

**INDEPENDENT WOMAN PORTRAYED IN JO MARCH IN
LITTLE WOMEN MOVIE (2019): A FEMINIST APPROACH**



**Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Attainment
Of The Degree of Education Bachelor in English Education**

By:

BELLADINA KUSUMA INDRIANI

A 320 170 135

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA**

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By:

BELLADINA KUSUMA INDRIANI

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Approved to be examined by consultant
School of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

Consultant,



Dr. Phil. Dewi Candraningrum, S.Pd., M.Ed.

NIDN. 0609127502

ACCEPTANCE

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School of Teacher Training and Education

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

On, 5 July 2021

Team of Examiner:

1. **Dr. Phil. Dewi Candraningrum, M. Ed**
(Head of Examiner)

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2. **Dr. M. Thoyibi, M. S**
(Member I of Examiner)

()

3. **Dr. Abdillah Nugroho, M. Hum**
(Member II of Examiner)

()



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Suraakarta, 5 July 2021
The Researcher

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a hand-drawn oval. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'B Kusuma Indriani'.

BELLADINA KUSUMA INDRIANI

A320170135

INDEPENDENT WOMAN PORTRAYED IN JO MARCH IN *LITTLE WOMEN* MOVIE (2019): A FEMINIST APPROACH

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kebebasan perempuan terhadap figure Jo March dalam film *Little Women* (2019) dengan pendekatan feminis, selain itu, penelitian ini juga untuk mengetahui nilai-nilai feminisme dalam karakter Jo March. Peneliti menggunakan jenis penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Terdapat dua sumber data yang digunakan untuk menganalisis isu terkait, yaitu sumber data primer dan sumber data sekunder. Sumber data primer dari film *Little Women* (2019) dan sumber data sekunder dari sumber lain seperti penelitian terdahulu, website, dan artikel lainnya. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah ditemukan dua kesimpulan. Yang pertama, terdapat empat jenis kebebasan pada figur Jo March yaitu kebebasan dalam lingkup social, pendidikan, ekonomi, dan tempat kerja. Yang kedua, nilai-nilai feminisme pada Jo March adalah mendobrak sistem patriarki, emansipasi wanita, dan mematahkan stereotype terhadap perempuan.

Kata Kunci: Kebebasan perempuan, Jo March, Feminisme, *Little Women*.

Abstract

This research purposes to identify woman independence towards Jo March's figure in *Little Women* movie (2019) using feminist approach, however, this research also figures out feminism values of Jo March's character. The researcher uses descriptive qualitative research. There are two data sources used to analyze the issue, namely primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source comes from *Little Women* movie (2019) and the secondary source is from previous studies, website, and other articles. The results of this research are two conclusion. The first, there are four kind of independence portrayed in Jo March namely independence in society, education, economy, and workplace. The second, feminism values in Jo March character are breaking patriarchy system, woman emancipation, and breaking woman stereotype.

Key words: Woman independence, Jo March, Feminism, *Little Women*.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this research, *Little Women* movie as object is analyzed in feminist approach. *Little Women* is kind of adapted from a novel which has same title written by Louisa May Alcott. This movie was released in 2019 and directed by Greta Gerwig. Greta is also taking part as movie script writer for this movie.

This movie taken setting in 19th century is kind of drama-romantic told about March Sisters and their dreams in mixed plot. March sisters are sibling from a mother who is called Marmee and a father worked as volunteer army during America Civil War at that time. Those March sisters are Margareth March as the oldest or usually called Meg, Josephine March or Jo, Elizabeth March or Beth, and the last child is Amy March. March family has an assistant in the house named Hannah and another family member who is not live with them, Aunt March.

March sisters' story is close to kindness and relate to feminism values. It can be seen and learn from their characters, thoughts, and behavior on how they face their uneasy life. Therefore, their story was also colored with happiness through role of Laurie. By explanation and summary above, it can be concluded that Jo March has dominant and strong character. For this research, the researcher wants to analyze Jo's independent character and feminism value within.

This movie highlights about independence in every of life through the characters. The characters have strong personality about persistence and independence as human being. The most dominant character for determining independence is portrayed in Jo March. A strong girl who fights for her dream and loves liberty for her own. Independence or liberty is kind of strength that somebody has to do something without any forced from others.

Independence is an absolute thing belonging every individual since her/his born. The term of independence can be interpreted a freedom to do, choose, and decide particular things for individual's life as willingness. According to (Kon, 1989) independence is an ability for doing important decision with responsibilities towards his/her action as consequent.

The purpose of this study is to figure out the independence portrayed in Jo March's figure. However, the researcher also analyzes the feminism values of Jo March's character in the *Little Women* movie (2019). The researcher conducts feminist approach in analyzing the data.

Feminism is a movement focused to change point of view about imbalance of gender between men and women. This movement aimed to

equalize men and women position in society. Feminism movements focuses in issues about right to vote and they (feminist) are persistent taking part in struggling to give declaration about equality, law, and chance in aspect of education and job (Lubis, 2006).

Feminism means to women liberty of their life and choices. Feminist approach covers not only in literature aspect, but also education and participation (Gupta, 1993). In this case, feminism support in all aspect of life as follow economy, social, culture, and politic. Men and women have same position without any differences. An awareness of women which wants to bring gender issue related to women is not getting fair treat in any aspect of life yet (Zulaiha, 2016).

In this research the independence is divided into four scopes. They are independence in society, education, economy, and workplace. So, the researcher conducts research entitled “INDEPENDENT WOMAN PORTRAYED IN JO MARCH IN *LITTLE WOMEN* MOVIE (2019): A FEMINIST APPROACH”

2. METHOD

In analyzing the issue of the study, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative research. The material used in the research is *Little Women* movie (2019) and for the formal research is the issue itself namely independence of Jo March and her feminism values. the primary source is *Little Women* movie (2019) by Greta Gerwig itself. However, the researcher also uses journal, article, and previous studies related to object to analyze as the secondary source. In collecting data, the researcher watches the movie repeatedly, highlighting important part related to the issue, noting every dialogue which interprets the issue, and concluding the evidence to clarify the problems. Therefore, the researcher uses three ways for analyzing data. (Miles & Huberman, 1984) state that there are three ways in processing analyzing data in qualitative research. They are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Independence Portrayed in Jo March

There are four kind of independence in Jo March:

a. Independence in Society

Women have important role and position in particular scope. Family is a small scope in society. Women's role here can be represented as a wife and/or mother. However, this also does not be concluded the possibility of women getting society's independence in a wider scope out of family. Women be able to determine their independence of being married or not, for having children or not, for being career women over full time housewife or not. Women's independence in society scope regards as universal independence as deciding life's choice. Women's choice is not only in family scope but they might be have carrier out of family.

Jo thought that women have right and liberty for their life. Women should not be represented as property. Jo wanted to be a carrier woman fully and against marriage, yet she is just woman who has feeling. She could not avoid that she was lonely and need someone connected to her although she was not believe in marriage.

b. Independence in Education

Education is one of important necessities in life. Everybody has same right for getting proper education. There is no limitation of sex identity for having education. Both men and women have same right and independent in education. By having proper education, somebody can enhance competence and get many benefits from it.

In this movie, Jo's independent figure showed in how she is aware on education to her siblings and people around her although she did not get any. Moreover, at that era education for women especially school is quite rare.

c. Independence in Economy

Women have important play in economic sector. Small scope is women managing and organizing economic cycle. Moreover, independence in economic can be caused of financial arranging, income and outcome by women.

Jo is a hard worker woman. She know that she has talent so she take grant it. She works by writing to help her family's economic. She didn't make her family worry and felt less so she didn't sign her name in her writing.

Jo March is a realistic woman. She has great talent and wants to be a writer. Therefore, Jo is aware that she needs money to live her life. So she cannot be a writer who praises on her works without paid because in there are no free charge in this world.

d. Independence in Work Place

Women have right in deciding their life. This includes about deciding occupation. Both men and woman have same opportunity to choose which occupation and profession they want.

In the end of the movie, Mr. Dashwood gives an offer to Jo about royalty from her book's selling in the end. Yet, Jo disagree about it. Jo needs money and she wants upfront payment. If Jo waits for the book selling, there is no guarantee whether her book will sold or not. That shows that Jo has persistence personality to keep her choice while she doesn't want to be controlled.

Relating about copyright, Jo March does not want to give any to the publisher. She refuses Mr. Dashwood asking about purchasing copyright. Jo wants her book so she decides not giving its copyright. She did not want to be control by the publisher, she had right for her own book so she rejected about copyright.

3.2 Feminism Values of Jo March

a. Breaking Patriarchy System

Jo March's figure in this movie is very influential. Characters' showed represent feminist personality. Jo March breaks patriarchy system that limits women's liberty at that time. Jo March, a powerful, persistence, and strong-willed woman who has big ambition and determine to pursue her dream to be a great writer.

Women have minds and souls as well as hearts, ambition and talent as well as beauty and I'm sick of being told that love is all a woman is fit for. But.. I am so lonely. (01.42.29-01.42.52)

That is the most powerful words of Jo March. Jo March shows her unrest about women that only be seen as kind of property and romantic idea instead of centering their ambition and ability. Therefore, Jo March grew up with her idea opposing about women should be in social construction. She had her thought about what women can do, yet, she realized that she needed partner besides her. Moreover, she was sure women could get liberty as well as love.

b. Woman Emancipation

Jo March's actions indirectly represent woman emancipation in 19th century. Her stubborn personality refuses publisher's offer to end the female characters in her novels with the choice of marrying or dying. Because for him women don't have to get married.

We never had a proper school, and now there are women's colleges opening. There should be a school...I'll open a school for boys and girls, both. (01.55.09 - 01.55.18)

The ending of the movie, Jo March was given a big house as legacy by Aunt March. Jo intends to make a school for girls. In 19th century there were many schools for boys, but seldom school for girls. Jo March concerns that education is important for women as well as men. In 19th century, women are supposed to be in house doing household thing while men are able to have proper education instead of women.

c. Woman Stereotype

Little Women (2019) is a movie that dominated by women figure. Moreover, *Little Women* (2019) has many lessons about women struggling against difficult social culture in 19th century. Figure Jo March is highlighting about powerful opposition of woman stereotype. Stereotype about how woman should be in social structure.

Jo: I feel ridiculous. I don't wanna look it.

Amy: You could be pretty if you tried.

Jo: Don't want to. Won't. (00.12.22-00.12.26)

...

Amy: Jo, that's so boyish.

Jo: That's why I do it.

Amy: I detest rude, unladylike girls.

Jo: I hate affected little chits.(00.26.51-00.26.57)

In society, women often associated as soft, weak, feminine, and obedient creature for the character. Therefore, beauty, neat, and attractive are seen from women for their appearances. While, Jo March shows androgyny character. She has bad-temper, loves being free, tomboys, and powerful. Her personality breaks woman stereotype. Woman is not always represented to be pretty, soft, patient, having long hair, or well-kept appearance.

3.3 Discussion

In that era, women did difficultness of getting their rights. In Jo's figure, her strength, power, and persistence, she figures that woman still can be everything without marrying to a wealthy man. Although, the culture and society said that women would be valued if they marrying and devoting their life for their family. Difference way is shown by Meg, Jo's big sister, she does not follow the existing culture to bound and marry a rich man, she instead chooses to marry John Brooke, a poor private teacher.

The movie raises the issue of gender inequality experienced by both men and women. Women are assumed subordinates who cannot equal men in every aspect of life. Stereotypes of women who sees women only in their beauty appearance and soft personality instead seeing women for their capability and potentials. In the movie, women are visualized in beauty appearance. Yet, women have their own character. Jo March is the one who breaks the women stereotype. Women are supposed to be what they want without be beg by society like they what should be. Women can be soft yet still have big ambition. Women can be a wife and/or mother without losing their right to have career in public sphere.

Due to the view on women based on their roles in family, women are often do not get their right of getting proper education. In 19th century,

formal education was for men. Meanwhile, education institutions for women were not adequate enough yet. In *Little Women*, education is described only for men. There are many choice for boy's school instead of girls. Perspective that women role is limited in domestic work makes women cannot get formal education.

The movie delivers messages that both men and women are equal as should it be. In every aspect of life, men and women are required same treat and right. One of the central value that matters is that women have choices over their lives. Women have freedom as well as men and not just become objects for men because they also have dreams and life goals to reach. Moreover, *Little Women* shows the women's struggle and emancipation in 19th century through March's sisters. They represents strong women but at the same time they are kind and tolerance with each other choice.

4. CLOSING

After analyzing the first research question, it can be concluded that the independences manifesting in Jo March are divided in four scope. They are independence in society, education, economy, and work place. The independence in society portrayed by Jo March is that woman has the same right as well as man in domestic or public sphere and woman can decide whether she wants marry or not. Independence in education is showed by Jo March by her awareness of her sister's education and make a school for girls. Then, independence in economy is represented in Jo March by having a job being a private teacher that earn money that she can help her family economically, she also sells her writing to get extra money. Lastly, independence in work place is described by Jo March in how she argues, negotiates, and makes deals with people in her work place. The feminist value manifesting in Jo March can be concluded in three aspects. The values are breaking patriarchy culture, stereotypes in woman, and showing woman emancipation. First, Jo March breaks patriarchy culture that limited women role and participate in domestic work and let herself to. Jo March breaks down patriarchy culture that restricts and limits woman's role and rights so she chooses to pursue her career instead of married that limits her goals. Second, Jo March changed stereotypes toward woman. She points out that woman does not

always have to be like social construction that has to be beautiful, soft, and obedient. Instead, Jo March represents powerful and strong woman who has ambition and perseverance. Last, woman's emancipation. The last is woman's emancipation. Jo March cares deeply about the fate of the women around her especially in education so she tries her best to make the fate of those around her better.

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