Ambivalent sexism experienced by the female characters in Cho Nam Joo's Saha

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Abstract

This study examines the two subcategories of ambivalent sexism, hostile and benevolent, as experienced by the female characters in Cho Nam Joo's *Saha*. Using a qualitative text analysis approach, the study investigates how sexism is portrayed in character conversations, actions, and narrative descriptions. The ambivalent sexism theory, initiated by Susan Fiske and Peter Glick, was used to analyze the data. Results show that benevolent sexism takes the form of overly protective attitudes and exaggerated praise, while hostile sexism in the novel takes the form of verbal and physical abuse. Both behaviours amplify social inequalities and gender stereotypes in the dystopian society depicted in *Saha,* where marginalized individuals, especially women, face systematic oppression and discrimination. The research concludes that *Saha* effectively portrays the complex dynamics of sexism in a patriarchal society, providing insight into how such themes contribute to discussions on gender studies and literature.

Abstrak

Seksisme Ambivalent Yang Dihadapi Oleh Karakter Perempuan Dalam Saha Karya Cho Nam Joo

Studi ini mengkaji dua subkategori dari seksisme ambivalen, yaitu *hostile* dan *benevolent* sebagaimana dialami oleh tokoh perempuan dalam novel *Saha* karya Cho Nam Joo. Penelitian ini membahas tentang pengambaran seksisme dalam percakapan karakter, tindakan, dan deskripsi naratif dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis teks kualitatif. Teori seksisme ambivalen, yang diperkenalkan oleh Susan Fiske dan Peter Glick, digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *benevolent sexism* berbentuk sikap terlalu melindungi dan pujian yang berlebian sedangkan *hostile sexism* dalam novel tersebut berbentuk pelecehan verbal dan fisik. Kedua perilaku tersebut memperkuat ketaksetaraan sosial dan stereotip gender dalam masyarakat distopia yang digambarkan dalam *Saha,* dimana individu-individu yang terpinggirkan, terutama perempuan, menghadapi penindasan dan diskriminasi yang sistematis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Saha secara efektif menggambarkan dinamika seksisme yang kompleks dalam masyarakat patriarkis, memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana tema-tema tersebut berkontribusi pada diskusi tentang studi gender dan sastra.

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1   Introduction

In South Korea, males traditionally play an important and powerful role in the family and society. This condition leads to systemic discrimination against women in various aspects of life. South Korea's deeply rooted patriarchal society nurtures sexism (Jimin, 2024). Although the country is known for its rapid technological and economic progress, the issue of sexism remains a significant challenge. Women often face discrimination in areas such as employment and education and even become victims of violence because society continues to see women as objects and subordinates. Therefore, many women experience psychological and other difficulties in reaching their full potential. In this case, sexism is often normalized and unnoticed (Koudenburg et al., 2021). The normalization of existing gender norms that go unnoticed plays an important role in maintaining gender injustice. Sexism does not only take the form of direct discrimination but also manifests in broader forms. Jobs such as childcare, housework and family care that women often perform in social reproduction are often considered "domestic work" that has no economic value, yet they play an important role in maintaining social and economic stability (Elias & Rai, 2019)

This study uses the theory of ambivalent sexism developed by Peter Glick and Susan Fiske because this theory is supposed to clarify how sexism is manifested in a patriarchal society, as depicted in *Saha.* As explained in the first paragraph, South Korean society has a deeply rooted patriarchal system, which causes discrimination against women. According to this theory, there are two main types of sexism: hostile and benevolent (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Hostile sexism is a concept that refers to direct negative attitudes towards women, including the belief that women are weak, lack competence, or are incapable of leadership. Benevolent sexism often appears as an attitude that looks positive but contains elements of oppression. Benevolent sexism reinforces inequality by maintaining women's traditional roles and limiting their life choices outside the household. Both types of sexism lead to problems for women who are trapped in systems that are characterized by them, either explicitly or through hidden social expectations. This research is expected to broaden insights into how gender themes and gender discrimination are displayed in Cho Nam Joo's works by incorporating the theory of ambivalent sexism.

Saha, by Cho Nam Joo, was chosen for this study because the novel depicts the reality of social injustice related to gender inequality in a patriarchal society. *Saha* is a dystopian novel based on the life of the people living in mansion Saha, who are considered the lowest class and controlled by large corporations' power; they live in poverty and despair because they have no access to freedom and justice, including gender inequality. South Korean society has an entrenched patriarchal system, which leads to discrimination against women in various aspects of life, and this is reflected in *Saha*, where women experience various forms of social, economic, and political oppression. One of the main characters in *Saha* is Jin Kyung. She portrays the complexities of women's lives in an unjust society. As she discovers the truth about several mysterious events, one of which is the murder of a young woman and the disappearance of her brother, she uncovers a system of injustice and corruption. The novel depicts how people live under social, political and economic pressures and highlights gender inequality and sexual harassment. This situation makes Saha relevant to the theory of ambivalent sexism, which condemns both hostile sexism in the form of exploitation and abuse of women and benevolent sexism that challenges them in traditional ways. Therefore, this work not only illustrates gender norms but also explores how sexism is structured in a patriarchal society.

There are several previous studies related to this research. Previous studies on Cho Nam Joo's *Saha* have mainly focused on feminism and gender discrimination (Chairina & Ririn, 2022; Firdaus & Yulistiyanti, 2022; Fujianty et al., 2022). These studies highlight how Cho Nam Joo consistently incorporates feminist themes in her work, depicting the struggles of women in a patriarchal society. However, research applying ambivalent sexism theory has been conducted in a variety of contexts,

such as the experiences of lesbian women and men (Bravestone et al., 2024; Liinason, 2020). Gender representation in games that focuses on gender issues emerges in gaming communities previously dominated by men (Kelly et al., 2023; Song et al., 2020). Previous studies that use the ambivalent theory of sexism examine the portrayal of sexism in online children's literature (Hasanah, 2022; Istiadah & Afifah, 2020). Moreover, various studies have explored ambivalent sexism in pop culture and media, especially in films and television shows, revealing how both hostile and benevolent sexism affect gender representations (Blumell, 2020; Brewington et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021). This research aims to fill that gap by studying how ambivalent sexism emerges in *Saha,* a novel that depicts systemic oppression, including gender-based discrimination. This is achieved by looking at how ambivalent sexism emerges in the novel and how it affects female characters' experiences. These studies underline that ambivalent sexism often creates paradoxes in gender portrayal due to the combination of overt (hostile) and subtle (benevolent) sexism towards women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). In this way, it helps provide a solid basis for examining how ambivalent sexism plays a role in the novel *Saha* and enriches the understanding of gender and feminism.

Although many previous studies have investigated Cho Nam Joo's works, most have focused on gender discrimination as a whole and not specifically on ambivalent sexism. Although some studies have applied the theory of ambivalent sexism to various objects such as LGBT individuals, movies, culture, and television shows, research on ambivalent sexism in literary works, especially dystopian novels, is still limited. This study fills this gap by looking at how Saha depicted benevolent and hostile sexism in a dystopian society. The novel's dystopian setting serves as an important lens through which to view how gender oppression interacts with broader economic, political, and social injustices. This study, in contrast to previous studies, emphasizes how the dystopian elements in Saha's novel amplify the ambivalent overtones of sexism, providing a better understanding of how systemic gender oppression is normalized and sustained. This study not only finds examples of sexism but also reveals how stories challenge or reinforce patriarchal structures. It does so by using the theory of ambivalent sexism developed by Glick and Fiske. This study provides a new perspective on how dystopian literature can serve as a medium to criticize gender inequality in the real world, and offers a new way to talk about sexism in literature.

2   Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, specifically text analysis, to explore the representation of sexism in the novel Saha by Cho Nam Joo. Peter and Susan's ambivalent sexism theory, which divides sexism into hostile and benevolent forms, is applied because it offers a thorough framework for examining how gender discrimination functions in the novel in overt and covert ways. This theory is an appropriate perspective to understand the portrayal of gender inequality in this novel as it reveals how female characters experience overt oppression (hostile sexism) and restrictive gender norms disguised as protection or admiration (benevolent sexism). The data source for this study is Saha. Saha was written by a writer from South Korea, Cho Nam Joo. She has created many written works, some of which have even been made into movies. Saha was originally published in 2019 and subsequently re-released in 2022. Saha consists of 190 pages. The English translation by Jamie Chang was utilized to facilitate analysis. The data collection from the novel consists of phrases, sentences, utterances, and paragraphs that identify the sexism experienced. The data collection process involved library research techniques. The data were analyzed through a data reduction process using a table form presentation. Then, conclusions were reached to understand how sexism experienced by women was expressed in the story. Data validation is checked using cross-referencing the analysis result with related literature to ensure accuracy and consistency with interpretation.

3 Findings

The main findings describe how the victims experienced ambivalent sexism, highlighting its manifestations and impacts. Most of the victims of ambivalent sexism identified in *Saha's* novel are women who face a variety of sexism, both hostile and benevolent. To facilitate classification and analysis, the data are presented in tables so readers can understand the specific forms of ambivalent sexism expressed in the stories. This section focuses on the female characters in the novel.This research aims to find the types of ambivalent sexism experienced by the female characters in the story. Table 1 shows findings about the types and classifications of ambivalent sexism experienced by female characters.

Table 1: The victims and classification of types of sexism problem

No.	The victims	Types of sexism problem	Hostile	Benevolent
1.	Jin Kyung's mother	Labeled as a caring woman		✔
2.	Sa Ra	Receiving body shaming	✔	
3.	Eun Jin	Praise for being gentle		✔
4	Jin Kyung	Get negative stigma	✔	
5	Yonwha	Receiving physical violence	✔	
		Receiving compliments on one's appearance		✔
		Protective attitude		✔
6	Su	Protective attitude		✔
		Getting raped	✔	

Table 1 shows the female characters as subjects who experience ambivalent sexism in *Saha's* story. The female characters face various challenges reflecting their experiences with ambivalent sexism. This reflects the complexity of ambivalent sexism in their lives. It discusses the classification of various sexism problems women face in *Saha*. It classifies the problem of sexism in novels, whether it is hostile or benevolent. The data analysis results show the type of problem raised in *Saha*. In hostile sexism, there is a form of sexism that women receive in the form of verbal and nonverbal. Meanwhile, the benevolent sexism received by the female characters is the form of a protective attitude and getting praise. The character who gets the most experience of ambivalent sexism is Yonhwa's character.

4 Discussion

The analysis of ambivalent sexism in Cho Nam Joo's novel focuses on how this type of sexism, which includes both hostile and benevolent sexism, affects the characters in the story. In a dominating patriarchal society, sexism often operates in two main ways: hostile sexism, which involves behaviors that intentionally harm women, and benevolent sexism, which involves behaviors that do not harm women but rather challenge their freedom. This part focuses on how ambivalent Sexism is portrayed through the experiences of female characters such as Yonhwa, Jin Kyung and her mothers, Sara, Eun Jin and Su. The main focus will be how this type of sexism manifests in dialog, character interaction, and narrative. Through this investigation, this research aims to understand better how hostile and benign sexism contributes to harmful gender stereotypes and not only affects social reality.

4.1 Hostile Sexism

Hostile sexism is characterized by negative attitudes towards women, often seeing women as manipulative and a threat to male power. This perspective leads to harmful behaviours, such as not seeking support from women, which can threaten interpersonal relationships (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Women are perceived as exploitative by men, which causes them to avoid emotional dependence (Pani, Prithvi, 2023). Hostile sexism includes attitudes or actions that directly degrade and abuse

women, both physically and psychologically. From the data found in *Saha*, hostile sexism can be found in various types of treatment. Specific forms of hostile sexism found in *Saha* include physical violence, rape, and verbal abuse.

The first point discusses hostile sexism in physical form. In the physical form, there are two that were found, which are domestic violence (Glick & Fiske, 2001) and also a case of sexual assault against one of the female characters in the movie.

> *He sat up and gazed Into her eyes. "So that's what you're after?" he said. Yonhwa didn't answer. He repeated his question two more times. She didn't answer, and he hit her for the first time. (Joo, 2023;53)*

The above represents ambivalent sexism in the form of hostile sexism. Where hostile sexism is overt gender discrimination, it often involves demeaning women. In this quote, Yonhwa's husband is very ignorant of his wife's feelings. Her husband's attitude is reflected when he commits physical violence; this strongly indicates the existence of hostile sexism (Juarros-basterretxea et al., 2019). In this scene, Yonhwa's silence, despite being asked repeatedly by her husband, indicates a passive resistance to her husband's authority, but the response she receives is violence. This shows that Yonhwa is not respected by her husband, and Yonhwa chooses to remain silent or voice her intentions (Hayes, 2020).

> *"She'd been missing for two days when she was found. The police reported in a press briefing that the car belonged to the deceased, and signs of sexual assault found on the body suggest rape and maunder." (Joo, 2023;17)*

The excerpt above shows the hostile sexism received by women in *Saha*. The character mentioned in the story is Su. Su is claimed to have died and was a victim of sexual violence before being killed. Sexual harassment is a form of hostile sexism because sexual harassment is not only an individual act but a reflection of broader attitudes towards sexual gender. Hostile sexism reflects a deep-seated negative view of women, which often results from aggressive or insulting behaviour, including harassment (Glick & Fiske, 1997). This concept is linked to gender discrimination, which highlights the systematic issues that contribute to such behaviour (Adolph, 2017). Hostile sexism is associated with greater support for violence against women that can manifest in sexual harassment behaviour (Gutierrez & Leaper, 2024).

Hostile Sexism is not only physical but can also be verbal. Such as the existence of insults against women directly. The form of Hostile sexism found in *Saha* is body shaming. The character who gets this kind of treatment is Sara. As in the following excerpt:

> *One cop covered his right eye with his right hand and said, 'You're the one-eyed bartender who works at the bar down the back street, right? You're real famous, you know that? I hear you only show people your bum eye in bed. Let me see that mysterious eye of yours. (Joo, 2023;55)*

The cop calls Sara's name, saying, "Hey, one-eyed." This shows that the cop wants to demean Sara by insulting her physically. Then the cop says, "People say you only show your deformed eye in bed. Let's see your amazing eyes." Exhibiting a rude attitude, he seeks not only to mistreat Sa Ra physically but also to humiliate her sexually. This is ambivalent sexism, which falls under hostile sexism. Intimidating behaviour is used to reinforce traditional gender roles and uphold men's positions of power. Here, the police officer tries to maintain his control and power through humiliation and threats, reflecting the view that women deserve to be humiliated or intimidated if they are perceived as violating gender or social norms (Colker, 2020). Sara's position as someone who works in a bar makes the police officers even more sexually insulting and degrading to her.

The excerpts above show that there is physical humiliation of women. Insulting women's physical condition is the same as hostile sexism. It reflects negative stereotyping and discrimination against

women (Colker, 2020). Types of hostile sexism in the quote include manipulative, deceptive and flirtatious. These behaviours involve tactics to influence women to make them emotionally powerless (Radhiah et al., 2023).

Hostile sexism in *Saha* is described as an insult and degrading to women directly. The data found in the *saha* shows that the characters Jin Kyung and Yonhwa received this behaviour.

> *He said, enunciating every word, "Dumb bitch. You try trying to strangle me? You got a fucking death wish" (Joo, 2023;186)*

The excerpt is a type of ambivalent sexism, specifically hostile sexism. In this quote, there are negative attitudes and also negative behaviour that are done to women. This is how a man with his language degrades women. In this excerpt, Jin Kyung goes to save her sister. Then when she wants to defend herself, she is shouted at as a "bitch". The term "bitch" is an insult used to demean Jin Kyung. Such terms are designed to place women in certain categories emphasizing weakness, helplessness, or low moral character. Men are often not similarly labelled (Ariftha & Azhar, 2023). The term "bitch" became a strong stigma that disqualified women, often labelled as inferior in a normal way which was a social tactic. This state, of course, represents the hostile sexism in the story. Jin Kyung is subjected to verbal abuse as well as physical violence. This shows that women can easily get verbal abuse that will lead to physical violence, as quoted in "Still pointing the gun at Jin Kyung, the man stepped aside and moved his chin toward the large door. "Meeting room." All of this, of course, serves the purpose of intimidating and controlling women.

> *She honestly felt the day would never come. He was healthier and livelier than she was. He spent his days picking on every little thing she was doing wrong around the house, and his nights harassing her with his insatiable sexual appetite. (Joo, 2023;52)*

This excerpt highlights the actions of Yonwa's husband, who shows a rude and very demeaning attitude towards Yonhwa. Her husband criticized her even though she only made a small mistake at home. This was done to undermine Yonhwa's self-esteem and courage. Her husband's criticism does not lead to an improvement but shows that her husband has superiority, as if she is never enough. As Glick points out, hostile sexism is a more blatant and hateful form of sexism against women (Glick & Fiske, 2011). In this quote, her husband openly expresses an insult to Yonhwa. He feels entitled to do so in order to control his wife. The treatment makes women look inferior and worthless, especially when compared to men who have authority in a relationship (Mati, 2022). Some statements directly insult women who are part of hostile sexism. Giving women bad terms and demeaning attitudes is quite clearly part of hostile sexism. It reinforces traditional stereotypes of femininity, and it promotes and perpetuates gender inequality (Felmlee, 2020).

4.2   Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism consists of behaviour that appears caring but ultimately restricts women's autonomy (Barreto & Doyle, 2023). Benevolent sexism portrays women as dependent and in need of protection and reinforces existing gender roles (Fiske, 2018). It prevents women from challenging stereotypes, which causes them to become more objectified and dissatisfied with their bodies, and ultimately maintains gender inequality (Barreto & Doyle, 2023). Although benevolence may seem positive, it can harm women without realizing it (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Some of the benevolent sexism found in *Saha* is in the form of a protective attitude towards women and then also in the form of complimenting women either on their appearance or attitude. The attitude is a form of benevolent sexism. Characters who receive benevolent sexist treatment in *Saha* are Sara, Eun Jin, Yonhwa, and Su. Benevolent sexism that makes women have to be protected is found in the *Saha* experienced by Yonhwa and Su, found in the following excerpt;

He wants to live out the rest of his wife with a nice, obedient woman and leave her everything.(Joo, 2023;51)

The excerpt above tells the story of Yonhwa, who is offered to marry an older man, so she is advised to obey her husband's broker; her husband will give her an inheritance. This quote is a form of benevolent sexism. It shows benevolent sexism through the opinion that the ideal woman is a woman who is "good and obedient." Moreover, these words express a man's desire to pass on his property. At first glance, this is positive towards women; they appear kind and supportive. However, this can limit women and only benefit men. It is like the need for women to be submissive, having to follow. This excerpt portrays women as submissive and passive. This proof defines subtle sexism but still demeans women.

The agent got Yonhwa a life-changing job after all. Marriage. With a Citizen. Most women could marry a citizen and receive citizenship with their husband's sponsorship. (Joo, 2023;81)

This excerpt describes ambivalent sexism in a form called "benevolent sexism." This attitude benefits women but reinforces derogatory stereotypes about women (Glick & Fiske, 2011). In this case, it is shown that a woman can gain social status and additional rights by marrying a townsperson. This situation strengthens conventional gender roles that assume women are dependent on men for social and economic security. Although it appears to be a good opportunity, it is demeaning, suggesting that women's status and worth depend on their relationship with men (Elena & Cardoso, 2021; Glick & Fiske, 2011).In other words, women are considered only to be able to "move up" in the social strata by marriage rather than through their achievements or independence, which limits their freedom and makes them more dependent on men.

"It's not like you're good with your hands. I suppose they liked you. Who knows what employers are looking for?" (Joo, 2023;81)

The excerpt above shows the existence of benevolent sexism, a comment made by an agent to Yonhwa. In this expression, the agent praises Yonhwa because the company interests her. The agent says, "I think they like you," which shows that the company likes her, but with the phrase 'We never know what the company is looking for, do we?" These excerpts mean the company is not looking at her because of Yonhwa's competence but for other reasons. The text does not specify; it could refer to Yonhwa's attractive appearance. This proof points to the existence of benevolent sexism that sees women's aesthetics and physical attractiveness as the main value rather than their skills. The view could reinforce the stereotype that women are valued more for their physical attractiveness than their competence. This view explains the disregard for women's potential that can harm the optimal development of a woman's skills or career.

"The doctor who died a few days ago in the park... Your brother was harassing and stalking him, wasn't he?" (Joo, 2023;28)

"Do Kyung stalk her. "Stalker, stalker, stalker," she mumbles to herself, the sinister consonants rolling on her tongue" (Joo, 2023;28)

It shows the ambivalent sexism in the form of benevolent sexism. Su is a woman who died of murder. The murder is also unknown who the culprit is, but in the novel, Su often interacts with Do Kyung; it can be said that they have a special relationship. The police assumed that Do Kyung was a stalker, who always stalked Su, while originally Do Kyung was not a stalker, but they did meet often before the incident. In this quote, hostile sexism is represented where women often experience things such as violence or even harassment. With the accusations made by the police to Do Kyung as a stalker it seems to provide a protective attitude towards Su or women. This treatment is part of benevolent sexism, as if protecting women, but without realizing it, it makes women look like weak women and need to be overprotected. Benevolent sexism often makes a person appear as having

annoying behaviour rather than a serious threat, which can diminish the importance of prevention (Miglietta & Maran, 2017).

The excerpt shows a more protective attitude towards the female characters in *Saha*. The protective attitude towards women indicates the existence of benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism stipulates that men should respect and protect women, offering security. This attitude is considered a concern or a sense of honour, as women need to be protected. This protective attitude is characterized as protective paternalism. This attitude harms women's self-esteem, making women feel that they are not competent or strong enough to succeed without the help of men (Oswald & Kirkman, 2019).

The praise with certain intentions obtained by the characters in *Saha* also shows the existence of benevolent sexism. In *Saha*, several data were found that discussed the treatment received by Eun Jin and Yonhwa;

> *"It's not like you're good with your hands. I suppose they liked you. Who knows what employers are looking for?" (Joo, 2023;81)*

The data above shows the existence of benevolent sexism, a comment made by an agent to Yonhwa. In this expression, the agent praises Yonhwa because the company interests her. The agent says, "I think they like you," which shows that the company likes her, but with the phrase 'We never know what the company is looking for, do we?" This excerpt means that the company is not looking at her because of Yonhwa's competence but for other reasons. The text does not specify; it could refer to Yonhwa's attractive appearance. This condition points to the existence of benevolent sexism that sees women's aesthetics and physical attractiveness as the main value rather than their skills. This could reinforce the stereotype that women are valued more for their physical attractiveness than their competence. This explains the disregard for women's potential. This can harm the optimal development a woman's skills or career.

> *"You should be a caregiver when you grow up," (Joo, 2023;170)*

Benevolent sexism includes attitudes that appear to be positive but are demeaning and reinforce traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2011). In the quote, the head caregiver's comment, "You should be a caregiver when you grow up," reflects benevolent sexism. It shows that Eun Jin is praised for her nature and ability as a nanny. Although it sounds like a compliment that Eun Jin has such a nature, it implies that she has the primary ability to be a nanny. This would limit Eun Jin's potential, as her future role would have to be that of a nanny. This aligns with the traditional stereotype that they should take on the traditional role of a caregiver rather than looking for other avenues that might be more diverse. This was also reinforced during Eun Jin's 15th birthday. She decided arbitrarily that she would become a caregiver: "I have to be a caregiver". When asked why she became a nanny, she only answered because her nanny said she should be a caregiver. The quote, "You said so yourself, you said I should be a caregiver when I grew up. You said that last year." In this quote, it strongly shows that Eun Jin cannot improve her abilities in other fields because, from childhood, she has been praised and said to be a caregiver. So, Eun Jin thinks that her role should be that of a caregiver following the stereotypes and traditional roles of women.

Praise of women that refers to traditional roles such as being a faithful partner or even having parenting skills reflects a form of benevolent sexism. These compliments are delivered with positive intentions and a sense of appreciation. Compliments rooted in benevolent sexism often reinforce traditional gender expectations. This creates significant social pressure for women to continue to meet these standards. This leaves women limited in expressing their full potential (Alba et al., 2024).

> *"Jin Kyung's mother, who'd run away from her husband twice, returned to nurse her bedridden husband and provided for the family with unbelievable devotion." (Joo, 2023;28)*

Her mother is an example of benevolent sexism in that she continues to care for her abusive husband despite her suffering. This reflects the traditional role of women as caregivers who "sacrifice" for the family. There is benevolent sexism when Jin Kyung's mother "takes care of her husband," suggesting that the traditional role of women is to care for the family, children, and home. In this excerpt, the term "devotion" refers to the emphasis on this traditional role, giving the impression that women should always try to meet the needs of others, often at the expense of their own needs and desires. Benevolent sexism violates traditional gender roles.

Furthermore, although Jin Kyung's mother is considered the "backbone" member of the family, it is generally assumed that she has a tough attitude. Labelling a woman as caring for her husband reflects benevolent sexism, which often seems positive, but it reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. The term emphasizes that women have a special role as caregivers, supporters, or keepers of household harmony. This is in line with complementary gender differentiation in ambivalent sexism, where role differences are considered natural and complementary but only in the framework of patriarchal hierarchy (Oswald & Kirkman, 2019).

5   Conclusion

This study has identified two types of ambivalent sexism that appear in the novel *Saha* by Cho Nam Joo: hostile and benevolent. Hostile sexism is seen in various forms of demeaning treatment and discrimination experienced by female characters in *Saha*. Meanwhile, benevolent sexism is shown through protective attitudes that seem to praise and adore or even care for women, but this can limit their freedom and reinforce their dependence on men.

The female characters are Jin Kyung's mother, Jin Kyung, Yonhwa, Eun Jin, Sara, and Su. In *Saha's* novel, they face various forms of sexism that affect their lives. ChoNam Joo, the author of *Saha,* illustrates how sexism restricts women's freedom of movement. This study concludes that *Saha* depicts women's struggles and invites readers to understand how sexism can limit women, whether it takes the form of friendly and kind actions that are ultimately harmful.

Furthermore, although sexism impacts female characters, it ignores how male characters' perspectives can provide an unbalanced picture. Future research is recommended to examine the broader patriarchal culture of South Korea so that the results of the data analysis are richer and follow the social background in which *Saha's* story developed. Future research can also expand the focus by analyzing male characters in the novel to understand how they play a role in the dynamics of sexism. This could help provide a broader perspective on ambivalent sexism.

Disclosure Statement

The authors claim there is no conflict of interest.

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