THE STEREOTYPES OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN
AMANDA BROWN’S LEGALLY BLONDE NOVEL

Rina Lestari
Prodi Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Jakarta
05693447055
rina.rls@bsi.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to answer research problems that focus on the stereotypes that Elle, the main character, gets in the Legally Blonde Novel. The writer chooses the Feminism approach which has the strongest relationship with the topic and uses a Psychological approach to analyze the characters and stereotypes more deeply that appears in the novel. The theory used in this research is the Stereotype theory which is used to find the stereotypes of women in the novel. This research was conducted using descriptive methods and qualitative approaches. In preparing and completing the research, the writer collected data through repeated novel reading, library research and the internet. The results of this study indicate that there are several categories of stereotypes used in this novel, namely Gender, Physical Characteristics, Occupation and Socio-Economic Status. In addition, research shows that Elle is presented as a female character who breaks the stereotype of women under prejudice and discrimination especially at Stanford Law School.

Keywords: character, feminism, stereotype, prejudice, discrimination

ABSTRAK


Kata kunci: karakter, feminisme, stereotip, prasangka, diskriminasi
INTRODUCTION

Background

Human’s mind is one of the most wonderful gifts from God to human being as a perfect creature. And because of that, human is very different from the other God’s creatures. Besides, the people can create something that makes them have feeling like happy, sad, upset, surprise, etc, get or enlarge the knowledge and become creative and innovative. People create everything in their life, so their life becomes very lively and colorful. Their creation becomes their culture in their life. One of the culture is art. And literary work has been considered as an art work since centuries ago. Literary work can be a reflection of a society, simple thought, experience, true story, value, understanding, etc. There are many kinds of literary works in our life whether it is fiction or non fiction as a result of our creativity, imagination, the way of thinking, character and everything relating and in fluencing our life.

Similar to the statement above, (Robbins, 2000) stated that “in the literary works there are two types of literature work, namely fictional literature and non-fiction literature as expert Literature & Wolf stated that literary works are fictional and non-fiction literary works.” So novels, plays and poems are categorized as literature or literary works because the authors create those things in order to open the view of human kind into the world they have been living through the lines of chosen words.

As time goes by, there is some improvement in novel, so novel becomes as popular as film and still maintains its leading position as the genre which produces the most innovative work of art in literature. (Burhan Nurgiantoro, 1998) said that “Novel sebagai sebuah karya fiksi menawarkan sebuah dunia, dunia yang berisi model kehidupan yang diidealkan, dunia imajinatif, yang dibangun melalui berbagai unsur instrinsiknya seperti peristiwa, plot, tokoh (dan penokohan), latar, sudut pandang, dan lain-lain yang kesemuanya tentu saja juga bersifat imajinatif.” So, there are many people who prefer novel because of its character to film. That is why novel will always exist in this world and its
including in America. Since the history of American literature is begun, Many American Novelists use realistic details to describe the reality of American life. It is started from the presence of American novels written mostly by the American males until that of American novels written by the American females. Female characters used to be the object of the story more than of the males’ character. So it made the female authors decide to write a novel using female character as the main character of the story with their own styles of writing since they also want to show to the world the power of female that female could do the same thing as male. As clearly shown by one of the American famous novelists, Amanda Brown, her novel is a unique, well known and delightful novel.

Amanda Brown is the author of *Legally Blonde*. She was formerly a student at Stanford Law School and she is now a full time novelist. Amanda’s father is the late Jack Brown who founded the Phoenix Law Firm Brown and Bain. Her mother was a member of the second Harvard Law College Class to admit women to their rank. The novel entitled *Legally Blonde* is written based on a true experience of the author’s life and the major character of Elle Wood in *Legally Blonde* is like the representation and reflection of Amanda and her mother’s character in real American life. It is one of the reason why the novel is interesting, unique and inspiring novel. The characteristics of her writing style are light and humorous.

In *Legally Blonde*, Amanda brown tells about Elle Woods. Elle woods is described as the beautiful blonde girl who is very modern, rich, feminine, spoiled, fond of pink color and reading Cosmo magazine and represents the blonde to men as they know. She has a boyfriend named Warner. Her goal is just to be Warner’s wife but this has been vanished when Warner dumps her and goes off to Stanford Law School. In order to win warner’s love and heart back, Elle makes many efforts. The complex problems presented by Amanda Brown in *Legally Blonde* do not only include Elle’s character and her personal problems but also the environment, the society and the psychological side of the society in Stanford Law School.
Research Problems

Based on the background of the problem, so the writer tries to formulate some important basic questions as her research problem that would be discussed further in the next chapters. The problems are as follows:

1. what are the stereotypes that Elle, the main character, got in Amanda Brown’s Legally Blonde novel?
2. how does Elle Woods break the stereotypes?

Aims of the Research

This research is aimed to discuss the life of a students of Southern California Sociopolitical Jewelry Design Major named Elle Wood who decided to go to Stanford Law School, as follow:

1. to identify the stereotypes that Elle, the main character, got in Amanda Brown’s Legally Blonde novel.
2. to analyze how Elle Woods breaks the stereotypes that she got in Stanford Law School.

Literature Review

Feminism

(Robbins, 2000) stated that “where Showalter’s description of feminist approaches was definitely right, though, was in the identification of feminism with gyno-centrism-woman-centredness. My defining limitation on feminism is this: all literary feminisms worth the name share a double commitment to place women at the centre of their literary-critical discourses, and to do so as part of a wider political process.”

According to Djajanegara in (Junaidi, 2018), there are four stages of the application of feminist literary criticism, namely: (1) Position of female figures in society, (2) Life purpose of female characters, (3) Behavior and character of female characters, (4) Establishment and speech of the female character.
Character

Since the main character is a woman and most of the minor characters are also women so it is interesting for the writer to analyze how she expresses her ideas. Barnet in (Istihayyu et al., 2021) stated that “Characterization, or personality, is defined, as in fiction, by what the character do, by what others say about them, and by setting in which they move.”

Tough in (Istihayyu et al., 2021) stated, “Characters are familiar tropes because they are conveyed by diverse media, both fictional and nonfictional. Narratives, rhetoric, ideologies, frames, and the like shape our understandings largely through the characters they create.” According to Wellek and Warren in (Dewinta, 2020), situation and plot of a literary work might become more interesting if the characters are well portrayed psychologically and that it is applicable in analyzing a character and situation of a story.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are preconception about individuals of group. According to Ashmore and Del Boca in (Atillah et al., 2020) stereotype is “a structured set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people”. People tend to build some general perspectives that include the positive and negative things about a group of people. Stereotypes are common phenomenon that is happen in the society where sometimes people do not realize that they are stereotyping others. It is caused by people who come from different culture which are formed by different norms, value, ideologies, and other components. Stereotype is also known as the particular perception. It is a significant thing to understand what stereotype is. By studying about stereotype, people can find out the categories, the cause and also the function of stereotype.

Gilman in (Atillah et al., 2020) states that all of people may create an image of things based on their fear and glory. People assign labels to other people that serve to set them apart from ourselves, and thus people crate the stereotype. There are two problems that may be formed from stereotype such people may have incorrect generalization about other groups. Not only incorrect
generalization, people also can use some generalization to make incorrect judgments about individuals.

According to Puspita in (Yunita et al., 2020), stereotypes are labeling or marking for certain groups. And Agustine also stated that the consequences of stereotypes lead to discrimination and injustice that occurs to women by limiting, disadvantaging women, making it difficult and impoverishing. Stereotypes are also referred to as gender injustice that is born from gender differences. In the party world there are many stereotypes against women such as women who are weak, not independent and always prioritize feelings that women are directly stereotyped. Men are also stereotyped as an independent, rational person.

As stated in (Ismiati, 2018) Stereotype mengacu pada kecenderungan untuk mengembangkan dan mempertahankan persepsi yang tetap dan tidak berubah mengenai sekelompok manusia dan menggunakan persepsi ini untuk mengevaluasi anggota kelompok tersebut, dengan mengabaikan karakteristik individual yang unik.

Endraswara in (Arizah, 2004) revealed that in analyzing literary works in a focused study of feminism are: a. position and role of female figures in literature, b. lags of women in all aspects of life, including education and community activities, c. pay attention to the literary factor, how does the reader respond to women's emancipation in literature. Kolodny in Djajanegara describes several objectives of feminist literary criticism, namely: a. with feminist literary criticism are able to reinterpret and reassess all literary works produced in the past century; b. help us understand, interpret, and assess the stories of women writers. Kuiper also reveals the objectives of literary feminist research as follows: 1. To criticize canon literary works and to highlight things that are standard based on patriarchy; 2. To display underestimated texts made by women; 3. To establish gynocritic, which is the study of texts centered on women, and to strengthen women's canons; 4. To explore the cultural construction of gender and identity.

Perkins in (Seiter, 1986) offers a useful outline of the systematic way in which stereotypes distort social relationships while insisting that their strength
lies in a 'combination of validity and distortion'. Cultural representations (which usually employ stereotypes) may be much better analysed using Perkins’s distinctions between what is true and false in stereotypes and her model of how stereotypes falsify social reality:

. . . stereotypes present interpretations of groups which conceal the 'real' cause of the group's oppressed position. Secondly, stereotypes are selective descriptions of particularly significant or problematic areas and to that extent they are exaggerations. (2016)

Davies in (Leicht et al., 2017) stereotypes represent a considerable barrier to women’s leadership aspirations. Indeed, past research has shown that exposing women participants to gender stereotypes can dampen their leadership aspirations.

**Prejudice and Discrimination**

O’Connor stated that “Prejudice can color the way we see other people. Prejudgment may cause a person to ignore information that contradicts their prejudice.” And Devine stated that “In mental health and other health care settings, prejudice can undermine client care—even if the provider is unaware of their own prejudice. As claimed by Arrow, a prejudicial belief that seniors are slow, sick, or uninterested in learning new things can lead to discrimination. For example, a person charged with hiring at a company that prizes innovation may refuse to hire older workers. Their prejudicial belief in seniors’ refusal to learn new things may even cause them to ignore evidence to the contrary in an applicant’s résumé. When this attitude plays a role in many decisions, it can lead to systemic discrimination. A company that allows ageist attitudes to affect hiring may eventually have only young employees, or mistreat its older staff.

**METHOD**

Before coming further to the content analyses the writer would like particularly drawn the reader’s attention on how she collected the sources. In preparing and finishing this research, the writer used library research for getting and collecting reliable and accurate data and information to fulfil and support
the research. And put them into the logical mind process of thinking.

Firstly, the writer read the novel several times in order to get to know more understand the story. Secondly, the writer searched much information from library and the internet by reading some references, journals and some theoretical books which were dealing with the theory and the novel in order to help her to provide some basic theories, valuable knowledge and information related to the research and the novel. The writer analyzed the theories by applying descriptive analysis. It meant that all of the problems would be drawn as possible and the solution too. After getting enough information, then she examined the novel and tried to find the correlation among the cases or problems stated inside the novel. At last the writer found some theories that could give the solution of each problems in this novel. The theories come from some experts that have made their concept that according to the writer are the closest and the most suitable approaches can be used to examine the problems. The writer also focused on her analogy and her concept of thinking by using those theories. That approaches used to support the analysis on examining and elaborating the problems in Legally Blonde novel in order to strengthen writer’s opinion about this novel.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher analyzed the novel with several parts. The first part is analyzing the stereotypes that Elle Woods, the main character, got in Amanda Brown’s Legally Blonde novel. Then analyzing how Elle Woods break the stereotypes under the prejudice and discrimination especially in the Stanford Law School.

The Stereotypes of the main character in Amanda Brown’s Legally Blonde novel.

There are many misassumptions or prejudice of being blonde (her physical feature). Because of the first impression that finally will cause
stereotype whether it is from the brain, the attitude or even the habit. In this novel, the impression of Blondeis spoiled, lazy and always fun with money and life. Another bad assumption of Blonde girl is impolite, foolish or dumb girl and bad or mean girl. Here, Elle gets all the misassumptions as blonde girl not only from Warner but also from her dean, her classmate and other people.

1. The Streatypes from Warner, as Elle's Boy Friend and His Grandmother

Firstly, in the novel, Wamer gives bad and unequal treatment towards Elle by breaking the relationship and giving bad judgment towards her capabilities. The breaking relationship with one-side agreement from Warner shows his bad treatments towards woman, his man's authority and domination in deciding woman's life and in this case Elle's life. He decides by himself to break the relationship based on his interest, reason and opinion without paying attention and caring to Elle's expectation and decision as his couple. He does not give Elle a right to choose whether she wants that condition or not, whether she accepts his decision or not. She can not do anything even though she disagrees with his decision. In other words, she must accept that condition. He thinks that her frivolous lifestyle will hinder his political future and she is not the girl that he wants to be serious with. His attitude disgraces Elle fully as a girl. It also shows that he will treat her better and more different if Elle is as serious as his type of girl.

Secondly, the different educational background and biological determination is one factor of changing Warner's behavior in order to reach his goal. Elle is from Sociopolitical Jewelry design major meanwhile Warner is from law major. His attitude towards Elle has changed when he has been accepted in Stanford Law School. Warner's dislikes Elle as a blonde girl because most of the women around him are mostly brunette and none blonde girl.

Thirdly, Elle feels more hurts from Warner because Warner does not only underestimate her capabilities but also compares her biological determinism to
Sarah who totally has distinctive hair, character and performance feature with her for example, Elle is a blonde girl and Sarah is a blacked hair girl.

Warner tries to open Elle's mind that Law School is not for her. It is not suitable for her. Meanwhile in the reality, Elle has already been accepted in Stanford Law School and even studied in the same school as his. He ridicules and mocks Elle's attitude decision to stand living and studying in Stanford Law School.

Also Warner's grandmother has a bad assumption in Elle at her first impression. It is influenced by the media. She has had bad opinion in Elle because Elle's performance has the similarity with a famous blonde actress that she knows, Pamela Anderson even though in the reality Elle is very different from her.

2. The Streotypes from Stanford's Institution and the Dean

Firstly, When she comes to Stanford Law School to take her orientation schedule for studying in that school, she has the bad and different treatment in getting the academic service in Stanford Law School because of her educational background that she has. The dialogue shows that there are classes because of family and educational background. In this novel, Elle comes from different family and educational background. She does not come from law family and her basic educational background does not relate to the law major. Elle does not get her community care in Stanford Law School. Elle gets different and special treatment from the other new students in Stanford Law School. It can not be a praise and kind treatment if the situation like it is described in the above quotation.

Secondly, Elle gets the impolite, rude and unfair treatment from her dean in the dean's speech in a formal Welcome Meeting. In common university welcome, it usually becomes on honour if the new name called by the dean in front of all public in the university. But not for Elle, She feels ashamed when the honourable Dean Haus mentioned her name in his welcome speech. Elle gets humiliation in her first day at law welcome. She is astounded by the dean's unusual introduction. It is not a praise for her again when she sees the reaction
of the Stanford Law School students. Many people in that welcome speech laugh at her. The dean mocks her educational achievement which happens just because she graduates from jewelry design major which is very different from law major and physic as a blonde girl.

3. The Stereotypes from Elle's classmates

   Firstly, Elle gets *mockeries* because of her *blonde* hair rather than her educational background. She gets a nick name from her classmates toward her blonde hair or the stereotypes of blonde as barbie. They call her "Barbie," They always compare her with a doll especially *Barbie* doll. They can do it directly in front of her or indirectly by whispering behind her which is clearly seen, listened and known by Elle.

   Next, Fran, who is one of Elle's classmates, stares at Elle's costume with wide-eyed amazement. But from her impolite statement it can be seen that it does not flatter Elle and is not good judgment as well. She does not realize that it is common to wear any kind of costume in Halloween party even if it is a sexy cloth. Everyone can show their costume as they wish.

   In other occasion, Elle always gets bad skepticism, for example, some of her classmates underestimate her capabilities and call her by common nickname "Barbie" from her classmate, Claire. Claire still ignores Elle's advice and dislikes her advice by naming her as perfect tan, perfect Barbie.

   Finally, the worst thing is Sarah, Warner's Fiancée, when she underestimates *Elle's intellectual determinants*. She judges that Elle can not have friend and *adapt* in Stanford Law School because she has problem with her *intellectual capabilities*. And she also states that Elle is just a joke thing for Stanford Law School's students.

   Many people have bad perception of her that finally from that condition, stereotype of blonde as sexy, stupid and naughty girl appears.

Elle Woods Breaks The Stereotypes in Stanford Law School

   In this part the researcher would like to explore how Elle Woods breaks the stereotype in Stanford Law School.
1. Empowering Herself in Stanford Law School

Firstly, in order to get and be accepted in Stanford Law School, Elle struggles by empowering herself before she comes to Stanford Law School. She studies hard and willingly spends most of her time reading some books and even postpones her daily common activities and writes the personal-essay part of the Stanford application. By having a 4.0 achievement index, a perfect LSAT score and tons of extracurricular activities which have a very impressive background as homecoming queen and sorority president, she proves that she is qualified, can come and study to study in Stanford Law School as well as Warner without changing her identity as a blonde girl and even without Warner’s help.

Secondly, Elle has positive thinking. By always having positive thinking, Elle has stepped into a new path of mature person. She sees everything in good side and does not have a bad judgment first towards something before it happens.

Thirdly, she motivates herself by trying hard to read her class outline and study hard at every time she can and everywhere she is. Even in her leisure time, she brings books and studies. She dismisses all of her appointments with her friends for focusing herself on studying about law in Stanford Law School. Elle even often listens to law cases in order to help herself in studying in Stanford Law School.

Forthly, in order to survive studying in Stanford Law School, Elle finds other motivating places to refresh her mind and give her new spirit. To empower herself, she goes to saloon, does the manicure and pedicure and also shares her ideas, problems in that place to increase her motivation studying in Stanford Law School, to motivate her revolt and also to strengthen her own identity.

"Josette said 'horrible' in a Frenchified way, 'hor-ree-bil.' It was fun to hear her talk. Elle had booked enough time for a pedicure as well as a manicure; she was starved to talk to someone with discerning taste, and would have stayed longer if she could." (Brown, 2003; 44) Josette becomes the motivator and adviser of all Elle’s problems in Stanford Law School. Besides, determined not to be cast aside and ignored in law classes, Elle studies very hard and gets help and advice from her secret admirer in facing all difficult classes in
Stanford Law School.

Eugenia reminds her for every single case she reads, for every class outline she falls asleep with her face on top of it and her struggle to make other people in Stanford Law School realize especially Warner that she is as serious as other girls in Stanford Law School. She motivates herself.

2. Promoting Herself As One of the Famous Lawyer Assistants

Another way how Elle break the stereotypes in Stanford Law School is by promoting herself as one of the famous lawyer assistant in order to show her ability and shape her own knowledge and experience about law. She enters for the interview which Christopher Miles has to search research assistants. By having high confidence, finally she gets her own opportunity to have interview with a Stanford Law Graduate and a famous defense attorney, Christopher Miles. But before the interview, Elle has researched about Brooke's case for example by having researches relate to the subject dealing with the Brooke's case, talking to people who know the case or Brooke Vandermark, gathering the information, the news and gossips in order to help her towards the case, and making notes which are very reliable and details from her surroundings whether taken place in or out of Stanford Law School. Finally her efforts are not in vain, she gets the job which she is really interested in. She becomes one of research assistants without the attorney realizes it. It can be shown in this part.

He admires her talents and abilities. He shows his trust to Elle and finally along with Wamer and Vivian, Elle is hired as an intern assistant. They are assigned to solve the case of a young woman, Brooke Vandermark, accused of themurder of her older wealthy husband. He is incidentally a former member of Theta and a famous fitness instructor. That fact convinces Elle of her innocence and makes Elle confident to prove that she is unguilty.

3. Solving the Law Case

In order to win a murder crime, Elle does many researches and collects
the data and information in or out of Stanford Law School. As a result, the famous and respected lawyer listens to Elle's opinion and believes her capabilities.

The first way to solve the case is by getting the data and information from the environment. Elle has researched in the obsolete manner of the computer illiterate and talked to the people who know Brooke Vandermark, the murder convict. She collects the data and information by spending hours on the phone with sorority sisters, gathering gossips about Brooke's USC days, making reliable and details notes and even by asking her friend's help in order to get more information. After interviewing the witnesses, Elle and the lawyer interview the convict, Brooke Vandermark. Then Elle builds trust and makes good relationship towards Brooke in order to get the valuable data and to help her to solve the case. Finally Brooke really believes in Elle's capabilities and likes her personality. Brooke tells her secret and everything that relates to the case rather than to her own lawyer. She believes more in Elle than in Christopher. And after that Elle finds the other way to help Brooke where there is not any witnesses she has. Elle has already promised not to tell the real witnesses even she has already known them. Finally because her bravery in giving her judgment and knowledge in hair and saloon, she wins the law case and helps Brooke to get her freedom. Elle finally succeeds to win and solve the case. Chutney directly admit that she is the real murder and because of that case is closed and Brooke gets her freedom. Above of all Elle gets praise and high self-satisfaction not only in herself but also from her lawyer and Brooke and even most people in Stanford Law School who attend that court. She shows her brilliant Blonde power and breaks the bad stereotype which appear in Stanford Law School.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

**Conclusion**

_Hatred and love_ will always appear in this world especially where there are many different, unique, and special people in some extent. Basically God
creates human the same from one to another, the differences are made in order to make our life become colorful and interesting. But it does not mean because other people is different from us in some extent, we must make bad judgment or even bad feeling like disgracing, ignoring, or even hating.

It is realized and considered that human as a social creature can not live alone without others because it is a fate that human is social person. The differences, conflicts and relationships appear because the interaction exists in this world. The interaction and socialization among the people appear commonly in the society and this world but it does not always have a good condition. Sometimes a bad condition is needed in order to make people one another know better, deeper and closer.

All of those have been portrayed and explained in a novel Legally Blonde. It has shown and focused on the character, personality of person and the relationship among the people in the society especially about the women. The novel of Legally Blonde is interesting to be analyzed by the writer because even though it is a fiction, novel which is full of feminism and psychological problems, the story is based on the true story and experience of the author and the social environment around her. Legally Blonde is the first novel of Amanda Brown that the story based on her experience of life and surrounding that mostly related to Law. By blonde ambition and power that Elle has, she struggles and faces all the problems related to her biological determination, her educational background and the stereotypes of being blonde who is naturally her identity. Elle is very strong, tough minded and has a strong self-help and self-actualization which encounters her to survive in Stanford Law School. She discovers that Warner is not worth for all her efforts and finds out her new perceptions, point of view, power and life goal for her. Beside she gets praise and self satisfaction and actualization, she changes the bad stereotypes of being blonde and points out new reference that relates to the world of beauty, fashion and lifestyle. She finds also that all of those can come in handy in a classroom or a courtroom, in other words, every aspect of life is related to each other for example fashion and design can relate to the law world as well.
Legally Blonde is a sassy satire as there are many messages from Amanda Brown for her readers. Her first intention is that looks are not everything. It teaches how to see other people not only from their performances but also from their personalities and truly intelligence determinants. Her second intention is that believe in yourself in every situation and place. It teaches the people always to have confident and do not feel doubt in everything that relates to their life whether in making decision or doing something. Her third intention is that Showing your girl power is a good way to make success in life. It happens because most of the characters are women and everything in the novel relates to the world of women whether from the author or even the topic and the problems which are shown in the novel. It is taught for all women in order not to be underestimated by man in living, as it goes without saying that they are living in the man's world which has mostly the man's domination. It also shows us to believe that woman is as equal as man.

Suggestion

The writer can analyze and discuss deeply about what has been portrayed in the Legally Blonde and its message that can be clearly seen and informed to the readers as well as moral and social messages that actually can inspire the readers and the world community not to stimulate the conflict and hatred or even misunderstanding in the society in order to live happily and peacefully in this world. It can also be seen that everyone has right and freedom to choose, to do and to get or to reach something in life for example, to choose education, do the favorite habit or hobby or interest, get a good life, a good future, happiness or even love. People do not need to underestimate, ignore or even differentiate other people if they want to live together and socialize in this world.

For English students especially those who want to research stereotypes and bad treatments in the movie they should be more aware of the importance of stereotypes and bad treatments problems so that they can make the wider community understand the adverse effects resulting from stereotypes and bad treatments.
It is recommended that for future research using qualitative descriptive methods, especially about the stereotypes and bad treatments in the movie, can be studied more broadly and more deeply about the issue of stereotypes and bad treatments that has occurred to date. Research on stereotypes and bad treatments in this movie needs to be refined in all aspects of stereotypes and bad treatments can be resumed in the latest movie.
REFERENCES


