

THE PROHIBITION OF WOMEN TO WORK IN MICHAEL PETRONI'S MOVIE *THE BOOK THIEF*

Ayu Wandari Sabahtini¹, Agnes Widyaningrum²

Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies, Stikubank University

e-mail : silvianaayu0321@gmail.com¹, agneswidyaningrum@edu.unisbank.ac.id²

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the prohibition of women to work that are experienced by the female characters depicted in *The Book Thief* movie. The prohibition of women to work has many reasons. One of the reasons is that they cannot have the same opportunity to determine their wish, not just in work but also in education. The limitation in having jobs for women is because of the limited education that they have. Which is the education for women is usually categorized as women's education that is related to the housework considered as appropriate education for women. The method in this study is essentially qualitative research with content analysis technique in *The Book Thief* movie script by collecting certain information that relates to the research questions on the prohibition of women to work, based on feminism theory by Mary Wollstonecraft "A Vindication of the Right Of Women". Finding of the study shows that education for women has an important role, such as economic growth and also for the welfare of their own family. If women do not have enough education it will hamper them from the opportunity of employment, with those opportunities they can help their family's economic condition.

Key words: *Women's work, Education, Gender equality, Women's Rights*

1. INTRODUCTION

In this study, the discussion focuses on the prohibition of women to work depicted in *The Book Thief* movie. The background story of the movie happened during the Nazi's era in 1930s, German. At that time women's work usually indicates of the work as a mother, wife and daughter that performed within a family and household. The term "women's work" may defined by nature in that only women are biologically capable of performing them, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. That is the main focus of this study and also the cause that women are prohibited to work outside of the house for female characters in *The Book Thief* movie. Other than that, "Women's work" may also refer to roles in raising children, particularly within the home, diaper changing and related hygiene, toilet training, bathing, clothing, feeding, nanny and day care worker. "Women's work" may also refer to roles related to housekeeping such as: cooking, sewing, ironing, and cleaning. It may also refer to professions that include these functions such as maid and cook. Though much of

"women's work" is indoors, but also can be outdoors such as grocery shopping, nurses and cleaning ladies (maids, cooks). The housework like this they have done from an early age, which is considered very appropriate for a woman so that they did not get a chance in the employment and education equality for their rights to develop themselves as a woman who has knowledges.

The prohibition of women in work has many reasons, one of these reasons is that they cannot have the same opportunity to determine what they want not just in work but also in education. If they have limitations in education, then they also will be limited in their self-development, that is what Mary Waulstonescraf's said in her theory *The Vindication of The Rights of Women*. She also said that An equal rights claim for equal opportunities for women in terms both of their right to intellectual development and of their need for better employment opportunities. It is also depicted in *The Book Thief* movie, women were prohibited from working outside the house because they were obliged to have children and take care of them and do the homework.

Feminism is a set of theoretical ideologies, which is the purposes to achieve equal social, political, education and economics. In the general definition of feminism is the belief that both women and men should have equal rights. There are many kinds of feminism acts such as in the ideas, movements and agendas, those action refer to any action in particular to organize that drives changes in society to end inequality to women.

The approach based on the Feminism study is an approach that emphasizes an aspect in a literary work. This study is conducted to analyze the causes on women's prohibition to work. In this study the writer uses a feminist approach by Mary Wollstonecraf called *The Vindication of The Rights of Women (1792)*. Mary Wollstonecraf argued in the 'Reason' of *The Vindication of The Rights of Women*, such as the Reason of essential for the development of moral, virtuous character and the Reason of an equal in education. This approach is also applied to find out the reason why women cannot have a job outside of the house in *The Book Thief* movie. The writer analyzes the cause based on the statement of the problem. This is done in order to collect adequate and relevant data to address the research objectives of this study.

2. PREVIOUS STUDY

In the previous study, the researcher has studied several journals related to the research. In the journals the researcher found the similarities such as is in education equality, employment and women's rights.

The first journal that the researcher has studied in Vidhya (2014), it shows that educational qualification play significant role in women empowerment and it concludes that if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Women's empowerment is not the end of the results itself, but a pivotal step towards establishing gender equality. The empowerment of women in the world of education has an important role not only good for the women but also in social and economic development. Also the other journal that the researcher has studied in Jae-Hee Ahn (2011), in employment of women's labor market that there has been rapid growth in the quantitative measures of female education, there is a significant discrepancy between the level of female education and participation in the labor market. The result shows that the quantitative increase in educational opportunities for females has not resulted in gender equality in education. And the other journal that the researcher has studied in Rahman (2019), it shows that the discrimination issue in working sector, in order to achieve the equality between men and women in the workplace. This discrimination is often faced by women because they are considered physically not fit and only capable to do light work. This shows why women must have a much broader education to defend themselves from the injustice in the workplace, because of their lack of understanding of their own rights as workers. Women are always looked down upon so that they do not have the opportunity in employment and unconsciously they have lost their rights.

Those previous studies show that all those researches found that the quantitative increase in educational opportunities for females have not resulted in gender equality in education, and also in employment opportunities. The writer also studied that women's education and life was influenced by people who are dominant in the society, by people who have the authority to make the rules. Then influenced the lives of women and unconsciously they have been oppressed.

The writer studies on the prohibition of women to work that has been created by certain authority which influence the society especially for women. People create this though related to the gender, then people divide the characteristics between male and female to give limitation for both. Male is considered as a great character and female as a weak character,

this predicate creates the impact of the male, so male has the assumption that he can dominate and organize the female.

3. METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative methods in *The Book Thief* movie subtitle. The research data through online sources and also libraries, to conduct the study the writer uses the movie subtitle and the movie itself. The data of this study are in the form of sentences in the form of dialogues, the analysis is done descriptively with English subtitle. The writer watched *The Book Thief* movie while took notes on the subtitle, collects certain information relating to the research questions, based on feminism theory by Mary wollstonecraft that has been studied previously from several journals related to Mary Wollstonecraft theory in "*A Vindication of the Right Of Women*". In order to accomplish this study on the prohibition of women to work depicted in *The Book Thief* the writers use movie to gain the findings and support the analytical process.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Book Thief movie

The Book Thief movie was released in October 3rd, 2013, the movie produced by British film director Brian Percival and script written by Australian film writer and director Michael Petroni. The story was adopted from the best seller novel with the same title from the movie *The Book Thief*, the novel was written by famous Australian author Markus Zusak, the novel was published in 2005. *The Book Thief* movie the story happened during the Nazi's era that most of women spend their time at home looking after their children and housekeeping. Even though they have a job, it is inside the house, because most of them cannot work outside the house. The women should live revolve around the three 'Ks' : Kinder, Küche, Kirche, means "Children, Kitchen, Church", women at that time must live by these rules.

A glimpse of the story of *The Book Thief movie* at first is, Rosa Hubermann, and her husband Hans Hubermann is a former army. The old couple lived alone after their grown son Hans Hubermann Jr, joins the Nazi Party member who believes that his father is a coward for not supporting Hitler, and their grown daughter Trudy Hubermann, she is live-in housemaid for a wealthy Munich family. Rosa and her Husband received an offer to be a foster parent, which they promise them two allowances of two children, Liesel and her little brother.

Unfortunately, Liesle little brother died when they are on their way to the Hubermann's house. On her daily basis, Rosa Hubermann, washes and irons clothing for the wealthy people of Molching to add some extra money for their needs. One day Rosa asks Leslie to deliver the laundry to Ilsa Hermann the mayor's wife. When Liesle saw the picture of her son Johannes Hermann on the table, she told Liesle that her son died in the war. Rosa's neighbor, Barbara Steiner, Rudy's mother also friend of Liesle, is taking care of her 5 children after her grown son Kurt Steiner joined the Nazi's army.

In finding out about the prohibition of women to work depicted in *The Book Thief* movie, the writer would answer the first question about the reasons why the female character Rosa Hubermann receiving the offer to be a foster parent. As shown in the findings below, Rosa Hubermann asking for her allowance. As shown in this citation

Rosa Hubermann : “ *They promised us two children, with two allowances.* ” (00:05:21,989 - 00:05:24,659)

from the citation above it shows that Rosa Hubermann asking for her allowances to the employees who drop off Liesel to her family. The reason why the Rosa Hubermann received the offer to be a foster parent is because they assigned as foster parents for orphans with the allowance for the children as the promised. This is also one of the duties that they have to follow during the Nazi's rule in German. The other reason why Rosa Hubermann received the offer, it is because she felt deficient to fulfil her family needs. In this citation based on the setting of condition shows that the Hubermann family is economically disadvantaged and live in a small house in the suburbs of Mouching. With their economic situation, Rosa thinks that the offer to become foster parents is the right thing to do, at least they can be helped by the benefits given to her families.

One day Max, Hans's friend's son came to their house, asked for help if he could stay with Hans's family. But Rosa refused to have a new member in their house. Because, Hans Hubermann Rosa's husband did not have job so that this condition becomes the reason she objects bearing a new member in their house. As shown in this citation

Rosa Hubermann : “*What are we going to feed him on?*” (00:38:34,980-00:38:36,207)

Rosa Hubermann felt that their family would no longer be able to take care the others people because of their economic condition and she complains about having other people in

their house. In this citation based on setting of conditions shows that the Hubermann family has an economic issue which makes them worry about their daily needs, especially for Rosa she worried if they have other people in their house that it will burden them. But Hans still wants to help Max to stay at their house and Rosa disagrees and complains about it. As shown in this citation

Rosa Hubermann : *“We are barely have enough to feed ourselves!” (00:38:36,232-00:38:37,833)*

From the citation above it shows that Rosa Hubermann mad because her husband wants to take care of another member in their house, while they don't have a job with enough wages to fulfill their daily needs. In this citation shows the internal conflict of Rosa Hubermann, which she is worried about something that might not be happening to her family and make her depressed about her family situation.

As shown from the citation above that Rosa Hubermann convey that she has been promised with two children and two allowances. This is the only way Rosa Hubermann can fulfill her family needs because women cannot freely work outside the house. Based on the theory of *The Vindication of The Rights Of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft that women should have their opportunities in both terms of their right to intellectual development and of their need for better employment opportunities.

“...to render women truly useful member of society, I argue that they should be led, by having their understanding cultivated on a large scale, to acquire a rational affection for their country, founded on knowledge.(Wollstonecraft, 1977: 212).”

Based on the Mary Wollstonecraft's theory above that Rosa has accepted the adopted child and received benefits from the government, this was done because Rosa had run out of ways to be able to fulfill her family needs, she took a chance become foster parents to get the allowance, in order to support her economic condition. Wollstonecraft's argued that women have the opportunity or the right to develop intellectually and opportunities to work, by having women's knowledge will be more viewed, therefore women must be led in order to develop their knowledge and skills. In order to get better employment for themselves and to support their families.

The second question that the writer would answer is the reasons why women should stay at home and cannot have a job outside the house. As shown in the finding below, Rosa

Hubermann has to work in her house as a laundress in order to fulfill her family needs. After she finished her work she asked Liesel to deliver the laundry to the Mayor's house, so that Rosa can do the rest of the work. As shown in this citation

Rosa Hubermann : *“ Liesel!! I have a job for you. And don't forget to count the money. Come back with the right amount or don't bother coming back at all.” (00:45:10,617-00:45:11,501)*

From the citation above it shows that Rosa Hubermann works in her house as a laundress. Rosa Hubermann had to work in her house because woman cannot have jobs outside of the house, and that is the reason why Rosa Hubermann had to work at her house as a laundress to support her family. As it is seen based on the setting of social conditions it shows that the Hubermann family lives in poor economic conditions. With such circumstances Rosa must be able to find ways to help her family, and the work that she felt was right for her to do is working as a laundress. Besides the work can be done at her house also it is because women are not allowed to work outside the house on the other hand her family needs money to fulfill their needs.

The rules on women are very strict they are required to follow every rule, otherwise they will get sanction for their actions. For example is what happened to Liesel when he returned from delivering the laundry from the mayor's house. Her mother Rosa Hubermann got fired because of her mistake. As shown in this citation

Rosa Hubermann : *“ he didn't say why? I don't understand it. I always ironed his shirts in exactly the same way. ” (01:00:24,956-01:00:35,383)*

From the citation above it shows that Rosa Hubermann stressed out because she has lost her job, it is because Liesel was found out by a minister when she delivered the laundry to the major's house. Because Rosa Hubermann broke the rules that the family who has received the offers to become a foster parents are not allowed to have a job outside the house especially women, even though Rosa felt that the allowance provided by the government was not enough to fulfil her family needs. But she did not get tougher sanctions other than being fired to work at the mayor's house and it makes Rosa stressful. In this citation shows the external problem between the Hubermann family and the government, which is the rules was too tight where they live in poverty but it is difficult for them to be able to help themselves because of the existing rules.

As shown from the citation above that Rosa Hubermann has to work in her house as a laundress in order to fulfill her family needs. Because women are not allowed to work outside the house, Rosa has to find ways to help her family as a laundress in her house. But one day Rosa get fired because of Liesel's mistake, she got caught by a minister when she delivered the laundry to the major's house.

Most women remain to stay at home and only men can work outside the house. This is why they never get the chance to develop themselves more broadly, the rule made their life dependents on men. Mary Wollstonecraft's initial criticisms for an equal rights claim for equal opportunities for women in terms both of their right to be intellectual development and of their need for better employment opportunities.

"... apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength must render them in some degree dependent on men in the various relations of life»" (Wollstonecraft, 1977: 7)

In her theory she stressed out that this was done because of their assumption that women were inability, unable to do anything and made them live dependent on men. So, the opportunity of employment cannot be found by women even though they can actually do it if they are taught and given the opportunities of self-development.

And last but not least, the writer would answer the question about the women lives in Nazi's era depicted in *The Book thief* movie. As shown in the finding below, one of the Steiner's family activities, Barbara and Alex Steiner take care of the children. Barbara in her daily life she is taking care of the house and her children. Alex is a tailor and he owns the shop, sometimes he helps his wife take care of their children. As shown in this citation

Barbara Steiner : *" The boy is crazy"*
Rudy Steiner : *" Ow! That hurts."*
Alex Steiner : *"Sit still, Rudy."* (00:24:24,214>0024:27,592).

From the citation above it shows that Alex Steiner Rudy's father is helping to clean Rudy's body full of mud, while Barbara is taking care of the laundry and her two little daughters. When Alex went to work in his shop Barbara stays at home takes care of their children. Barbara spends her time at home every day she has four children whose eldest son Rudy's brother has gone to join the Nazi army and one day later his son Rudy will also leave him and his family. There is no different from Barbara's daily activities seen from the setting of social condition, Barbara's appearance is very simple like a woman in general with friends in the environment where she lives which come from underprivileged community.

However, in contrast to the Rosa Hubermann's family Barbara does not need to worry too much to fulfil her family needs because Alex Barbara's husband has a shop that can fulfil their needs. And they also get allowance from the government because their children which is owned by the Nazi government and they have the right get the allowance with disability someday their children will become the asset of the state, especially Rudy and his older brother who had earlier gone joined the Nazi army.

Like the other family, the Hubermann's family do their everyday activities at home. As shown in this citation

Rosa Hubermann : *"I'm not going to waste good money..."*. *"on a stamp for a letter that's never going to be answered."*

Hans Bubernann : *"What was I to say?"* (00:26:34,511>00:50:15,972)

One of the Hubermann's family activities is take care of the house. (Rosa and Hans Hubermann always spend time together in their homes because Hans does not have a permanent job, when there is no work for him outside the house he helps his wife take care of the house. In addition, Rosa chose to work at her house as a laundress to get extra money to meet their daily needs. Based on setting of place it shows that Rosa Hubermann and her family lived in such a poor of economic conditions. This is seen from where Rosa Hubermann and her family lived, Rosa and her family live in a small house in underprivileged society in the suburbs of Molching.

One of the Mayor Hermann's family activities is reading a book in the library. Frau Hermann is a wealthy woman and also as the wife of a mayor, she has a private library in her home that she can read whenever she wants, her daily activities are more time spent in the library. She allowed Liesel to read whatever books she wanted in her library, every time Liesel delivered the laundry.

Liesel : *" I have to go. "*

Frau Hermann : *" You can come back whenever you want. It will be here. "*

Liesel : *" Yes, Frau Hermann. "*

Frau Hermann : *" Call me "Ilsa." What shall I call you? "*

Liesel : *"Liesel"* (00:50:19,893>00:50:39,204)

From the citation above it shows that Ilsa does not matter if a child like Liesel reads a book, even though she knows that is not allowed but she secretly allows Liesel to come to her library. In this citation based on setting of social condition shows that the wife of mayor has a

good life. She dressed elegantly, living in the big house and have her own library in her house, this shows that Frau Hermann's family is a well-heeled.

Based on setting of social condition Hubermann and Steiner's family live underprivileged. Rosa Hubermann in her daily routine take care of the house such as cooking and house cleaning, she only has an older child Liesel which she doesn't need much attention to take care of her. And also just like Barbara Steiner's family, Rosa Hubermann's neighbor she has three children that she takes care of as her daily routine, and taking care of all the housework, there is nothing else she does in her routine other than those things. Both Rosa and Barbara do not have any others activities in their everyday live, they just do their activities repeatedly. Therefore they cannot develop themselves more broadly. Whereas Frau Herman is a wealthy family and live in big house. Mrs. Frau's in her daily routine does not do much work, unlike Rosa and Barbara, there is someone who petrified taking care of her house. She likes to spend her time reading books in library in her house, many kind of books that can be read any time she wants. By reading Mrs. Frau can learn many things, not like Rosa and Barbara, in their daily life spend their time taking care of their house and children and cannot have such as opportunity.

The three families above shows that people who are live underprivileged cannot have better opportunity for their life. In their daily activities they just do the same housework and repeatedly, they cannot have the opportunity to find another experience of their lives. Which from the experience they can learn new things, for example Mrs. Frau by reading books she can learn and know many things. Based on Mary Wollstonecraft's theory she said that women can learn through their experiences.

"... A Knowledge (. . .) of the futility of life, (which), if obtained by experience, is very useful, because it is natural; but when a frail being is shown the follies and vices of man (. . .) surely it is not speaking harshly to call it the wisdom of this world, contrasted with the nobler fruit of piety and experience (Wollstonecraft, 1977: 1 18- 1 19)"

Based on Mary Wollstonecraft's theory that the level of knowledge can be gained from their daily experience. If someone just do the same things repeatedly they cannot develop themselves more broadly such as their skills and knowledes.

She stressed out that if women have the oportuny to have a good experience a woman must be intelligent in her own right, Mary Wollstonecraft stated that this does not conflict with the role as a women, mothers or caregivers, those are the roles of women at

home. She stated that 'meek wives, in general, is foolish mothers'. A mother will affect their children from their life experiences, said Mary, if girls are encouraged from an early age to develop their minds, it will be seen that they are rational creatures and there is no reason for them not to be given the same opportunities as boys in relation to education and training. Women can enter the profession and have the same career as men.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the study above that the prohibition happens because there are no opportunities for women in equal education. So that they do not get the opportunity of employment. The education for women have an important role, with high education, women can provide knowledge for themselves and those around them, women can also raise their lives and can help their family's economic. Although women have an obligation to take care of their children and husband when they are married, it cannot be a barrier for women to have the same education as men. Women also have a very important role in the education of their children at a later time.

The result shows that the three families Rosa Hubermann, Barbara Steiner and Msr.Frau Hermann are from different communities. Rosa Hubermann and Barbara Steiner are coming from the same community they live underprivileged cannot have better opportunity for their life. In their daily activities they just do the same housework repeatedly, they cannot have the opportunity to find another experience of their lives. And for women become mother is one of the rules that must be obeyed whether they are ready or not. The right for them to have education and work for the welfare of their family is not something they can do. So that it puts them under pressure. Mrs. Frau she is from a wealthy family, in her daily activities she did not do much of house work she likes to spend her time by reading books in her own library in her house. The study showed a very significant difference among the three families, which people who live underprivileged could not get their rights to have an education and the opportunity of employment. Meanwhile, Mrs. Frau who came from wealthy family still have her own privilege such as she owns library in her house so that she could learn many things.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahn.Jae-Hee / Analysis of Changes in Female Education in Korea from an Education - Labor Market Perspective / Yonsei University, South Korea.

Julie A. Monroe (1987) / A Feminist Vindication of Mary Wollstonecraft/ /The University of Iowa.

Rahman A. Abdul / Discrimination Against Women in Workplace: A Case Study on Hotel Dress/Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Perlis, Malaysia.

Vidhya Sri, december 2014. Women Empowerment, Role of Education Journal of Department of Management Studies.

Employment of Women in the 1930s.<https://medium.com/the-thirties/employment-of-women-in-the-1930s-5998fd255f5>

Life for women and the family in Nazi Germany.<<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/historyofgerman>

Subservient Wombs for the Führer: The Role of Women in Nazi Germany. <https://www.historyhit.com/the-role-of-women-in-nazi-germany>

The Core Ideas and Beliefs of Feminism.<<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-feminism-3528958>

The Book Thief Study Guide.<<https://www.gradesaver.com/the-book-thief-movie>