SEXUAL HARASSMENT REFLECTED AT NAWAL EL SAADAWI ‘S WOMEN AT POINT ZERO (1983):
A FEMINIST APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The major problem of this study is How is Sexual Harassment reflected at Nawal El Saadawi Women at Point Zero (1983): A feminist Approach. The objectives of this study is to analyze based on feminist approach. The research uses qualitative research. The data of the research consists of primary data and secondary data. The primary data of the research is the Women at Point Zero novel and the secondary data of the research are other materials related of the study. The result to the study shows the following conclusion. Based on feminist approach, it shows that Women at Point Zero novel illustrates a Firdaus how a woman is able patriarchal culture, Firdaus as prostitution and get sexual harassment in the society. It is based on the reality in daily long-life story that women as Firdaus. In this reality this condition women in Mubarak Era, a women feels condition and situation patriarchal culture in Egypt

Keyword: sexual harassment, Firdaus, women at point zero, feminist approach
A. INTRODUCTION

*Women at Point Zero* is a novel by Nawal El Saadawi, and she was published in 1983. The book was first published in London. It was a major work of fiction to be produced by Nawal El Sadawi and translated by Sherif Hitata. This novel is an Initially, Egyptian publishers rejected the book, and the first edition was published in Lebanon in 1985. *Women at Point Zero* has subsequently been published in twenty-two languages. The English language translation was originally published in 1983 by Zed Books Ltd. in London and Room 400 in New York.

Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian novelist, a doctor and a militant writer on Arab women’s life conditions. She was born in 1931 in the village of KafrTahla in the Egyptian Delta, and attended college at the Faculty of Medicine in Cairo, “one of approximately fifty women among hundreds of men (Douglas, 1995: p. 11). Nawal El Saadawi is known for her controversial writings, often an invitation to question authority and patriarchal power. Dismissed from Ministry of Health, Chief Editor of an important health journal, Assistant General Secretary in the Medical Association in Egypt, and imprisoned in 1981 for her courageous political activity, Nawal El Saadawi has often been silenced for advocating women’s liberation. Her Arab Women’s Solidarity Association, an international organization dedicated to “lifting the veil from the mind” of the Arab Women (Douglas, 1995: p. 11), and her controversial books, are just few examples of her important work.

Nawal El Saadawi was born in 1931 in the village of KafrTahla in the Egyptian Delta, and “grew up in a large family of nine brothers and sisters”. Her father believed strongly in education, which helped him to become a high official in the Egyptian Ministry of Education. El Saadawi, for her part, attended public schools before going on to study in the faculty of medicine at the University of Cairo. In other words, El Saadawi’s formal education took place in native Egyptian Arabic-language schools. This is
hardly a given for Arab intellectuals, many of whom received substantial amounts of their education either outside the region or in foreign (and generally foreign-language) schools in the Middle East. Nor was Nawal the only child in her family to attend college: all her siblings did as well. But El Saadawi did not choose to pursue medicine for its own sake. Rather, as she puts it, “the Faculty of Medicine takes the best students, those with the highest grades.” One of approximately fifty women among hundreds of men she graduated in 1955. As a physician, El Saadawi practiced in the areas of thoracic medicine and psychiatry. She was appointed to the Ministry of Health in 1958, but in August 1972 she was dismissed from the ministry and from her post as Egypt’s national public health director owing to her frank writings on sexuality, specifically in Woman and Sex (Doglas, 1955: p. 7).

This research paper concerning is a very interesting literature work, which has specific type of the novel which offers different values to the readers. This novel woman is able patriarchal culture, Firdaus as prostitution with sexual harassment in the society. That condition is factual happen in the society.

The word feminist as a word gained widespread usage in the western world’s in the 1890s. “It emerged at this time as a way to identity individuals who supported not merely an increased public role women but also women’s right to define themselves as autonomous beings” (Mandell, 1995: 4).

Feminist theory generally shares four concerns (Jeggar and Rothenberg, 1984). First, Feminist theory seeks to understand the gender nature of virtually social institutional relations. Second, gender relations are constructed as problematic and as related to other inequities and contradiction in social life. Third, gender relations are not viewed as other constructs theory by and about women. Fourth, Feminist theorist tend to be explicitly political in their advocacy of social change. Women, feminist declare that they must define themselves and assert their own voices through politics, social, society, education and art. Feminist has bug hope to realize that both male and female has big hope to realize that both male and female have equally valued voices (Charles, 1996:180).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer uses a qualitative research. The steps to conduct this research are determining the type of the study, the object of the study, data and data source, technique of data collection, and technique of data analysis. The object of the study Sexual Harassment reflected at

There are two data sources needed to do this research, namely: primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data sources is directed study Sexual Harassment *Women at Point Zero* (1983) by Nawal El Saadawi. The secondary data sources are other sources related to the study, such as: website, dictionary, some books that support the analysis. The technique of data analysis, the writer used take notes as the method of collection data in this research. The technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis.

C. **Finding and Discussion**

After analyzing this novel, the researcher found some research findings. The research findings will be discussed below.

1. **Women’s Position**

   Along the history, women position is subordinate to men. Their positions are under males. It is difficult for them to enter the college or professions because it is dominated by men, so there are a few opportunities for them. In the society women are seen as the second class people, they do not have the right position in their own life. According to Andersen (1983: 9), feminist believe that women are treated as inferior.

   *Women at Point Zero* seems to show that women’s position is still under men. It is represented through the characterization of the character in the novel both major and minor character and the condition that follows.

   The main character, Firdaus, a give up of male subordination is a symbol of a harassed and powerless woman in a
society in which women have limited options. Firdaus is performance prototypes as a persecuted and lower-class female farmer image. While these descriptions point to the disturbing psychological effects and emotional injure inflicted by the different forms of male oppression represented in the text, they raise questions about the narrator’s dependability as an important narrative voice because of her extremely selfish language. Her closing words on men ring with a dim pessimism: “My life means their death. My death means their life (WAPZ, p.100).

At the first time, women’s position in the society described in this novel is under man. As a child, Firdaus’s uncle uses any opportunity he has to exploit. Her aunt and uncle view her as a useless burden after her graduation, and marry her off to the elderly Sheikh Mahmoud. As stated in the following excerpts of two dialogues between Uncle’s and aunt.

‘Supposing she refuses’?
‘Why should she refuse him?... besides she has inherited nothing, and has
no income of her own. We will never find a better husband for her than Sheikh
Mahmoud’
‘Do you think Sheikh Mahmoud will welcome the idea?’
‘If I speak to him I am sure he will agree. I intend to ask him for a big dowry.’
‘How much?’
‘A hundred pound or perhaps even two hundred if he has the money.’
‘If he pays a hundred pound then Allah will indeed have been generous to us
and I would not be greedy to ask for more.’
‘I will start with two hundred. You know he is a man who can argue for hours
over five milliners and kill himself over a piaster.’
‘If he pays one hundred pounds that will be sufficient blessing from Allah. I will be able to pay my debt and buy some underwear as well as a dress or two for her’(WAPZ, p.37).
Firdaus reflected figure in the women power stronger in this novel. But, Firdaus has a feeling that a woman was powerless. The description as hit in the sentences indicated Sheik Bayoumi’s authority. Implicitly, it means that women were inferior man. Hit is a harassed.

2. **Women’s Right**

Every person is born equal. Mandell (1995: 5) states that person should be allowed to exercise freedom of choice unfettered by either public opinion or law. In principles every person was given equal opportunity and civil right. According to Andersen (1983: 139), “All people should be given equal opportunity and right to do their activity without gender differentiation.”

From the statement above, it is seen that every person’s has the same right and chance to express their idea, need and desire, such as in work place, education, law and social. But in reality men still dominate in them.

Uncle Firdaus attend classes in El Azhar, and study at a time when Firdaus was still a child and had no yet learned to read or write.

When my uncle would clamber into the train, and bit me farewell, I would cry and beg him to take with him to Cairo. But my uncle would ask,

‘What will you do in Cairo, Firdaus?’

And I would reply: ‘I will go to El Azhar and study like you’

Then he would laugh and explain that El Azhar was only for men. And I would cry, and hold on to his hand, as the train started to move but he would pull it away with a force and suddenness that made me fall flat on my face (WAPZ, p.16).
El Azhar is a university at just for men. There is only man who can go to school. Women only at home, cooking, cleaning the house and others.

3. **Women’s Role**

The emergency of feminist is for changing the assumption that some cannot run their role in public area. Andersen (1983: 10) states that feminist movement has significant changes in the ways men and women’s role are defined and the ways in which they thinks of each other. These changes bring out the positive impact to the women, for example there are they run their role in domestic area.

In the context of the *Women at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi creates a major Character named Firdaus as a figure a women patriarchy. Living wage in men domination, women usually are limited to do the whole thing that they can.

When my uncle would clamber into the train, and bit me farewell, I would cry and beg him to take with him to Cairo. But my uncle would ask, ‘What will you do in Cairo, Firdaus?’ And I would reply: ‘I will go to El Azhar and study like you’

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Her coming back to her uncle’s house hopeful to find support but when Firdaus complains, her uncle simply tells her that "all husbands beat their wives” (WAPZ, p.69) and her uncle's wife disclose to being flattened often. Her aunt tells her: "A virtuous woman is not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty is perfect obedience.”(WAPZ, p.70).Firdaus cannot believe this and argues with her: "I said my uncle was a respected Sheikh, well versed in the
teachings of religion, and he, therefore, could not possibly be in the habit of beating his wife." (WAPZ, p.71) However, her aunt replies ironically that it was "precisely men well versed in their religion who beat their wives. The precepts of religion permitted such punishment." (WAPZ, p.72).

4. Women’s Participation

Through history, generally women have fewer participation and career opportunities than men. They do not equal right with men in citizenship with a reason that women are less rational. In our society, the men participation is more important than women. Women are less participated and men are much participated. “The women voices, decision, opinion and critique are ignored by the men” (Mandell, 1995: 188).

Firdaus knows that women did not become heads of the state. She was discovered these entire rulers were man. Firdaus cannot get an opportunity to work in the government.

I knew that women did not become heads of state, but I felt that I was not like other women, nor like the other girls around me who kept talking about love, or about men. For these were subject I never mentioned. Somehow I was not interested in the things that occupied their minds, and what seemed of importance to them struck me as being trivial (WAPZ, p.25).

I discovered that all theses rulers were men. What they had in common was an avaricious and distorted personality, am never-ending appetite for money, sex and unlimited power. They were men who showed corruption on the earth, and plundered their peoples, men endowed with loud voices a capacity for persuasion, for choosing sweet words and shooting poisoned arrows. Thus, the truth about them was revealed only after their death, and as a
result I discovered that history tended to repeat itself with a foolish obstinacy (WAPZ, p.27).

5. Sexual Harassment

The term sexual harassment was not coined until the 1970s (Farley 1978), but formal organizational responses have since diffused rapidly (Dobbin and Kelly 2007; Schultz 2003).

Feminist scholarship situates sexual harassment within broader patterns of discrimination, power, and privilege, linking harassment to sex-based inequality (MacKinnon 1979).

Women are subjected to various quantities of physical and sexual abuse from their partners. Firdaus’s father always beats her mother. She observes that this is one of the “very few things” he knows in life, that is, “how to beat his wife and make her bite the dust each night” (WAPZ, 1983: p:12).

As a child, her uncle uses any opportunity he has to exploit her sexually. While she is manipulate dough to heat for family use, her uncle, under the guise of reading a book, rubs her thighs and gradually moves upwards to her private part. He only stops when he hears a sound or movement and ‘I would watch them as they continue to press against my thighs with a grasping almost brutal insistence” (WAPZ, p.13) when silence is restored to the situation.

Firdaus tolerates this matrimonial rape called sex instead of enjoying it because these men see sexual pleasure as their individual right. She says, He got into the habit of beating me whether he had a reason for it or not. On one occasion he hit all over me with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised... One day, he hit me with a heavy stick until the blood ran from my nose and ears. So I left, but this time I did not go to my uncle’s house, I walked
through the streets with swollen eyes and a bruised face (WAPZ, 1983: p.47).

D. Discussion

The analysis of the main character, Firdaus, a give up of male subordination is a symbol of a harassed and powerless woman in a society in which women have limited options. Women’s position in the society described in this novel is under man. As a child, Firdaus’s uncle uses any opportunity he has to exploit. Her aunt and uncle view her as a useless burden after her graduation, and marry her off to the elderly Sheikh Mahmoud.

And then after Firdaus married with Sheikh Mahmoud, Firdaus to show that women’s position still under man in advance. But Firdaus get oppression lives with Sheikh Mahmoud.

In the context of the Women at Point Zero, Nawal El Saadawi creates a major Character named Firdaus as a figure a women. Living wage in men domination, women usually are limited to do the whole thing that they can. Women that’s their disabilities are unspecific not capable to full be taking and partnership role. It means that women are always associated with domestic role: their roles as daughter, wife, and mother. Women public role a women decides to work external the house they will face many form of oppression from their husband or father and from the government in that place.
E. CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing Women at Point Zero novel, the researcher describes the following conclusion. Based on feminist Approach, it shows that Women at Point Zero novel illustrates a Firdaus how a woman is able patriarchal culture, Firdaus as prostitution and get sexual harassment in the society. It is based on the reality in daily long-life story that women as Firdaus. In this reality this condition women in Mubarak Era, a women feels condition and situation patriarchal culture in Egypt.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


