

OPPRESSION TO WOMEN REFLECTED IN ELIF SHAFAK'S HONOUR (2012): A FEMINIST THEORY

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Abstrak

Tujuan besar dilakukannya penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana penindasan terhadap perempuan terjadi berdasarkan novel Honor karya Elif Shafak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab beberapa hal mendasar yang menjadi rumusan masalah: mendeskripsikan indikator penindasan terhadap perempuan dalam novel, mendeskripsikan bagaimana penindasan tersebut tergambar dalam novel, dan menemukan alasan mengapa penulis mengangkat tema penindasan terhadap perempuan. Kedepannya penelitian ini akan memberikan jawaban mengenai permasalahan penindasan terhadap perempuan yang terjadi melalui novel yang dijadikan objek penelitian. Teknik pengumpulan data yang peneliti gunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah dengan membaca novel kemudian memberikan tanda-tanda mengenai indikator penindasan terhadap perempuan. Dalam menandai informasi penting sebagai data dalam penelitian ini, teknik selanjutnya yang peneliti gunakan adalah dengan mencatat segala hal penting yang berkaitan dengan hasil indikator penindasan terhadap perempuan. Sehingga ditemukan hasil penelitian yang menunjukkan bahwa terdapat lima indikasi penindasan terhadap perempuan yang terjadi pada tokoh utama perempuan berdasarkan novel ini, yaitu; pembatasan hak atas pendidikan, hak berekspresi, hak atas tubuh sendiri, dan kekerasan seksual, honour killing.

Kata Kunci: feminist, penindasan, honour, kekerasan seksual

Abstract

The main aim of this research is to describe how oppression of women occurs based on the novel Honour by Elif Shafak. This research aims to answer several basic things that form the formulation of the problem: describe the indicators of oppression against women in the novel, describe how this oppression is depicted in the novel, and find the reasons why the author raises the theme of oppression against women. woman. In the future, this research will provide answers to the problem of oppression of women that occurs through the novel which is used as the object of research. The data collection technique that researchers used in this research was by reading novels and then providing signs regarding indicators of oppression against women. In marking important information as data in this research, the next technique the researcher used was to record all important things related to the results of indicators of oppression against women. So, research results were found which showed that there were four indications of oppression against women that occurred in the main female characters based on this novel, namely; restrictions on the right to education, the right to expression, the right to one's own body, and sexual violence.

Keywords: feminist, oppression, honour, sexual harrasment

1. INTRODUCTION

Oppression refers to the unjustified use of authority, power, or control over a particular individual or group resulting in harm to, or denial of, basic rights and freedoms. (Arthur Brittan, 1984). Around us so far, many women have experienced oppression without us realizing it. Starting from sexual harassment, domestic violence, lack of opportunities in getting a job, restrictions on women's rights to make decisions on their own bodies such as the right not to get pregnant and give birth.

In 2011, women's oppression in Turkey remained a severe issue, particularly domestic abuse and sexual harassment. A 2009 poll found that over 42% of women in Turkey had suffered physical or sexual assault from their spouses. Even in rural areas, the figure jumped to 47 percent. Although Turkey has approved Law 4320 on Family Protection since 1998, which allows women to obtain protection orders from family courts, its execution is frequently inefficient. Many women encounter obstacles while attempting to obtain assistance, such as the fact that police and prosecutors do not take them seriously and that shelters do not provide appropriate protection.

Elif Shafak pays close attention to the phenomenon of oppression happening around her. The inequality that she concludes focuses on the continuity between the rights and obligations imposed on women is considered burdensome based on existing facts. This can be proven by the many cases of violence and harassment that occur against women. Shafak has produced many novels including *Forty Rules of Love*, *Bastard from Istanbul* *Palace of Flea and Honour*. She is known for her strong writing style and deep thoughts on social issues, especially feminism.

Honour by Elif Shafak received a lot of positive feedback from readers and the media. *The Independent* (UK) rated the novel's narrative as skilfully crafted and highly ambitious. The Kirkus review noted that Shafak turned what might seem like a polemic against honour killings on the smaller side into a heartbreaking yet empathetic and ultimately universal family tragedy.

In addition to reviews from the media, readers also leave reviews on online shopping sites. Many people liked Shafak after the publication of this honour book. There are also those who make *Honour* the best book recommendation to read because of its interesting topic. Dedicated to "those who see and those who hear," the book deconstructs the specific form patriarchy takes in Turkish communities and vehemently criticizes the normalization of violence against women. Elif Shafak's book was well received by critics who noted that "Shafak turns what might seem a polemic into a novel that explores the deep roots of Iskender Toprak's "honor killing" of his own mother.

After reading the novel, the author felt increasingly concerned about the oppression of women. This led to the formulation of several research questions, such as what are the indicators of oppression against women, how is oppression against women depicted in the novel, and why did the novelist raise

this theme? These questions will be answered in this study. In addition, the author used feminist theory as a reference in analyzing the novel "Honour".

In previous studies, there have been studies that analyze the novel of Honour from several perspectives such as multicultural identity, the theory of historicism, feminist theory, then the study of the suffering experienced by the female character and the comparison of the literary elements present in the novel Honour and White Teeth. In addition, there is a study of social and cultural structures as well as investigating the behavioural psychology of major characters. Therefore, there is a gap that has to be filled through research. One of the interesting things for the researchers in discussing this film is how Pembe has survived all the injustice he has received since marrying Adem Toprak. The reason the author chose this topic is because the novel describes how cruel patriarchy is to women. As a woman, the writer felt very concerned and felt very unfair. Research related to oppression of women in this context is important to ignore oppressive behaviour so that there will be no more oppression in the future. So, the author will examine the novel Honour (2012) by Elif Shafak using a feminist perspective with the title OPPRESSION TO WOMEN REFLECTED IN ELIF SHAFAK'S HONOUR (2012): A FEMINIST THEORY.

2. METHOD

In this research, the author used qualitative research. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry used in a variety of social science and social science disciplines. Researchers use formal objects and material objects. The formal object of this research is several articles about oppression of women and the material object of research is the novel Honor by Elif Shafak. The author uses document analysis techniques to collect data. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Also, the author uses note-taking with several steps as a technique for analyzing data. The following data analysis techniques are used by the author.

- a. Reading the Honour (2012) repeatedly.
- b. Writing the data
- c. Data reduction
- d. Identifying data
- e. Analyzing data
- f. Connect to the theory

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The author finds several indicators of oppression against women in the novel Honour by Elif

Shafak. The following is a brief explanation of some of the indicators that have been found by the author.

a. Physical Violence

One afternoon, while Mum was cooking and I was playing under the kitchen table, the woman's husband appeared. There was a faint, sour odour emanating from him – aftershave and whisky. His eyes were bloodshot but oddly amused. Unaware of my presence, he staggered towards Mum and grabbed her sides. 'Hush,' the man said, putting his finger to his lips. 'They're all sleeping.' They're all sleeping. They won't see us. They're all sleeping. So we can sleep too. I'll buy you nice things. Shoes, bags, clothes, a pair of golden earrings . . . You're a good woman, a saint. Please have pity on me. My wife will never know. Neither will your husband. They're all sleeping. I'm not a bad man. But I am a man, like any other, and I have needs. My wife isn't a woman any more. She's changed since the baby, always weeping, whining. The entire city is sleeping. My mother pushed the man against the wall; in his drunken state he offered little resistance. His hands dangled at his sides, his body slackened as if it were empty, like a soft toy.

In the novel there is an indicator of female oppression that is physical violence. Pembe worked as a housemaid in one of London's most prominent houses. One day, while Pembe was cooking and Esma was playing under the table, Pembe's employer appeared with a very strong smell of alcohol. He ignored Esma's presence under the table, then staggered over to Pembe and hugged her from the side. The man offered many things such as branded bags, money and more to persuade Pembe to have sex with him. Pembe vehemently refused and pushed him against the wall.

According to the theory that the author has explained in chapter 2, physical violence is the use of force to harm or injure another person. This includes violence against women, such as beatings, rape, and other physical attacks. The actions taken by Pembe's employer constituted attempted rape because her employer touched her body without her permission.

In addition, physical violence was committed by Adem Toprak to Pembe because Pembe did not give Pembe hard work money as a household assistant.

'What do you mean you didn't have the money? How much did they give you?'

'Nothing. I'm not going to work for them again.'

'What the hell are you talking about?' my father asked, raising his voice a notch, but no more. 'I have debts, you know that.'

'They didn't pay me . . .'

For almost a full minute I didn't hear a sound. Then, as if surfacing from dark waters to grab a breath, my father inhaled loudly. 'You come home at this hour and you think I'm going to believe your lies. Where's the money, you whore?'

There was a backscratcher on the sofa. A mustard-yellow, cold tool made of a ram's horn. In the twinkling of an eye, he grabbed it and flung it at Mum, who was so distracted by his words that she failed to dodge it in time. The implement hit her on the side of her face with a thud, cutting her neck.

One night, Pembe had just returned home from work. Adem, who was in the living room, immediately asked Pembe for some money. However, Pembe refused because she had been fired from her job for refusing to have sex with her employer. Adem, who felt lied to by Pembe, became angry and picked up a rake on the sofa. It was a cold, amber-colored tool made from a ram's horn. In the blink of an eye, he grabbed it and threw it at Pembe. It hit the side of her face hard, injuring her neck.

Adem's actions in hitting his own wife resulted in injuries to her neck, Certain civilizations or cultures may still set women for roles that are usually limited, such as expecting them to stay at home after marriage and not giving them equal opportunities at work or in politics which constituted physical violence. As the author has explained in chapter 2, examples of physical violence are rape, beatings, and other violence that results in injury.

b. Expected Traditional Role

Meanwhile, their mother, Naze, didn't see the point in their going to such lengths to master words and numbers that would be of no use, since they would all get married before long.

Pembe and Jamila's father still wants to give his twin daughters the right to education, because he thinks education is very important and so they can be educated. However, it was different with their mother, Naze. Naze thinks education is useless for girls because they will eventually get married and take care of the children and the house.

The data corresponds to an indicator of oppression against women, namely traditional expected roles. Certain civilizations or cultures may still assign traditionally limited roles to women, such as expecting them to stay at home after marriage and not providing equal opportunities in the workplace or in politics.

c. Gender Stereotype and Discrimination

It was all because women were made of the lightest cambric, Naze continued, whereas men were cut of thick, dark fabric. That is how God had tailored the two: one superior to the other. As to why He had done that, it wasn't up to human beings to question. What mattered was that the colour black didn't show stains, unlike the colour white, which revealed even the tiniest speck of dirt. By the same token, women who were sullied would be instantly noticed and separated from the rest, like husks removed from grains. Hence when a virgin gave herself to a man – even if he were the man whom she loved – she had everything to lose, while he had absolutely nothing to lose.

According to Naze, women are made of the lightest cambric cloth, while men are made of thick, dark cloth. That is how God created both: one is superior to the other. What is important is that the black color does not show stains, unlike the white color, which shows the slightest stain. In the same way, a tainted woman will be instantly visible and separated from the others,

just as the chaff is separated from the grain. Therefore, when a virgin gives herself to a man - even if he is a man she loves - she has nothing to lose, while he has absolutely nothing to lose.

The data belongs to gender stereotyping and discrimination, seen from the way Naze compares men and women using the analogy of cloth and color. According to her, women are made of the lightest cambric fabric while men are made of thick and dark pieces of cloth. Therefore, women are considered weaker than men. In addition, men are like the black color that shows no stains at all, unlike the white color that will look dirty even with the slightest stain.

d. Honour Killing

The novel Honour by Elif Shafak discusses the culture of honor killing or the killing of female family members who bring disgrace in order to restore the family's honor. This is depicted through characterization, setting, events and visualization. According to Shite (2018), characterization, setting, events, and language style are among the elements contained in literary works. (Harya, 2016). These elements are an important part of a literary work. The characterizations in Elif Shafak's Honour are divided into major characters and minor characters.

The major is a significant person who serves as the focal point of the narrative's action or central idea. The protagonist, often known as the main character, is the one who can set off the story's conflict when they have an antagonistic relationship. This individual is typically at the centre of the story.

In Elif Shafak's Honor, there are three main characters. The first character is Pembe Kader. She is a wife and a mother who loves her three children very much. She is a tough and independent woman, working hard to support her children because her husband lost his job and ran away with his mistress. The second character is Adem Toprak. He is a man who is deeply attached to his Turkish-Kurdish cultural heritage which eventually influences his views and behaviour. Adem is a temperamental man, ever since he had another woman besides his wife. The third character is Iskander Toprak. He is like any other man. He likes to make fun of his sister in front of people. In addition, this man is very unappreciative of time.

The role of minor characters is to provide some context for the main characters. Minor characters are often static, which means they don't change from the beginning to the end of the work. In the novel Honour by Elif Shafak, the minor characters are Esma and Yunus Toprak, the Pembe family, the Adem family, Rita, Roxana and Elias.

Apart from the characters, there is a setting that is an important element in this novel. As we know, in a literary work, setting is an important part that must exist in a story. In the novel Honour, the setting is shown around 1945-1992. Meanwhile, the settings that are usually shown in this movie are London, Turkey, and Abu Dhabi.

In addition, it discusses how Iskander killed his own mother. The story begins with Adem wanting to propose to Jamila, Pembe's twin sister, but it fails because Adem finds out that Jamila is no longer a virgin.

'They kept her somewhere for a few days. Then Berzo sent for them and gave his consent to Kamile's marriage. In return they brought Jamila back.'

'Did they . . . touch her . . .?'

'Hmm, nobody knows for sure. They say they didn't lay a hand on her, but they're shifty and the girl never explained. Her father beat her several times but still not a word. A midwife examined her. She says Jamila has no hymen but some girls are born like this.'

Later, Berzo, the twins' father, proposes Adem to marry Pembe. Later, Berzo suggested that Adem marry Pembe. For years together there was no love in their household. Adem only loved Jamila, and Pembe felt the same way. Because of this, Adem often went to a bar or club. There, he met a woman named Roxana. A woman from Bulgaria who works as a performer, danseuse, entertainer, exotic dancer in a club.

From then on, Adem and Roxana had an illicit relationship that led Adem to abandon his family. Letting Pembe work hard to support her three children. He also committed domestic violence against Pembe. Hitting her when Pembe did not give some money to Adem.

Since the violent tragedy, Adem has never returned home. She chose to live with her mistress at Pembe's house. Pembe worked in a salon while bringing Yunus, her youngest child. The salon owner was kind enough to allow Pembe to work with her young son.

One day, Pembe asked permission to go to a bakery during her break. She received racist treatment from the bakery waitress because she was Kurdish. Then, a kind man appeared and saved Pembe from the situation. That man is Elias. Elias feels attracted to Pembe and vice versa. The two of them often spend time together watching movies because Pembe loves movies. In addition, they also often spend time at Elias' flat to just chat casually. Both of them loved each other, but from all sides, Pembe's affair was wrong. She was no different from her husband.

Iskander went to see Tariq, Adem's older brother. Tariq told Iskander that his mother had had an affair with another man. Iskander, hearing this, immediately went to see his father in order to resolve the matter. However, his father refused to return home and went to Abu Dhabi instead Iskander felt angry at his father, angry at his mother and at himself. Because he was the eldest son in the Toprak family, he felt he had to solve this problem.

Iskander returned home feeling angry, walking towards Pembe with a knife and wanting to kill her for having an affair that brought shame to the family. However, as fate would have it,

the knife swung and stabbed right into the right breast of Jamila who was trying to protect Pembe. Because their family still follows Kurdish traditions, where there is a tradition called "honour killing", meaning the killing of female family members who bring shame to the family in order to restore the family's honor.

For a second or two Pembe watched her elder son trail behind her sister. Iskender's eyes had narrowed into slits; his jaw was tight, his lips moving incessantly, as if quarrelling with himself. She couldn't figure out what was going on. Even when she saw him lunge towards Jamila, even when she noticed the knife in his hand, even when he blocked her sister's way and uttered words that could only have amounted to steeling himself against any doubts, what was taking place in front of her eyes continued to make no sense. But then suddenly the curtain that was clouding her vision lifted, and she saw the full truth, the full danger. She felt the air go out of her. Still clutching the lemons, she flew from the balcony to the living room, through the corridor, out the door, into the street.

Pembe ran. She was eight feet away when she saw her son stab her sister. Iskender swung the knife sloppily and hastily, as though he wanted to get it over with at once and go on his way. The blade drew a half-circle in the air, entering Jamila's flesh on the right side of her thorax. Behind them a strangled sound came from Pembe. She knew instantly, she knew in her bones, that the knife had gone into her twin's heart.

After the murder, Iskander was still looking for Pembe. Esmâ and Yunus decide to hide Pembe's whereabouts to prevent Iskander from killing his own mother. The media were very excited about the news. Iskander was held accountable for his behaviour and spent 14 years in prison.

According to the results, the author has found some data that serves as an indicator of oppression against women in the novel Honor. (2012). First, physical violence, this includes sexual harassment and domestic violence. sexual harassment is also included in the oppression of women. It is as if there is no safe place for women in this world. The impact of sexual harassment on women can be devastating, including psychological disorders, loss of self-confidence, stress, depression, and deep trauma. Sexual harassment is also a serious violation of human rights and a form of gender discrimination especially women. In addition, domestic violence is also included in the oppression of women. There are many reasons that are quite unreasonable that make men commit acts of violence against their wives. Domestic violence has serious repercussions for victims, including physical and psychological injuries, trauma, depression, and social isolation. It is also a violation of human rights and requires decisive action to prevent it and provide protection to victims. (Santoso, 2019).

Second, the traditional role is expected. The traditional role of women in many cultures and societies is often centered on several major themes. First, women are expected to be housekeepers, responsible for housekeeping, childcare, and the care of the elderly. Second, the role of the wife often emphasizes support and devotion to husband and family. Third, the mother's role is considered important in caring, guiding, and cultivating values in children.

Fourthly, women are often seen as moral guardians and household sweeteners, creating a warm and supportive atmosphere for families. (Charlotte H. Townsend, 2023). Furthermore, these traditional roles often have significant burdens and constraints, limiting women's opportunities and bridging gender inequalities.

Besides, gender stereotypes and discrimination are also included in the oppression of women. Gender stereotypes are a simplified and exaggerated view of the characteristics and roles of men and women in society, often based on misguided norms and cultures, and can have a negative impact on women's lives. Furthermore, virginity is the only honour that women have and they must protect that honour. When they are sexually assaulted or voluntarily give it to a man, then they are worthless and will be excluded. Meanwhile, men will not lose. In some cultures, a woman's virginity is considered a symbol of purity and chastity, and losing it can be considered a disgrace to the family or community. Stigmatizing women who lose their virginity can lead to social isolation, harassment, or violence. (Utami Syahdiah, 2022). Patriarchy creates a gender double standard where female sexual behavior is strictly regulated while male sexual behavior is considered more acceptable. This can lead to high social pressure on women to maintain their virginity, while men may not be subject to the same pressure. (Zouari, 2022).

Lastly, there is a tradition called "honor killing", which is the killing of female family members who are considered to bring disgrace to restore the family's honor. Honor killing is an extreme form of oppression against women. It occurs when a person, often a family member, kills another family member, especially a woman, who is believed to have "tarnished" the family's honor or dignity, usually through behavior deemed to violate certain cultural or religious norms. (Ni Kt Rai Purwati, 2021)

Honor killing reflects a strong control over women and the belief that the family has the right to control their behavior, even to the extent of taking their lives as a form of punishment. It is not only an extreme form of domestic violence, but also an extreme example of gender oppression perpetrated by patriarchal social or cultural structures.

As a writer, Shafak has full responsibility for her writing. Shafak picked up this theme of oppression because she is very interested in feminism. After her parents divorced, she was raised by her mother and grandmother in Turkey. She saw her mother and grandmother as two different women who supported each other. This influenced her to become a feminist activist. Shafak also believes that if women support each other, the impact of that support will transcend generations. She is also an advocate for women's rights, LGBTQ+, and freedom of expression.

Oppression of women from a feminist perspective involves a deep understanding of how patriarchal power structures, gender social norms, and systemic inequalities affect women's

lives in various areas. Feminists identify patriarchal power structures as the root of women's oppression. This system provides male domination over women in the social, political, economic and cultural fields. The result of this patriarchal structure is gender inequality. This includes gaps in access to education, employment, health, reproductive rights and freedom of expression between women and men. (Allen Pranata Putra, 2021). Every human being in this world has the same rights regardless of gender. Apart from that, the result of this patriarchal structure is that men are considered to have a higher status than women. Having a son is a blessing, while giving birth to a daughter is a disgrace. Feminists describe and highlight various forms of violence experienced by women, such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. The author describes these indicators in a paragraph accompanied by evidence of narrative and conversations from the novel. Feminists describe and highlight various forms of violence experienced by women, such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence.

The author discovered a tradition called "honor killing". Honor killing is an act of violence committed against family members—especially women—who are deemed to have violated certain norms or values that are considered to affect the "honor" or "dignity" of the family. From a feminist perspective, "honor killing" (murder for reasons of family honor or tradition) is considered an extreme expression of patriarchal control that regulates women's lives in society. These are horrific acts of violence against women that violate traditional norms or are considered to 'tarnish' family honor. Feminists emphasize that "honor killing" is one aspect of patriarchal control over women's bodies. This involves attempts to limit women's freedom in choosing a life partner, organizing their social life, or expressing themselves.

Feminist viewpoints push for social change and better laws to protect women from violence and punish perpetrators of honor killings. This involves advocating for stricter punishment for perpetrators of such crimes and efforts to increase public awareness. Family "honor" should not be used as an excuse to kill or punish women who violate certain norms. The feminist viewpoint emphasizes the need to change society's view of women and respect their human rights without fear of violence or discrimination based on gender or particular traditions.

Before this research conducted, there were several studies that analyzed gender violence related to the research to be conducted by the author. Based on the research conducted by the author, this research can support or add information from previous studies that have been presented in previous studies. As additional information, this research adds information to the research conducted by (Gayas, 2016) with the title *Suffering Women Characters in Elif Shafak's Novel Honour*. In addition, this study also supports the results of research conducted by (Zouari,

2022) with the title *Male Pride / Female Shame: Gender Violence in Elif Shafak's Honor*.

4. CLOSING

The analysis of Elif Shafak's novel "Honour" (2012) reveals three key conclusions. First, the novel depicts four forms of oppression against women: restrictions on education, expression, control over their bodies, and sexual violence. These limitations deny equal education, freedom of expression, autonomy over reproduction, and subject women to various forms of sexual abuse.

Second, the author portrays the oppression of women through character development, setting descriptions, events, and language style. Characters, including main and supporting roles, illustrate the harsh reality of oppression. The settings in time and place, alongside events narrated in the novel, highlight these themes with supporting evidence.

Third, Shafak's exploration of oppression stems from her interest in feminism, where she condemns patriarchal culture as a source of cruel oppression. The novel serves as a vehicle for advocating the elimination of women's oppression, aiming to eradicate patriarchal dominance and grant women equal rights and freedom.

In summary, the analysis underscores feminists' staunch opposition to honor killings, viewing them as extreme manifestations of control over women's lives, choices, and bodies. Such acts are considered severe violence aimed at curtailing women's individual freedoms and sexuality.

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