WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY REFLECTED IN *LITTLE WOMEN* NOVEL: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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By:

RADEN RORO SEKAR TEDAK WAHYU NUNGRAHENTI
A320170201

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
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by:

RADEN RORO SEKAR TEDAK WAHYU NUNGRAHENTI

A320170201

Approved to be examined by the Consultant

Consultant,

Titis Setyabudi, S.S., MA
NIDN. 0617047701

ACCEPTANCE

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Accepted by the Board of Examiner
School of Teacher and Training and Education
Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta
On June 2021

The Board of Examiners:

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Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa salah satu novel karya Louisa May Alcott dengan judul *Little Women* yang diterbitkan pada tahun 1868 di Amerika Serikat. Topik pada skripsi ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui macam ketidaksetaraan pada gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori sosial feminisme. Penilitian ini menggunakan sumber data dari novel dan mengumpulkan jurnal yang berhubungan dengan novel ini. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Studi ini berfokus pada ketidaksetaraan gender yang digambarkan dalam novel. Berdasarkan analisis didapatkan hasil adanya jenis ketidaksetaraan pada gender, cara ketidaksetaraan pada gender, dan perjuangan karakter dengan menggunakan metode sosial feminism.

Kata kunci: Feminisme, Perjuangan dan Ketidaksetaraan Gender

Abstract

This study is analyze one of a novel by Louisa May Alcott entitled *Little Women*, published in 1868 in United Stated of America. The research topic of this thesis aims to find out the types of inequality in gender. This research used a feminism social theory. This research is used a data sources from novels and collects journals related to this novel. The method used in this study using qualitative methods. This study focuses on the gender inequality depicted in the novel. Based on the analysis, the results obtained are: kind of gender inequality, the way gender inequality, and struggle of the character portrayed through socialist feminism.

Keywords: Feminism, Struggle, and Gender Inequality

1. INTRODUCTION

Louisa May Alcott was born on November 29, 1832, in Germantown, Pennsylvania. She was the second eldest of four children. Alcott was taught by her father, Amos Bronson Alcott, until 1848, and studied informally with family friends such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Theodore Parker. Residing in Boston and Concord, Massachusetts, Alcott worked as a domestic servant and teacher, among other positions, to help support her family from 1850 to 1862. During the Civil War, she went to Washington, D.C. to work as a nurse. Louisa May Alcott was an American author who wrote under various pseudonyms and only started using her own name when she was ready to commit

to writing. Her novel *Little Women* gave Alcott financial independence and a lifetime writing career. Alcott was a best-selling novelist of the late 1800s, and many of her works, most notably *Little Women*.

This novel tells about a simple family, Mr. March, with a wife named Mrs. March. In their small home they live with a very wise mother (Mrs. March) and a kind and loyal female assistant, named Hannah. Then the father who was fighting on the battlefield of civil war in Concord. One day Meg and Jo got an invitation to go to a party from a rich family in his city. Then Meg and Jo will attend the party. Because they are a very simple family, they wear old dresses but they creatively integrate to stay elegant. At first Laurie was an awkward person but eventually they were able to talk together and then dance together. Since then Jo wanted to get to know Laurie better, because according to Jo, Laurie looked lonely and never left the house. One morning Jo decided to go to Laurie's house, Jo felt sorry because he had never played. Laurie welcomed her guests well, in that house there was only Laurie and her eccentric grandfather and several assistants. After a few days of meeting and became closer then they became friends from that moment on. Laurie also often plays to March's family home, Laurie is very happy to have a new friend who is very cheerful.

One day Laurie invites Jo and Meg for a holiday then Laurie invites Mr. Brooke his teacher to take part in their holiday, at the time from which Mr. Brooke likes Meg, but the young Meg does not want to get married soon. Then one day after they came home from vacation, suddenly his mother told them to give a meal that normally be for breakfast to a neighbor who had no food, which in the house was a hungry baby, then March's family began to intensively in assisting the family. In addition to working at the home of March's aunt, Jo also sent her story to the publishers, but she was kept secret from her family, but not with Laurie who knew about it. When it was snowing at that time, suddenly the post box in front of the March family's house contained news that their father, Mr. March was seriously ill, all at once in the house were nervous and crying. Mrs. March then

realized that everything had to be done as soon as possible and immediately left to take care of her husband. Then the Laurent family also helped to prepare all the needs of Mrs. March on the way. Suddenly Jo disappeared, which finally he boldly and sincerely decided to cut hair and sell hair to help with travel expenses and the need to care for his father later. His hair was like a boy's, and gave the money to Mrs. March, they were all moved by his decision. Before his departure Mrs. March advised that they love each other and do the same work as usual and look after each other, he also said they must obey Hannah as long as her mother was not at home. Finally Mrs. March departed accompanied by Mr. Brooke on the orders of Mr. Laurent.

When the four girls were at home without her mother, the house felt empty, but they had to keep as her mother said, Jo continued to work at Aunt March's house, as well as Meg, then Beth sincerely cared for a neighbor's child who turned out to have an infectious disease. And luckily even Beth contracted the disease. Feeling guilty about not taking good care of his sister, Jo took care of Beth with love, then Mr. Laurent brought a doctor to examine Beth's critical condition. They all panicked to make a decision and said that Beth was being critical because of contracting the disease to her mother. Then Laurie sent a letter to Mrs. March tells that Beth is critical. At the day after tomorrow his mother returned home, while Mr. Brooke and Mr. The march stays at Concord. And at that moment Beth's condition had recovered. After weeks of hard times, they were replaced by happiness because suddenly their father returned home with Mr. Brooke.

In this novel, there are many positive lessons that we can take and are very real in everyday life, the story is light discussing family problems and women's problems in this day. Simple but the message in the novel is very touching, also in this novel tucked in that women must be strong and must have the freedom and purpose of their lives, such as Jo's character who has to work to help financially support his family, and the younger sibling who goes to school. So in this novel a

character who is free and does not follow the ideal female desires of society in general.

The classic Novel *Little Women* has its own appeal for readers. The content of stories depicting real life in general does not continuously show excessive luxury from his characters. A simple plot can make the reader feel the warmth of the family while reading the novel. A Novel depicting love and compassion with the family. Readers can take the value of the story told in the novel, and the author beautifully adds the values of feminism that are encapsulated simply. This novel deserves to be discussed and enjoyed, because the plot is simple and depicting real life relating to women who dare to fight bad stereotypes in women.

The reason why researcher choose a novel *Little Women* because feminism and humanity become the main issue of the novel. The current issue of feminism continues to develop, because it has been supported by many women in the world. Today's women are aware of the importance of feminism. Because the existence of a feminist movement of justice for women is getting better and more recognized in the world, even though women are not completely free from the bad stigma and unfair treatment that women have always felt. This novel contains the issue of feminism that will be raised in this study, because in the future the issue of feminism will be more developed and gender equality for women is accepted throughout the world, career opportunities and education for women will be better.

Feminist developments in the world are getting better, women in the world are starting to become aware of this movement. Feminism is a new perspective which is a bright spot for women to find justice. Liberal feminists of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries asserted women's ability and right to participate in public life at least through the suffrage, examined the institution of marriage and the legal framework of divorce and property laws, and challenged the practices of denying women access to the same quality education as men and to the professions. To defend their claim, some feminists argued that men and women were of equal human worth; some argued that some women were

superior to some men and thus all women should be given opportunity to demonstrate their worth; and some argued that women's virtues were superior to men's and thus warranted influence on public economic and political activity. According to Jagger described liberal feminism as theory and work that concentrates more on issues such as equality in the workplace, in education, and in political rights. Important issues that exist in liberal feminists are reproductive rights and abortion, sexual harassment, voting, education, "equal pay between women and men", affordable child care, affordable health care, and highlighting the frequency sexual violence and domestic violence against women.

2. METHOD

The type of researcher used in the research study is qualitative study (Mattew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2016). The researcher collected the data, analyzed them and concluded them without statistic data to get the fact. The type of the data in this novel contains words, phrases, and sentence which are used to analyze the novel. In order to analyze *Little Women* novel, the researcher uses a feminist study approach and applies it using descriptive analysis which concerns to make some interpretation of dealing with the novel. In this study, there is a sequence of interactions between humans originating from novels related to the issues used by the researcher, then notes during the study have been recorded coherently. The results obtained were obtained by collecting data on grouping topics in the data. There are various kinds of qualitative research methods. Among them is Grounded Theory. According to the method (Fernandez, 2013) Grounded theory is a theory that systematically generates concepts to inform the dissemination of research results through methodology on issues of community life

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Kinds of Gender Inequality

3.1.1 Stereotype

Stereotype is a form of gender inequality that discriminates against something or limits the space for one gender that develops in society. Jo is a girl who has a free mind and an unpretentious attitude. However, the stereotypes that have developed in the society require women to look elegant and maintain their level of behavior.

3.1.2 Marginalization

There is an assumption that men have an important role in all aspects because women do not have an important role in all aspects. It can be said that women only get poverty and marginalization. In this novel, Meg is a worker. She does not go to school due to limited funds. She suffers from injustice because she cannot go to school and has to work at a young age.

3.1.3 Subordination

Subordination is gender inequality in which one gender has a higher position than another gender. Usually, the position at number two is women. In this novel, it is shown when Meg says that women are always at home, while men work to meet economic needs. When a husband works outside the house, the woman who is in the lower position will take care of domestic work.

3.1.4 Violence

Violence that is physically and verbally experienced by women is due to the inequality of power over gender. Verbal violence can be categorized as the mildest violence. In this novel, verbal violence is shown because it is said through words, such as when Meg meets Laurie at a party, but Meg experiences verbal violence when Laurie talks about Meg's excessive makeup. Meg at that moment is offended by Laurie's words.

3.1.5 Burden

Women's work outside the house is considered as a "burden" because women do not only have to work outside, but they are also responsible for their household work. Mothers who work outside the house also does household chores when she returns home.

3.2 The way gender inequality reflected in the novel

3.2.1 Theme

The main idea that will be associated with the storyline of a novel that has been determined by the author. The theme is interesting in this novel because it tells the story of a group of women who are strong and independent.

3.2.2 Plot

According to (Nurgiyantoro, 2013) Plot is a problem that has been prepared to connect the series of events from the main idea into a perfect plot. In the novel *Little Women*, a simple plot is shown to make it easier for readers to understand and feel. This novel uses a forward plot.

3.2.3 Character

A novel must have characters, as character is a very important part. The storyline will not be perfect without characters. The character will later carry a message. From this novel, it is shown that the majority of the characters are women and have a courageous nature with a unique character.

3.2.4 Setting

The setting of the problem in the novel has three elements, namely place, time and social context. When the author uses the setting of place or time, the reader will easily understand and enter the story. From the novel *Little Women*, it is shown that the time is in 1868 and the majority of events are at Mr. March.

3.2.5 Point of view

The presentation of a story developed by the story writer is the story writer's strategy to express an idea. From the novel *Little Women*, it is shown using a third person point of view because it uses "name" in the explanation.

3.2.6 Moral

A message that is intentionally made by the author on the problems of life that exist in a novel or literary work. From the *Little Women* novel, the moral that can be taken is not to be afraid of anything, we can go through it all with courage. Moreover, being an independent woman at this time is very beneficial for us.

3.3 Struggle Portrayed in socialist feminism

3.3.1 Labor of division

The division of work classified according to gender, such as in which female workers are given less wages than men, even though it has reached women but still has control from men. Thus, it makes women's conditions still lower than men. From the Little Women novel, it is shown that Jo actually does not want to be an assistant of a fussy grandmother, but she is forced to work because she needs money to help the family's economy. On the other hand, she wants to become a soldier, but it is impossible because she is a woman.

3.3.2 Hierarchies Power

The boundaries between women and men, which are usually men who limit or women can be set by a patriarch. It produces a privilege for one of the people. From the *Little Women* novel, it is shown that Meg and Jo feel that they will not marry rather than marry a rich man who has power, they think that it is better.

3.4 Discussion

After the researcher analyzed the novel *Little Women* by using feminism theory, Feminist theory focuses in the struggle for women to get the same rights as

men. According to (Young Iris, 2002) socialist feminism is gender equality between men and women to turn it into change.

According to (Mansour Fakih, 2001) gender inequality is a system that creates injustice. From this novel, gender inequality is identified, namely stereotype, marginalization, subordination, violence, and burden. Where women get unfair treatment from one gender. The stereotype experienced by Jo is due to the negative opinion of society and is believed. The marginalization that Meg experienced was because she was a worker and didn't go to school. The subordination depicted in this novel is when Meg thinks that women will be in a lower position. The violence Meg experienced was verbal abuse, with Laurie's words offending Meg and the Burden her mother experienced while working in two places.

4. CLOSING

In the research of Louisa May Alcott novel entitled *Little Women*: 1868 it able to give the conclusion as the follow;

First, gender inequality is a system that creates injustice, especially for women who are harmed. There are five types of gender inequality contained in the novel Little Women. Those are stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, violence and Burden.

Second, the researcher found that the theme, plot, and characters of this novel contain elements of feminism, so it is related to gender inequality.

Third, the researcher found the struggle of a woman by using feminism theory. There are three aspects contained in the theory of Marion Young, which are a sexual division of labor, normative heterosexuality, and hierarchies of power. But the data found in the novel is only that are a sexual division of labor and hierarchies of power.

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