
FEMINISM IN WOMEN TALKING MOVIE: A MAIN CHARACTER ANALYSIS

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ABSTRAK

*Sebagai salah satu bentuk karya sastra, film dapat menjadi media untuk menyebarluaskan informasi dan isu-isu yang ada di masyarakat. Salah satu isu yang sering diangkat dalam sebuah cerita film adalah feminisme. Feminisme sendiri merupakan sebuah gerakan yang memperjuangkan kesetaraan antara laki-laki dan perempuan. Penelitian ini mengambil film *Women Talking* sebagai objeknya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis feminisme yang digambarkan oleh tokoh utama perempuan dalam film *Women Talking*, terutama berfokus pada jenis, faktor, dan nilai moralnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori feminisme Tong untuk jenis-jenis feminisme. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah observasi dan dokumentasi film *Women Talking* yang berkaitan dengan feminisme dengan mencatat indikator-indikator feminisme dalam adegan-adegan film, meliputi durasi, gambar, dan dialog. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa faktor pendorong munculnya feminisme oleh tokoh utama dalam film ini adalah penghentian kekerasan dalam rumah tangga dan pelecehan. Sedangkan untuk jenis feminisme, ditemukan bahwa tokoh utama film ini menggambarkan feminisme liberal dan feminisme radikal.*

Kata kunci: *Feminisme, Jenis-jenis Feminisme, Tokoh Utama, Tong's*

ABSTRACT

As a form of literary work, the movie can be a medium to disseminate information and issues concerning society. One of the issues often raised in a movie story is feminism. Feminism itself is a movement that seeks equality between men and women. This research takes the movie *Women Talking* as its object. This study aims to analyze feminism portrayed by the female main character in the *Women Talking* movie, mainly focusing on the types, factors, and moral values. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The theories used in this research are Tong's feminism theory for the types of feminism. The data collection techniques used were observation and documentation of *Women Talking* movies related to feminism by recording the indicators of feminism in the movie scenes, including duration, images, and dialogue. The results of this study show that the driving factor for the emergence of feminism by the main character in this movie is ending domestic violence and abuse. As for the type of feminism, it was found that the main character of this movie depicts liberal feminism and radical feminism.

Keywords: *Feminism, Types of Feminism, Main Characted, Tong's*

INTRODUCTION

The social perception that men and women have different values is reinforced by literary depictions of gender differences (Nadiyanti, 2023). Therefore, women's lives are often the main focus in a large number of literary works such as movies. Nowadays, there are many themes raised in movies. Both fiction and non-fiction, many depict events that occur in society including feminism.

One movie that talks about the issue of feminism is "Women Talking". It is a movie adapted from the novel of the same name by Miriam Toews. It was directed by Sarah Polley and released in 2022. The movie's story centers around a group of women in a Mennonite community in Bolivia who face a major crisis when they realize that they have become victims of serial rape by male members of their community. To fight back against the sexual assault, they held a meeting in the hayloft. The meeting aims to decide what they will do, whether they will stay and fight back when the men return; or they will leave. Each choice has significant complications and consequences, and the women have only two days to decide their future. The study aims to classify the main character's feminism, exploring the underlying some factors of her feminist beliefs. The following is the literature framework related to this research:

Literature has historically been defined as a verbal or written work which contains the author's ideas that package aesthetically (Resen et al., 2021). Moreover, literature is defined as writing that was created by a reflection or replica of reality. Literature expresses thoughts, feelings, ideas or other special aspects of human experiences." (Jendra et al., 2022).

Literary works came in a variety of forms, including prose, poetry, novels and movies. "Movie itself is a media communication through audio and visuals to convey a message or information to the viewers. The message is told in various forms according to the theme or storyline in the movie" (Sofyan et al., 2022).

The main character plays a crucial role from the beginning until ending of a story since they serve as the representation of the story and without main character the story cannot be interesting. The main character of the movie exists

primarily to add depth and interest to the story. Furthermore, the story revolves around the main character. (Fitrahmadani, 2021) also stated that “main character is the most important participant in a movie. It can be 1 person or more. It is also often referred as actors or actresses because they specially have an ability to perform through the dialogue and action. This means that the main characters can pretend to play a character so that is like a real character.”

The feminist movement involves sociological and political theories concerning with gender difference issues. Feminism is cultural as well as political movement. It changes the way women think and feel and affect how women and men live their lives and intepret the world (Dewi & Medina, 2020). Feminism requires women to fight for their rights in all aspects of life and increase the position and degree of women so that they are equal to men. Feminism first arose as a woman’s movement demanding equal rights in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that pushed for political equality. The second wave, in the 1960s and 70s, demanded legal and professional equality. Then, the third wave, in the past couple of decades, has been concerned with social equality (Dewi & Medina, 2020).

Ryderberg (2016) state that “feminism is an ideology concerned with gender equality for men and women. It is a belief that seeks to highlight women's status in society.” Many issues of women's discrimination in society have prompted women to take action and form a movement. It can be said that gender is carried out actively and becomes a part of identity rather than biology (Salamina & Tawami, 2023).

Freedman (2001) in (Wulandari et al., 2020) says that “feminism concerns themselves with the inferior position of women in society and with the discrimination encountered by women because of their gender.” Il feminists believe that each of men and women should have equal access to opportunities, treatment, respect, and social rights. Every woman struggles to close the gap that exists between genders. In other words, there are still some women who experience physical or sexual harassment, and some males who engage in this

horrific behavior. In order to fight discrimination based on gender and to have equal chances, women must have their rights.

This is in line with the understanding of Shukla and Mishra (2020) that said “feminism has outsourced an insight of equal opportunity, humanity and a peaceful world full of love, understanding and logical life for all kinds of people.” (Arfani et al., 2023). It implies that the goal of feminism is to strive for a peaceful future that takes into account women, other oppressed groups, and gender. Feminism also aims to improve people's perceptions of the world when it comes to women in particular.

Tong (2009) in (Hastuti, Pratama, et al., 2022), mention 8 branches of feminism, they are:

1. Liberal Feminism

The movement for women to be treated equally to men in all fields is known as liberal feminism. Tong defines liberal feminism as opportunity equality. It denotes equality of opportunity, which indicates that men and women have equal rights and opportunities to grow personally in a variety of areas. As will be discussed in more detail below, there are some issues that become central to the women's movement, including:

a. Equal Education

Both men and women are capable of this. Because everyone deserves an equal opportunity to develop their moral and intellectual abilities in order to reach full personhood, society owes females the same education that it owes boys. Women, for instance, assist their parents with household chores and farm maintenance in addition to other tasks at home. They ought to receive an education to enable them to possess virtues like patience, obedience, and adaptability. These traits will help them become more self-assured, better caregivers for their children, and better educators of them. Because of this, women ought to have equal access to educational opportunities as males (Resen et al., 2021).

b. Equal Liberty

Generally, the best method to maximize happiness is to let people follow their dreams as long as they don't interfere with or harm one another along the road. In order to attain gender justice and sexual equality, women must be granted the same educational opportunities as men to be able to participate in politics and the economy. For example, women are free to pick what jobs they want to pursue, and whether to manage households or go outside and work. Without considering their gender, they can run a business or perform other tasks in the same manner as men (Resen et al., 2021)

c. Equal Right

Women and men are the same in humanity as a whole. Women therefore ought to be treated equally. To truly be free, women require access to the economy, sexual liberation, and civil rights. Every citizen is entitled to participate in their nation's government. One of them is the ability to vote in order to achieve equality with men. They believe that voting grants individuals the ability to influence policies, practices, and institutions that serve their interests in addition to expressing their own political opinions. For instance, women ought to be able to cast elections and run for office as leaders of the government. They ought to have the freedom to express themselves and speak up (Resen et al., 2021)

2. Radical Feminism

Radical Feminism is a feminist stance that seeks to fundamentally change the economic and social conditions of society by eliminating every form of male supremacy. By challenging both the institutions and the social norms that are imposed through the political process, this feminism also seeks to abolish patriarchy. The main focus of radical feminism is a system of beliefs and perspectives regarding the fight for women's rights and an equal place for men and women in society. Raising public awareness of issues like rape and violence against women, as well as rejecting the sexual objectification of women, are a few examples of how to challenge established gender norms.

3. Marxist and socialist feminists

Marxist and socialist feminists claim that social existence determines consciousness. For them, the observation that “women’s work is never done” is more than an aphorism; it is a description of the nature of woman’s work.

4. Psychoanalytic feminists

Psychoanalytic feminists maintain that the fundamental explanation for women’s way of acting is rooted deep in women’s psyche, specifically, in women’s way of thinking about themselves as women

5. Care-focused feminists

Care-focused feminists expend considerable energy developing a feminist ethics of care as a complement of, or even a substitute for, a traditional ethics of justice.

6. Multicultural, global, and postcolonial feminists

Multicultural, global, and postcolonial feminists push feminist thought in the direction of both recognizing women’s diversity and acknowledging the challenges it presents.

7. Ecofeminists

Ecofeminists argue there are conceptual, symbolic, and linguistic connections between feminist and ecological issues.

8. Third-wave feminists

Third-wave feminists are more than willing to accommodate diversity and change. They are particularly eager to understand the ways in which gender oppression and other kinds of human oppression co-create and co-maintain each other.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach. According to Moelong (2018), "qualitative research is a type of research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others, thoroughly and described through words and language."

This study analyzes the types of feminism, their contributing factors, and the moral values presented in the film "Women Talking." Data collection involved a qualitative approach, using observation, identification, classification, and interpretation of dialogues and scenes. The research utilized both primary data from the film and secondary data from scholarly sources. The theoretical framework is based on feminist theories by Tong, Fitrimadani, and others, as well as moral value theories by Lickona and Nurgiyantoro.

The following is a data analysis technique in this study according to Miles, et al (2014) which includes data condensation, data presentation, drawing, and verification of conclusions:

Data condensation according to Miles, et al (2014) refers to "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting." The second step in data analysis is data display. According to Miles, et al (2014), data display refers to "a set of data that has been arranged and allows one to reach a conclusion and take action." In addition, data presentation begins with a narrative description, then discussion and interpretation are carried out in accordance with the theory chosen by the researcher to get a clear understanding of what type of feminism is contained in the movie Women Talking and what factors cause feminism . The final step is drawing a conclusion. According to Miles et al (2014), drawing conclusions is "a process where beginnings with data collection, the researchers analyze the information by identifying patterns and making descriptions or explanations which in the final stage will conclude all data obtained by." This stage aims to identify the final data from all stages of analysis to be able to answer research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.

A. Types of Feminism in Women Talking Movie

Tong's (2009) theory in Hastuti (2022) is a broad overview of feminism that falls into many categories. The author finds two types of feminism portrayed by the main character in the movie Women Talking which are Liberal Feminism and Radical Feminism.

1. Liberal Feminism

According to Tong's concept of liberal feminism, women's concerns in the struggle are threefold: equal rights, equal liberty, and equal education. Meanwhile, equal rights and equal liberty are the main character characteristics found in this study.

a. Equal Rights



Figure III.1
Women in the colony voting
(at Hayloft, 00:04:40-00:05:36)

In this scene, the women in the Menonite colony including the main character are voting. This voting is done to determine what choice they will make next in the face of sexual harassment, whether they will stay, fight back or leave. Here, all women from young to old are allowed to participate in the vote without any discrimination. This scene highlights the collective decision of the women to choose their future, a fundamental aspect of equal rights as pointed out by (Tong in Resen et al., 2021). By actively participating in the decision-making process, they assert their right to have their voices heard and their choices respected.

b. Equal Liberty

Data 1



Figure III.2
Women having discussion
(at Hayloft, 00:15:16-00:16:04)

This scene is where the women discuss together in the hayloft about the pros of staying and fighting. They give their various opinions on what benefits they will get if they choose that option. From this scene, it can be implied that women are able to think rationally just like men. They are able to debate, express their opinions clearly and decide what is best for them. They can weigh the risks and benefits of various options, demonstrate their commitment to personal autonomy and obtain a free life as individual. This is in line with the principle of equal liberty by Tong in (Resen et al., 2021) which emphasized that every individual has the right to pursue what he likes and make his own decisions.

Data 2



Figure III.3
Ona talking with August
(outside Hayloft, 00:45:57-00:46:25)

In this scene, Ona is talking to August about the child she is carrying. Which is the result of the sexual violence she experienced. Ona explains that if she stays and does not win the fight then her child will be given to someone else and maybe even to the family of the person who has sexually assaulted her. Thinking about this possibility makes Ona feel uncomfortable. The thought that her child will be raised in a bad family environment makes her feel anxious. August seemed to understand what Ona was worried about saying "**you won't let that happen. no**", indicating encouragement for Ona to follow her heart. Ona's answer "**no, I won't let that happen**" agrees with August's statement.

Ona's answer on the other hand, can also be seen as a form of liberal feminism because it shows how Ona as a woman can determine what is good for herself. Where according to Ona putting the fate of her child in the future to other people, especially to people who are potentially dangerous is not the right choice. So, she then decided to never let that happen. Which Ona, later, will try to prevent the incident.

2. Radical Feminism

Data 1



Figure III.4
Salome angry
(at Hayloft, 00:51:57-00:52:3)

This is a scene where Salome feels angry towards the perpetrators of sexual abuse who have raped her child. Salome's anger illustrates a firm rejection of the patriarchal violence that occurred in the colony. In the dialog, Salome even says "**I will destroy any living thing that harms my child**" which can be

interpreted that she will not hesitate to face anyone who dares to hurt her child. The statement **“I will lie, I will hunt, I will kill. I will dance on graves and I will burn forever in hell before I allow another man to satisfy his violent urges with the body of my four-year-old child!”** shows that Salome can go to extremes such as harming and even killing if it is to protect her child. Salome's anger and desire for revenge shows that she will not accept such abuse without a fight, reflecting the principles of radical feminism that oppose violence and oppression especially sexual violence.

Data 2



Figure III.5
Women leaving colony
(On the street, 01:37:22)

This scene shows Menonite women including the main character leaving the colony. The scene of the women's departure shows the women's desire to be free from oppression and injustice. They are trying to break away from the patriarchal influence that has shackled them. All this time, they had to be submissive and could not speak up to defend themselves and also had to live under the constant pressure and orders of the men in the colony. They realized that they were not treated as members of society but as commodities. Women in the colony did not have the same place as men. There were gender restrictions and controls from colony men that caused women to experience injustice. The patriarchal system in the colonies has limited women's rights. If colony women wanted to get out of this condition, then they had to leave. The women's action to leave the colony can be seen as a manifestation of the principles of radical

feminism, as they took drastic action to change their lives and fight against the oppressive patriarchal structure.

B. Factors of Feminism

After further analyzing the type of feminism, the author then expands on its factors. The main characters in this film display feminist behavior in dealing with the problems that befall them. The writer analyzes the factors related to feminism that affect the main character of the film *Women Talking*. (Fitrahmadani, 2021) in her research mentioned there are five factors that contribute to the occurrence of feminism, the first is end domestic violence and abuse, reproductive rights, same salary and maternity leave, ecological protection, legal and economic autonomy. However, after writer tried to analyze the film, there was only one factor found, namely end domestic violence and violence, the following is the explanation:



Figure III.6
All the man go to police station
(at Hayloft, 00:02:55-00:03:42)

Supporting dialouge :

Narrator: *We caught one of them. I saw his face. And then he named the others. Eventually the attackers were taken to the police in the city for their own protection. Almost all of the men of the colony went to the city to post bail for the attackers. We were given two days to forgive the attackers before they returned. If we did not forgive them we would be ordered to leave the colony and be denied entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

From the narrative, "we caught one of them" we learn that the women in the colony had just caught the perpetrator who had been raping them for several years. Angered by this, one of the women from the colony went berserk and attacked the perpetrator. However, the perpetrator was later taken to the police for their safety. The women were even threatened that they would be expelled from the colony and not allowed to enter heaven if they did not forgive the perpetrator. Unable to accept the threat, the women then found a way to find a solution to stop the act when all the men in the colony went to get the perpetrator out of prison. And this is a factor in the emergence of feminist actions carried out by the main characters in this movie. This is in accordance with what has been discussed previously, that according to Fitrihramadani (2021) one of the factors of feminism is to end domestic violence, Which is one form of domestic violence is sexual violence (Komnas Perempuan in Putri & Irawan, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This movie tells how women struggle to be free to decide their own fate after being exposed to sexual violence by men in their colonies. So, this movie can be a good reference by anyone, especially a woman who is also trying to get out of the same problem.

The writer found two types of feminism based on Tong theory in. They are Liberal feminists, Radical feminists. For Liberal Feminism, the author finds there are two types of Liberal Feminism that are reflected by the main characters, namely Equal Right and Equal Liberty. These allusions of feminism have been embedded on the all female main characters in executing their decisions of life.

The research the author did using Tong's theory (2009) and found two types feminism, namely Liberal and Radical Feminism. Then in the research of (Indriyani et al., 2020) more highlighted feminism that occurred in toxic relationships while the research that the researchers did focused on feminism that occurred in remote and isolated community.

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