Press.

Yasir Arafat. (2020). Totalitarianism and Colonial Legacy: A Postcolonial Analysis of Muhammad Hanif's A Case of Exploding Mangoes. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, *4*(I), 31-37