

**THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLE IN FIGHTING FOR
GENDER EQUALITY IN DISNEY *MULAN* MOVIE**



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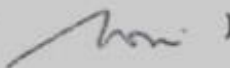
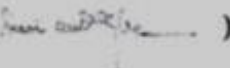
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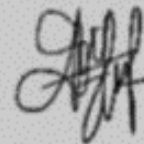
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Abstrak

Artikel ini berjudul “Perjuangan Tokoh Utama dalam Memperjuangkan Kesetaraan Gender Pada Disney Film *Mulan*” yang di produseri oleh Chris Bender, Tendo Nagenda, Jason Reed, dan Jake Weiner. Artikel ini berfokus pada perjuangan *Mulan* sebagai tokoh utama di film untuk menyetarakan gender di negaranya. Penelitian ini memiliki beberapa tujuan adalah (1) Mendeskripsikan bagaimana usaha *Mulan* dalam memperjuangkan kesetaraan gender pada film tersebut (2) Untuk mengidentifikasi aspek feminisme apa yang terkandung dalam film (3) Untuk menjelaskan nilai pendidikan apa yang terdapat dalam film. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Informasi yang didapatkan peneliti kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teori yang digunakan oleh peneliti sebagai acuan. Teori yang digunakan adalah teori feminisme. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perjuangan *Mulan* dapat menciptakan kesetaraan gender di lingkungannya sehingga diskriminasi gender tidak lagi menjadi sesuatu yang menjadi masalah. Berkat keberanian dan kerja keras *Mulan*, perempuan tidak lagi menjadi gender yang dipandang sebelah mata atau dibedakan.

Kata Kunci : Kesetaraan Gender, Teori Feminisme, Perjuangan

Abstract

This article is entitled “The Main Character’s Struggle in Fighting for Gender Equality in Disney *Mulan* Movie” which was produced by Chris Bender, Tendo Nagenda, Jason Reed, and Jake Weiner. This article focuses on the struggle of *Mulan* as the main character in the film to equalize gender in her country. This research has several objectives, namely (1) to describe how *Mulan*'s efforts in fighting for gender equality in the film (2) to identify what aspects of feminism are contained in the film (3) to explain what educational value is contained in the film. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive. The information obtained by the researcher was then analyzed using the theory used by the researcher as a reference. The theory used is the theory of feminism. The results of this study indicate that *Mulan*'s struggle can create gender equality in her environment so that gender discrimination is no longer a problem. Thanks to *Mulan*'s courage and hard work, women are no longer a gender that is underestimated or differentiated.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Feminism Theory, Struggle

1. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the issue of gender equality is especially about the problem of inequality between the conditions and positions of women and men in society. Why did this issue arise and become a long debate? This is because women still have limited opportunities compared to men to play an active role in various programs and other activities in society, such as economic, socio-cultural, education, institutional organizations, and many more. This limitation comes from the various values and norms of society that limit the movement of women compared to that of men. According to Rianingsih Djohani (1996: 7), what is meant by gender is "the division of roles, positions and duties between women and men which are determined by society based on the characteristics of women and men who are deemed appropriate according to norms, customs, beliefs, or people's habits."

One of the impacts is the loss of women's rights in various aspects of life, for example the loss of women's rights to work in addition to their obligations as housewives. Women will be increasingly pressured to take care of the house, wait for their husbands to come home from work, without being allowed to have jobs and pursue their dreams as career women. If the author does not research further about the object of this research, there will be a lack of sources of information from readers regarding the issue of gender equality that the researcher raises as the object of research. With a lack of sources of information, there will also be less interest in understanding and exploring the issue. With reduced interest, there will also be less and less people who will fight to defend and voice their rights so that they are equal to the rights of the opposite sex in various aspects of life.

In this article, the writer chose the issue of gender equality as the object to be studied. The issue of gender equality is an interesting one and needs to be raised so that many people who previously did not care about this issue will be more concerned and understand what can be done in an effort to equalize the rights of all gender, which is currently happening inequality in many places. By examining this object, it is hoped that there will be a change in the reader's perspective of gender inequality. The writer chose gender equality as the topic in this research because she was interested and wanted to change the mindset that is still lagging behind to become more advanced and open, especially about gender equality

issue. In this study, the author focuses on the main character's struggle in fighting for gender equality.

2. METHOD

This article is a literature study using a Disney film entitled *Mulan* (1998) as the object of the article. This article is a type of qualitative research. The primary data is taken from the film itself, and the second data sources used to support the strength of the primary data source are the documents related to this study, and the previous studies discussed in the next chapter. This study uses document analysis data collection techniques. The researcher describes this research by using the feminist theory.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Finding

There is a scene where Mulan talks to herself

"Silent, humble, graceful, polite, gentle, high-minded, not embarrassed"

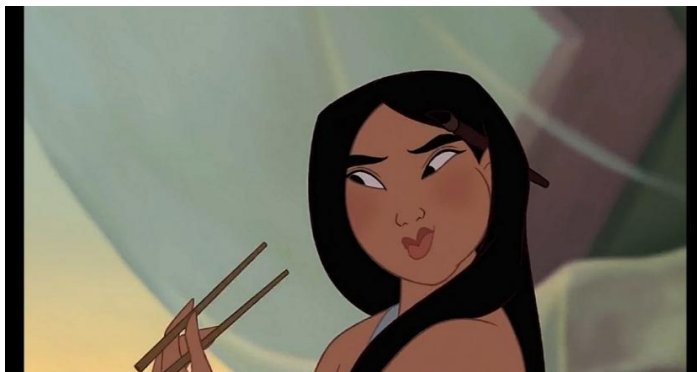


Figure 1 : Mulan ate while muttering (M, 1998: 00:03:09)

Mulan chewed food while muttering some human traits. She tried to get those traits into her brain and her mind. At this minute it can be seen that what was said by Mulan is a picture of what women should be. With an order who knows who made it, all women are required to be someone like that.



Figure 2 : Girls dressing up Mulan (M, 1998: 00:07:30)

*We will turn you into a better woman.
 You will be the pride of all of us.
 For good luck and a good hairdo.
 A girl can give pride and honor to her family in one way..
 By finding the right partner.*

At that minute there is a song that has meaning about a woman who can give honor to her family is a woman who can find the right partner. In the song, it can be seen that women can only help raise the status of their family by getting married, then living their days as the wife of someone who is not allowed to do this and that.

Then there was another song that was sung during the scene where Mulan was still being dressed by several people to undergo the ritual there, namely marrying off every daughter of each family at a certain age. In the second song, the meaning and content of the lyrics is about the man wanting a woman who tastes good, is calm, obedient, works fast, and comes from good descent. From this scenes, it can be seen that indirectly, women are required to be able to do this and that, and must have this and that ability, while the prohibitions they will get later are also many. This shows like woman must be the perfect person.

At the tenth minute there is a scene where there is an old woman who is called a 'matchmaker'. The woman called Mulan and told her to do a number of things that women should be able to do so that they can be said to be able to become a wife. But Mulan just made a mess.



Figure 3 : The matchmaker said to Mulan (M, 1998: 00:10:00)

The old woman said,

"To make your future in-laws happy, you have to show dignity and refinement. You also shouldn't be embarrassed."

At 00:11:20 the matchmaker said aloud to Mulan in front of many people.

"You are a disgrace. You may look like a woman but you will never make your family respectable."



Figure 4 : The matchmaker angry with Mulan's behavior (M, 1998: 00:11:20)

This scene shows that a little mistake made by women will be a big thing, as if women should be able to do everything and be perfect in many ways. This sounds really unfair especially to women. Even though the mistakes made by Mulan were only minor problems and could be fixed, it seemed to be a big mistake and even a disgrace to her family. This illustrates that how strict the rules of the world are,

especially for a women. Women should not do this and that. It's as if women never got the true freedom to be what they want.

Then there is a scene where the royal soldiers yell at Mulan's father because Mulan tries to ask for relief from the royal soldiers so that her old and sick father does not need to take royal training aimed at every male in a family that is there to fight the Huns.



Figure 5 : The royal soldiers yell at Mulan's father (M, 1998: 00:16:20)

"Shut up! You have to teach your daughter to be careful when there are boys"

Judging from the words of the royal soldiers, it can be seen that for women, freedom of speech and opinion is very limited. And majority, they underestimated women's thought and opinion. After this, Mulan's father said that Mulan had succeeded in humiliating her. Mulan felt sad because she only wanted to help her father, but what she said was considered a big mistake.



Figure 6 : Mulan took her father's stuffs (M, 1998: 00:18:20)

Mulan has changed her appearance to resemble a boy and entered the camp where the royal soldiers paracalon training. Mulan spent day after day at the camp with

the identity of a man named Ping. Mulan trains to be a strong and tough warrior in order to prepare herself for the day of war.



Figure 7 : Mulan's parents cry over Mulan's decision (M, 1998: 00:20:00)

At this minute, Mulan's father and mother found out that their daughter had left with her father's armor without telling them.

"If we reveal her identity, she will be killed"

Said the father to his wife with a heavy heart.

From what Mulan's father said it can be seen that disguising one's true identity can be very dangerous and risky. Especially if her true identity is a girl. It will be more risky.

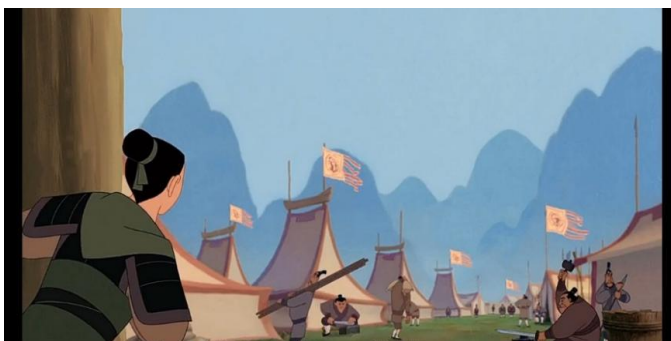


Figure 8 : Mulan hides to see the condition at the camp (M, 1998: 00:29:14)

"Ok. This is the time. Time to show them your man way." Mulan said.

This shows the beginning of Mulan starting her struggle to become a male soldier. At 29:18 minutes, Mushu tells Mulan how to walk properly so that her disguise will not be seen by others.

"Shoulders back, chest outstretched, legs stretched, head held high and straight."



Figure 9 : Mushu told Mulan about how should she do (M, 1998: 00:29:18)

At minutes 00:34:69, with the help of the little dragon, Mushu, Mulan finds her new identity as a man. She changed her identity from Mulan to Ping, a man. At this minute, the warrior leader and all the soldiers who were in the same place as Mulan believed in the beginning of the start of Mulan's disguise.



Figure 10 : Mulan introduced herself as Ping (M,1998: 00:34:69)

In this scene, introduced herself as a man named Ping. Ping will become Mulan's new identity for some time to come with the aim that her disguise will not be exposed until the end, so Mulan gets used to her new identity which is very opposite to her own.

In the next scene, caused by Mushu and Cricket playing with fire, the shot finally caused a loud enough explosion that made the Huns hear and know the position of

the soldier at that time. The war starts at minute 00:53:18. The Huns launched arrows and hit Shan-Yu's shoulder.



Figure 11 : Mulan brought the last cannon (M, 1998: 00:55:35)

After the war was so chaotic that only one cannon was left, it turned out that the Huns were still undefeated, their number was still many, even many times the number of soldiers. With Mulan's dexterity in thinking, she brought her last cannon close to an ice cliff with the aim of destroying all of the Huns even if it only used one cannon.

At 00:55:35, Mulan ran towards the ice cliff, threw the last cannon at the cliff, and finally the ice fell in such a large number that it managed to cover almost all layers below it, including the Huns. Mulan managed to save all the soldiers and wiped out the Huns.



Figure 12 : Mulan woke up from fainting (M, 1998: 01:00:15)

In this minute, all of Mulan's disguises were finally revealed. Mulan was exiled and abandoned by the other soldiers in the middle of the snow because she had lied to all the soldiers. At this minute it can be seen that lying is indeed a very sensitive

thing and cannot be accepted by everyone. One result of lying is the loss of trust in the person who is lying. This is what happened to Mulan. She can only surrender to the situation and accept the consequences because after all, lying is something that cannot be tolerated.

At 01:06:18 all the soldiers except Mulan returned from the battlefield to the kingdom with a rousing welcome from the people and processions such as songs, musical instruments, and dances.



Figure 13 : A soldier walk down the aisle full of people (M, 1998: 01:06:18)

At that moment there was a soldier who shouted
"make way for Chinese heroes".

From that minute's description, it can be seen that Mulan as the hero who could save the war at that time was not considered and seemed to be forgotten because they believe that only men who deserve and can hold the title of hero, so they have to cover up the fact that actually a woman named Mulan can help them and win the war.

After Mulan's disguise is exposed, no one believes her even when Mulan tries to tell Li-Shang that the Huns are still alive and on their way to the kingdom. Until finally what Mulan said happened, Huns arrived at the kingdom and took away the emperor of the kingdom and made chaos there.

For the second time, Mulan returned to save the kingdom and the emperor with her brilliant idea. But this did not make the emperor's advisors view her as a hero.



Figure 14 : The king adviser telling something to Shan-Yu(M, 1998: 01:15:36)

"She is a woman. She will have no value"

said the king's adviser in front of the many people who were on the royal court at that time.

The minute 01:15:38 shows the background of the kingdom which was quite damaged and chaotic due to further resistance from Shan-Yu, the leader of the Huns, an enemy of the Chinese kingdom. Mulan was again a helper at that time, she was able to save the king who almost died at the hands of Shan-Yu. The ideas that come out of Mulan's head are always brilliant and manage to save everything. However, the king's advisers thought that what Mulan did was worthless just because she was a woman. Mulan's sacrifice seemed meaningless just because she is a woman. This really illustrates gender discrimination, which means that a patriarchal culture is still inherent in that film.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the findings above, the writer can find out how Mulan's struggle in fighting for gender equality. Mulan is a girl from a simple family in China. She has a cheerful, easy-going, and manly character. In her teenager, Mulan was required by her family tradition to be a woman whose purpose in life was to find and be a good partner. And bring honor to her family. Until one day, Mulan failed to bring

honor to her family just because she was not able to become a woman according to the stereotypes formed in the surrounding community. Then from there, the form of gender inequality begins. The beginning of Mulan's struggle in this film is to obey everything that is shaped by society and her family as a necessity without tolerance to Mulan, as a girl. Mulan with an open heart tries to become what her family and society want her to be even though she realizes that all of that is not being herself.

One day, Mulan's father is required to become an additional soldier in the fight against the Huns. Mulan knowing that her father is no longer able to serve the kingdom because of his illness, Mulan decides to take her father's place. Mulan is desperate to change her appearance into a man in order to be allowed to participate in training to become a soldier. In this case, it can be seen that being a soldier is only allowed for men because the stereotype that develops is that women are weak creatures and do not have enough power even if the goal is to protect their own country and of their own volition. Changing her appearance to be a man and having to behave like a man was the beginning of Mulan's struggle to eliminate gender discrimination in her country. Mulan has to risk many things such as her time, her identity, her pride, and the consequences if her disguise is finally revealed. Mulan learns to use her strength and logic to balance men. With great tenacity and hard work, Mulan is finally able to impress her male friends because of her really fast changes in strength, dexterity, and accuracy in becoming a soldier. Mulan is also able to defeat the Huns with her brilliant idea. After all the good news happened, came the bad news, Mulan's disguise was finally revealed. All the soldiers know that Ping is Mulan. Ping is the male version of Mulan which means they all know that Mulan is a woman disguised as a man.

Mulan is shunned by her friends and expelled from the kingdom. Even though she had saved the kingdom from the Huns, but because she had lied and because she was a woman, all her hard work seemed to be meaningless in anyone's eyes. Then after that, during the celebration of the victory of the kingdom, all the people cheered and thanked all the soldiers. One of the leaders of the soldiers covered up

the fact that the hero behind this victory was Mulan. From this it can be concluded that even though the sacrifice is big, it means nothing if it is a woman who does it. Mulan admits her mistake and accepts the consequences. However, Mulan's struggle in fighting for gender equality is still not over. Mulan managed to save the king from Shan-Yu's attack with her own henchmen. And finally she managed to win the heart of the king so that all her struggles can be accepted and appreciated by all the people. Mulan's struggle was not in vain and paid off, that is, she can be seen, considered, and appreciated even though she is a minority. Mulan has succeeded in proving to the whole community that women also have the same abilities as men as long as they are willing to work hard.

From the description above, it can be seen that what Mulan did in her effort to balance gender equality can be called the feminism movement. The feminism movement is a form of movement to seek gender balance and a movement for women's liberation from racism, sexism, stereotyping, and oppression. The feminism movement has a meaning as an ideology that aims to create a world for women to achieve social equality. Feminism is divided into several, one of which is liberal feminism which began to emerge in the 18th century. What distinguishes liberal feminism from other feminism is, liberal feminism rejects the overall equality between men and women in several respects, one of which is in the reproductive function between men and women.

Gender inequality is a real problem in the world and until the 21st century. With the gender inequality that occurs in society, the feminism movement emerged. The feminist movement by Naomi Wolf that the writer takes is liberal feminism. The researcher chose liberal feminism as a theory because it has a correlation with the film Mulan where an example of the form of the feminism movement here is when Mulan disguises herself as a man with the aim of helping the family and the kingdom, after which her disguise is revealed. This makes Mulan ostracized and punished. However, because of her tenacity and great determination, Mulan was

able to bring honor to her family and the kingdom in China by successfully becoming the hero behind their victory against the enemy.

According to Rokhmansyah (through Anshori and Kosasih, 2016: 51) liberal feminism is based on the principles of liberalism which believes that the main goal of social life is individual freedom. Individual freedom is considered ideal because with freedom, people can choose to satisfy their expression of the things they want. The common goal of liberal feminism is to create a just and caring society in which freedom thrives. Liberal feminists also want to eliminate gender inequality in the patriarchal system.

The word gender can be interpreted as the roles formed by the community and the behavior that is embedded through the socialization process related to the gender of women and men. The most visible differences are biological differences. Culture interprets biological differences into a set of demands about appropriateness in behavior. For example, almost all community groups hand over the responsibility of caring for children to women while military duties to men.

With the awareness of each individual person, they will be able to continue the struggle for the issue of gender equality with action. Taking the example of the film *Mulan* which was discussed, the struggle for gender equality can be carried out through oneself and from the smallest environment, such as the family. In the film, *Mulan* goes through her own struggles, starting with opposition from her parents and the environment around her. But this does not make *Mulan's* determination just disappear. Correlating with what is happening today, we can become people who care about gender equality starting from the awareness and willingness of ourselves. When we as women feel that our rights in an environment cannot be fulfilled properly, then we must not remain silent and assume that all of this is a natural thing.

4. CLOSING

After analyzing the main character's struggle in fighting for gender equality in the Disney *Mulan* movie with the feminist theory, the writer concludes about her article. The

writer found a correlation between the main's character struggle in fighting for gender equality and the underlying theory used by the researcher. The first, about the feminism contained in the film. Several scenes in the film *Mulan* show the feminism movement. The researcher uses liberal feminism based on Naomi Wolf to examine the forms and types of feminism that exist in the film. Second, on the issue of gender equality which is the main goal in this research. By focusing on the struggle of the main character in the film, the researcher can find the purpose of her struggle is to seek gender equality that was not obtained before.

Mulan is a woman who never gives up, has great determination and great courage. Beginning with compassion for his father who had to serve the kingdom in his old age, Mulan ventured to change her identity to become a man and start her new life as a male soldier who will go to war. With this background, Mulan can change the position of women in her environment. She can equalize the roles of women and men because the people there believe that some women have the same abilities as men and they deserve to be given the same opportunities as well. That way, gender equality has been well implemented in the Chinese empire, because of Mulan's hard work.

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