

## **Feminism in the “Little Women” Movie Reviewed from The Aspects of Career, Love and Independence**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study concerned about the feminism that showed in the movie entitled “Little Women” especially from the aspects of career, love and independence. The objectives of the study were: 1) to describe career, love and independence of the women in the 19th century that represented in “Little Women” movie; 2) to describe the woman perception towards career, love, and independence in the 19th century as seen in “Little Women” movie; 3) to describe Jo March’s struggle in achieving her dreams in career, love and independence; 4) to describe the impact of gender equality in teaching and learning process in school. The method of the research used was descriptive qualitative research. The data collection used was documentation technique. Interactive model data of analysis used to analyze the data. The result of this study showed that: 1) upper-class women were more ideal compared to middle-class women in the 19th century from men’s point of view; 2) in the 19th century, most of the women were inclined with men’s point of view about ideal women; 3) Jo March represented the woman in the 19th century that succeeded in achieving her dreams in career, love and independence; 4) Gender education is important thing to be taught to the students in any level of schools.

*Keywords: Feminism, Movie, Career, Love, Independence*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gender and sex are not the same. According to West and Zimmerman (1987:131) states that sex is biological classification to classify persons as males or females. Meanwhile, Shaw and Lee (2012:105), gender is the status that creates and patterns by the society that related to masculinity and femininity. According to Connell (1987:95), masculinity is associated to men that defined with the image of strong, ambitious, and leader figure. Otherwise, Heilman (2012:113) states that femininity is associated to women that connected with being sensitive, care, and empathy. So that, it could be concluded that gender is closely related to the society. However, the society treats women and men differently because of that statement about masculinity and femininity. Those statements about masculinity and femininity causes general conception that society considered men as powerful and women as powerless. That different treatment between men and women, makes women feel uncomfortable

and start voicing their opinion to get gender equality.

The movement of women that voicing their opinion to get gender equality called as feminism. According to Bell Hooks (2000:1), feminism is the women movement to end the sexism and oppression. In addition, Humm (1992:406) states that feminism is the struggle of the women to create the world beyond social equality for women. From those definition of feminism above, it could be concluded that feminism is the women movement to create the world beyond social equality without sexism and oppression for women.

The struggle of women in voicing their opinion about gender inequality are recorded in various literary works. One of the pop literary work that record the struggle of women is a movie entitled "Little Women". "Little Women" movie tries to tell about the 19th century women's views freely in terms of career, love and independence.

The story of "Little Women" movie is about the struggle of March family that consisted of Marmee or the mom and her four daughters

namely Meg March, Jo March, Beth March and Amy March in lived without the figure of man in the family because their father went to the war. They had so many problems to be faced that related to career, love and independence especially for the main character there namely Jo March. That movie also shows the comparison between March family as the represented of middle-class family and the upper-class family in that era.

This article focuses on the career, love and independence of the women in the 19th century. This is because in those aspects women still have not got the same rights. According to Schein (2012:1) career is an individual phases or steps related to his or her occupation. Hall (1996:15) states that career is a complex process of profession in someone's life. So that, it could be concluded that career is a complex process related to someone's profession. In that era, especially for women, working was considered taboo. According to Karandashev (2019:31) love is interpersonal attraction to another person that is

often involve sexual desire. Hatfield, Cacciopo and Rapson (1993:12) state that love is basic human emotions that lead to a variety of cognitive-affective responses and behaviors. For women in that era, love could not express freely because it was constrained by customs and society rules. From those definitions of love, it could be concluded that love is interpersonal attraction to another person that lead to a variety of cognitive-affective responses and behaviors. According to Turnbull and Turnbull III (1985:108) independence means the way of someone living his or her own life with his or her own preferences and personal values and doing everything by themselves. Kon (1987:45) states that independence means individual ability in making and carrying out decision by him or herself without someone's direction and responsible for the decision made by him or her. From those definition above, it could be concluded that independence is the way of someone make and carry out decision about their life with their own preferences and personal values, and they responsible with it.

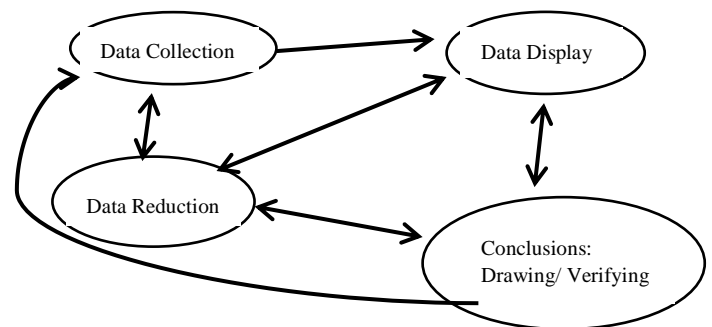
In that era, independence women also considered taboo and unrespectable by society.

Based on those theories above, there were four objectives of this study namely: 1) to describe career, love and independence of the women in the 19th century that represented in the movie entitled “Little Women”; 2) to describe the woman perception towards career, love, and independence in the 19th century that seen in “Little Women” movie; 3) to describe the struggle of Jo March in achieving her dreams in career, love and independence; 4) to describe the impact of gender equality in teaching and learning process in school.

## METHOD OF DATA

The method used in this study was descriptive qualitative. A qualitative research is the method of the research where the data is in the written form that obtained by observing the subject. The main data in this study was career, love and independence contained in the movie, while the main source of this data was “Little Women” movie that was

produced in 1994. Data collection used in this study was documentation by capturing the important scenes and dialogues. The data analysis used in this study was interactive model of data analysis. There were four steps in interactive model of data analysis namely data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusions, as below:



Component of data analysis:  
Interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1984:247)

## RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### a. Research Result

#### 1. Career, love and independence of the women in the 19th century represented in “Little Women” movie

This movie showed two social classes of the women in the 19th century namely middle- and upper-class women. The

middle-class women represented by March family, while the upper-class one represented by women from the rich family.

i. Career

From the career aspect, the middle-class women represented by Meg March. She worked as a private teacher for Mrs. King's children to support family financial. However, the upper-class women as represented by Aunt March, just need to do feminine hobbies such as embroider.

ii. Love

From the love aspect, the middle-class women represented by Meg March. There was one scene where Meg March bravely confess her desire to be with John Brooke (a poor guy) to her mom or Marmee. Meanwhile, the upper-class women represented by Belle (a Concord lady) that held a luxury dance party to look for a rich future husband.

iii. Independence

For the independence aspect, Marmee was the representation

of middle-class women. She could make a decision to withdrew Amy from school without her husband's opinion. While for upper-class women was represented by Aunt March that kept arrange Meg's marriage with upper-class man.

Those explanations above would be analyzed from men's point of view about ideal women in that era. According to Welter (1966:152) there are four criteria of ideal women in the 19th century in America namely piety, purity, submission and domesticity. From those criteria, it could be concluded that upper-class women in the 19th century were more ideal to the men because they fulfilled the criteria of submission and domesticity.

## **2. The woman perception towards career, love, and independence in the 19th century as seen in "Little Women" movie**

i. Career

Women that did not work and just stayed at home doing feminine hobbies were more

respectable in that era. So that to be considered as ideal woman, the woman that worked had to do feminine hobbies at the same time. That thing proved by Meg March as the middle-class women that worked, she had to do the feminine hobbies as well such as baking.

ii. Love

Married with someone from upper-class was the goals of the women in that era. Both of middle- and upper-class women in the 19th century were agreed with that idea. The upper-class woman represented by Belle that tried her best to look pretty by doing diet to catch upper-class man attention. While, middle-class women in the movie represented by Meg March and Amy March, they also tried their best to catch upper-class man attention even in the end they ended up marry with someone they loved not for the money.

iii. Independence

For the independence aspect of middle- and upper-class women in the movie could be

seen on the scene where upper-class women and Meg March gathered to attend Sally Moffat's luxury dance party (a Concord lady). The upper-class women were mocking Meg March because she did sewing her own dress, while the others choose to buy the ready-made dress from the dressmakers.

**3. Jo March's struggle in achieving her dreams in terms of career, love and independence**

i. Career

In the career aspect, Jo March had a dream to be a writer. She had through ups and downs on her way achieving her dream as a writer. Before that, Jo March had to work as Aunt March's companion and private teacher for Mrs. Kirk's children. In addition, she even got rejected by a publisher just because she was a woman. Until she finally met the love of her life, Friedrich, that helped her in publishing her novel. Besides, Friedrich also helped her in achieving her dream to build a

school from the big house that inherited to her by Aunt March.

ii. Love

Jo March was unlike the other women in that era that had a goal to marry someone from upper-class family. She did not want to marry for money. She got proposed by Laurie (an upper-class man) on the Meg's wedding day. However, Jo March rejected it because she did not love Laurie. After that, Jo March met Friedrich Bhaer (a poor professor from Germany) in New York. They lived in the Mrs. Kirk's boardinghouse. Day by day of hung out together, they fell in love to each other. Friedrich helped Jo to improve herself in the power of love.

iii. Independence

Jo was so independence for a woman in that era. Someday when she had to buy train tickets for Marmee to visit her dad that got injured in the war, she decided to sell her hair to the salon by herself. In addition, Jo also travelled alone to New York to achieve her dream as a writer.

#### **4. The impact of gender equality in teaching and learning process**

Gender education is important for the students in this era. Gender education that could be taught to the students related to sex education, the opportunity of career and leadership.

Sex education could be taught to the students from the elementary school until Senior High School level. Each level could be taught using teaching media that is appropriate to the students. If it necessary, the teacher could teach them separately between men and women in the different room. The purpose of sex education is to make both of male and female students appreciate each other.

In the opportunity of career, the teacher could motivate both of male and female students to do the career that they want and set aside their gender. The teacher could motivate them to show their ability in it. It could be started from the teacher that give the same opportunity for

male and female students in the class.

The teacher could teach students about independence through the opportunity of leadership. The teacher could use Scout as the organization to teach them about independence. Being independence is a must in Scout, because the students have to do everything by their own.

#### **b. Discussion**

In the 19th century, there were no gender equality between men and women especially in the aspects of career, love and independence. In the aspect of career, women that work were considered taboo, whereas if they worked they could support family financial. In the aspect of love, women could not express her love first because that was considered taboo. In the aspect of independence, women in that era should in accordance with their parents if they were still unmarried, and if they were married they should in accordance with their husband. From those explanations above, it could be

concluded that women in that era should live by society rules that had no gender equality. That was why women especially the character of Jo March in that movie, start voicing their opinion about it, because they treated unfairly.

Gender itself is the part of feminism. So that, in education field, teaching the material about gender education is so important. So that, the students would appreciate each other gender and achieve gender equality in every aspects of life especially in career, love and independence. Gender education could be taught from the level of elementary school until Senior High School.

#### **CONCLUSION**

There were four conclusions for this study. First, for the 19th century men's point of view, upper-class women were more ideal rather than middle-class women. Upper-class women met two of four criteria of being ideal women in the 19th century namely submission and domesticity. Second, both of middle-



and upper-class women were inclined with men's point of view about ideal women. So that, if they were not fulfilled the criteria of ideal women from men's point of view, they would try their best to be it. Third, in the end Jo March could achieve her dreams and love even after ups and downs that she had to go through. Fourth, gender education is important subject that has to be taught to the students, so that the students could achieve gender equality in school life.

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