

GENDER INEQUALITY ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN FEMALE CHARACTER IN NIKI CARO'S MULAN MOVIE: A FEMINISM STUDY

Afina Mirrah Hasna¹, Endang Yuliani Rahayu²

English Literature, Faculty of Law and Language
Stikubank University, Semarang.

E-mail: ¹mirrahhasna@gmail.com, ²endangyuliani@edu.unisbank.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research is focused on feminist studies. It is further discussing gender inequality reflected in Mulan, the impact of gender inequality in Mulan and Mulan's efforts to realize gender equality. This research is based on the theory of sexual politics by Kate Millett which explains that women must be able to have masculine and feminine behavior by fighting for gender equality. This means that women must also play the role of men. On the other hand, women can only serve their husbands and raise children when they are only seen as weak figures are called sexual politics. The data of this research is taken from Mulan movie, especially from the movie script and the point of view of the female character. In chapter IV the gender inequality reflected in Mulan, the impact of gender inequality in Mulan and the efforts made to achieve gender equality are discussed referring to Kate Millett theory. The study results that this film is about gender inequality because women are considered weaker and cannot do men's work. In addition, the authors hope that research on women's struggles in the future, especially gender equality, can be carried out more often.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Gender Equality, Feminism Study, Sexual Politics, Mulan Movie

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a social movement in which the fundamental goal is gender equality. Throughout history, people have insisted that men and women can be doing the same things and have worked to improve the social status of women and the quality of slightly disadvantaged men. Modern feminism emerged in the 19th century as a result of the gap in the positions of men and women in Japan, Europe and America. Women are really inferior to men when they have no

chance to participate in society, the legitimacy of their jobs, or the right to inherit money (Thakur, 1997). The definition of gender equality is the equality of values between the roles of men and women, which is viewed as critical for a nation's progress and development (Hussain, N., & Kirmani, 2010); yet, women are left behind substantially behind men on the majority of metrics of human development.

Gender equality means taking into account the interests, needs, and priorities of women and men, recognizing that different groups of women and men are different. Gender equality is the ideal situation in which women and men have equal opportunities to participate in political, social, and economic activities. There isn't any suffering from disadvantage or discrimination based on gender, both are seen as free, autonomous beings with dignity and rights (Htun, M., & Weldon, 2010).

Sexual Politics is a belief system that advocates and fights for women to exhibit both masculine and feminine behaviors to perform men's roles when necessary. Sexual politics was an examination of patriarchal dominance. Kate Millett analyzes and defines the structural forces she believes are crucial, the "ancient and universal scheme that prevails in the area of sex." She believes that a man's gender identity automatically empowers him, but because of the prevalence of patriarchy, women are rendered powerless, (Huyink, 2015). In her book, Millett demonstrates women's cooperation in male rule by examining how females are socialized to accept patriarchal beliefs and practices, which called into question the notion that female subservience is natural. (Bindel, 2017).

The Mulan Movie tells about a fighter who carries out a rebellion to fight for women's rights without risking his own risk. Mulan's efforts to fight for her show her ability to be a good warrior and help her comrades defeating the Huns are interesting to see from a feminist point of view. The writer wants to analyze Mulan's efforts to get equal rights with men by using a feminist point of view and the forms of discrimination against women in Mulan's experience. Based on the description above, the goals are set as follows: (1) To explain the gender inequality that occurred in Mulan (2) To illustrate the effects of gender inequality in Mulan (3) To explain Mulan's efforts to realize gender equality.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, researcher analyzes the movie "Mulan" using a contextual approach. This approach refers to various schools and methodologies that do not consider literary texts as independent and independent works of art but rather more comprehensive.

In order to analyze this research, the writer uses the feminism theory of Kate Millett. Several steps will be conducted before analyzing the data and they are as follows: First, the writer watches the Mulan movie, reads the text of the

film script, and understands the topic of the problem. Secondly, the writer identifies the problem formulation, collects the appropriate theory, and looks for journals and references. After that, the researcher analyzed the data based on Kate Millett's feminist theory. In the last step, the writer interprets the results of the data that has been analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Inequality Reflected in Mulan

This discussion explains some of the findings and discussion points. Mulan's attempt to define gender suggests that the female Mulan is more interested in learning about herself and joining the royal troops. It demonstrates how, despite being a girl, Mulan picks up boyish mannerisms when she enters the male training facility. Mulan's surroundings also influence her in how she learns to act, train, and fight like a boy. Mulan also mentioned gender when she was given the power to supervise. It proves that women can be influential leaders as well as men.

Daughter Brings Honor Through Marriage

Mulan's mother tells her father that evening how disappointed she is and worries that Mulan won't find a suitable husband because, it is tradition for a daughter to find a boyfriend or girlfriend as soon as she turns 18 and get engaged. Hua Li, Mulan's mother, is concerned that her daughter won't be able to find a suitable husband. It is based on the Mulan village's view that if a woman wants to find a good husband, she must be graceful, this is as shown in the following citation:

Li: *"You make excuses for her. You forget, Mulan is a daughter, not a son. A daughter brings honor through marriage."*

Hua Zhou: *"Any man would be fortunate to marry either of our daughters. Including Mulan."*

Li: *"I ask you, what man will want to marry a girl who flits around rooftops, chasing chickens?"*

From the quote above, it can be seen that there is gender inequality towards Mulan because she is forced to marry young and cannot determine her own partner, she also has to behave like an elegant woman, so she cannot be herself.

Hide Her Chi

Mulan has been gradually learning martial arts and Qi or Chi balancing since she was young. Chinese culture is predicated on the idea of qi, also known as Chi, which is thought to be a life force or spiritual force that permeates all

living things. The old custom that women are carriers of family honor is at odds with Mulan's tomboyish nature because women are seen as a representation of love and honor for their families. This is in line with the following citation:

Hua Zhou: *“Your chi is strong, Mulan. But chi is for warriors not daughters. Soon, you'll be a young woman... and it is time for you... to hide your gift away. To...To silence its voice”*

In the quotation above, it can be seen that there is a gender inequality behavior when Mulan's father suggests Mulan hide her Chi skills because, according to her culture, Chi is only for male soldiers, not female soldiers.

Women can't be soldiers

When Hun Army attacked the empire, the Imperial Majesty issued a rule that each family had to send one son, or if they didn't have a son, they could be replaced by the head of the family to join the Chinese army. This is in line with the following citation:

Village Magistrate: *“Citizens! Citizens, we are under attack from Northern Invaders. Our land is at war. By edict of His Imperial Majesty, the Son of Heaven. Every family must contribute one man to fight. One man from every house.”*

From the citation above, it can be seen that there is gender inequality because only men are allowed to join the army while girls are only allowed to stay at home.

The Effects of Gender Inequality Reflected in Mulan

Arranged Marriage Culture

When Mulan was young, she ran through the village, herding chickens into the coop. Mulan knocked over the fruit display and harmed the statue that was supposed to protect her family. Mulan's mother tells her father that evening how disappointed she is and worries that Mulan won't find a suitable husband because, it is tradition for a daughter to find a boyfriend or girlfriend as soon as she turns 18 and get engaged. Hua Li, Mulan's mother, is concerned that her daughter won't be able to find a suitable husband. It is based on the Mulan village's view that if a woman wants to find a good husband, she must be graceful, this is as shown in the following quotation:

Li: *“You make excuses for her. You forget, Mulan is a daughter, not a son. A daughter brings honor through marriage.”*

Hua Zhou: *“Any man would be fortunate to marry either of our daughters. Including Mulan.”*

Li: *“I ask you, what man will want to marry a girl who flits around rooftops, chasing chickens?”*

From the quotation above, it can be seen that there is gender inequality against Mulan because Mulan cannot make her own choices and has to follow her parents' orders. Mulan's parents are worried that Mulan can't be a good person and can't get a husband because she behaves like a man. Women must be polite and elegant because of their environment, and women bring honor to the family through marriage.

Mulan's parents decide to take her to a matchmaking agency. Because they are concerned that Mulan won't be able to find a good husband, Mulan's expression, however, changes when her parents discuss their choice to match her. Mulan appears to be very upset and dissatisfied with her family's decision. Mulan displays a dejected expression on her face as she attempts to convey her feelings of sadness and disappointment. This can be proven in the following citation:

Li: *"We have excellent news. The matchmaker has found you an auspicious match."*

Hua Zhou: *"Yes, Mulan, it is decided. Come and sit down. It is what is best for our family."*

Mulan: *"Yes. It is best. I will bring honor to us all."*

The dialogue above, Mulan expresses her feelings of sadness and disappointment with a disappointed look on her face. He could only follow what his family had chosen, especially his mother. Mulan feels unable to do what she wants. But because of the culture in which she lives, her family, especially her mother, Mulan is obliged to find a partner.

Mulan is not a graceful woman. She performs many tasks that men perform, so she cannot be as elegant as women. It is a common belief in his community that a woman's ability to find a suitable partner depends on her grace. It also demonstrates how a woman should present herself to men by dressing beautifully and maintaining a slim physique. The matchmaker advises women to treat their husbands with grace even when visiting a matchmaking agency. This is in line with the following citation:

Matchmaker: *"Quiet. Composed. Graceful. Elegant. Poised. Polite. These are the qualities we see in a good wife. These are the qualities we see in Mulan. When a wife serves her husband she must be silent."*

From the sentence above, it can be concluded that there is pressure given to women where they have to fulfill the requirements that are considered desirable by men. Because it is as if one of the functions of women's existence is to become a decoration that men are proud of, the majority of women only carry out activities at home or in private places. According to the belief of Mulan Village, there are differences between men and women, and women must behave appropriately and not behave like men.

Women Must be Feminine

Mulan has been gradually learning martial arts and Qi or Chi balancing since she was young. Chinese culture is predicated on the idea of qi, also known as Chi, which is thought to be a life force or spiritual force that permeates all living things. The old custom that women are carriers of family honor is at odds with Mulan's tomboyish nature because women are seen as a representation of love and honor for their families. This is in line with the following citation:

Hua Zhou: *“Your chi is strong, Mulan. But chi is for warriors not daughters. Soon, you'll be a young woman... and it is time for you... to hide your gift away. To...To silence its voice”*

In the quotation above, it can be seen that there is a gender inequality behavior when Mulan's father suggests Mulan hide her Chi skills because, according to her culture, Chi is only for male soldiers, not female soldiers. Because a man with strong Chi will be considered a great warrior, but when a woman has it, she is considered evil, ostracized, and a disgrace to her family.

Women are Forbidden to Join the Army

Mulan's decision to go into battle in place of her father was very careless. The rules mandated that only the son, who could only join the Chinese army, or the family head could advance. According to the regulations in place at the troop camp, it is also forbidden for women to enter the campgrounds. If this is discovered, the offender may be killed or removed from the troop list. But Mulan still forced herself to join the army to uphold her family's honor. This is as proven in the following quotation:

Commander Tung: *“What is your name?”*

Mulan: *“Hua Jun, Commander.”*

Commander Tung: *“Is this your family sword?”*

Mulan: *“It belongs to my father, Hua Zhou.”*

After looking at the quotation above, it can be concluded that Mulan's character is against the supposed gender role. She began to ignore the demands of society for the benefit of his family and herself. She dared to risk disguising herself as a man to become a Chinese soldier to help fight the Rouran army. It showed that she was ready to face any risk that she would take. It also emphasized that gender roles were no longer necessary to her.

According to Kate Millett, who developed the theory of "sexual politics," the idea that male domination over female domination is the most enduring form of power in the world. The theoretical basis for this research is a feminist study of gender inequality, which examines sexual politics, precisely gender inequality, to ensure that all human beings have equal rights regardless of gender (Millett, 1970).

Mulan's Effort to Realize Gender Equality

Pretending as a Man

According to the applicable regulations, only boys can join the Chinese army or heads of families who can advance, while girls cannot join. If this is found, the perpetrator can be killed or removed from the troop list. But Mulan still forced herself to join the army to uphold her family's honor. This is as evidenced in the following quotation:

Commander Tung: *"What is your name?"*

Mulan: *"Hua Jun, Commander."*

Commander Tung: *"Is this your family sword?"*

Mulan: *"It belongs to my father, Hua Zhou."*

Based on the quotation above, Mulan tries to hide her identity as a woman in order to take part in war training.

Joining War Training

Male used to be the only ones to participate in war training because they were thought to have a more robust physical makeup. At the war training camp, Mulan struggled to match the strength of her friends. Even though Mulan does all of these things while telling lies, she consistently tries to be strong and is often stronger than her male friends. The indicators for attending war training as shown in following script:

Sergeant Qiang: *"Only the strongest will reach the summit."*

"It will take everything you have."

"Straighten out those arms."

"Keep them up."

"Shoulder level."

"Keep your mind strong."

"Don't stop."

Based on the quotation above, Mulan is trying to prove that she can equalize her strength with men and that not all women are considered weak.

Defeating Hun's Army

When the emperor's soldiers are attacked by Hun Army and almost lost, Mulan disappears and devises a strategy to divert the enemy away from the emperor's soldiers. In the end, Mulan defeated the Hun army and saved the emperor's soldiers. Finally, Mulan confessed to the emperor's soldiers that she was a woman. Indicators for defeating Hun's army as shown in the following quotation:

Mulan: *"I'm Hua Mulan. Forgive me."*

Cricket: *“He's a girl?”*

Commander Tung: *“You are an imposter. You've betrayed the regiment. You've brought disgrace to the Hua family.”*

Mulan: *“Commander...”*

Commander Tung: *“Your deceit is my shame.”*

Sergeant Qiang: *“Commander, what is the punishment assigned to this imposter?”*

Commander Tung: *“Expulsion.”*

Mulan: *“I would rather be executed.”*

Commander Tung: *“From this moment forward, you are expelled from the emperor's Imperial Army. If you show your face again... your wish to be executed will be granted. You can never go home. Your disgrace is worse than death”*

After looking at the quote above, it can be concluded that Mulan was able to equalize her strength with men by proving to defeat the Hun army with her own strategy and efforts, but she lied pretending to be a man that she was forced to be expelled from the emperor's army.

Becoming a Leader

Men usually fulfill the responsibility of being a leader. Men are thought to be born with a strong sense of leadership. But in essence, women are also able to take over. Mulan tries to be the leader when the imperial army returns to the imperial city. She tries and struggles to remain a woman on par with men. Mulan's efforts were not in vain when she led the imperial army to return to the imperial city. Indicators for becoming a leader as shown in the following quotation:

Commander Tung: *“Hua mulan”*

“Your actions have brought disgrace and dishonor to this regiment... to this kingdom and to your own family.”

“But your loyalty and bravery are without question.”

“You will lead us as we ride to the Imperial City.”

Becoming an emperor's guard

An emperor's guard would almost always consist of males in ancient or imperial times. It is due to the perception that males are more capable and have more incredible physical stamina than females. The Indicators of becoming an emperor's guard as can be proved in the following dialogue:

Sergeant Qiang: *“As befits a great warrior... the sword is marked with the pillars of virtue.”*

Hua Zhou: *“Loyal, brave, true.”*

“And what is this fourth virtue I see?”

Commander Tung: *“Read it aloud, Mulan.”*

Hua Mulan: *“Devotion to family.”*

Hua Zhou: *“You have brought honor to us all.”*

Sergeant Qiang: *“The emperor urges you to reconsider his invitation to join our greatest decorated warriors. As an officer in the Emperor's Guard.”*

When Mulan was appointed as the Emperor's bodyguard. The Indicators of becoming an emperor's guard also can be found in the following citation:

“The green shoot has grown up to the sky... and her ancestors celebrate her in the vault of the heavens.”

“The girl became a soldier.”

“The soldier became a leader.”

“And the leader... became a legend.”

In the quotation above, it can be seen that Mulan can prove that men can be the emperor's guards because they are considered physically more robust, but women can also become the emperor's guards if their bodies are trained to be strong.

CONCLUSION

Mulan Movie refers to gender inequality that discriminates against women and cannot do things considered vital. Thus, females don't always have to be constrained by customary laws that require them to act according to their position. Everyone must obey Customary law, but Mulan can give an open view, to change people's social mindset about thinking about women who are considered too weak.

Mulan the movie also gives a message about gender equality, how a woman tries to be recognized and respected as a man and shows that women and men can do the same thing without discrimination. This message about gender equality is conveyed through conversations between Mulan and the commander in the middle of the film when Mulan is considered to have committed a shameful disgrace and at the end of the film when the Commander praises Mulan as a female soldier like other soldiers and not a shameful disgrace. The existence of gender equality that Mulan fought for as a woman was also supported by the community so that it gave satisfactory results. The film also depicts the masculinity of brave, tough, independent, strong women who like to compete.

REFERENCES

- Bindel, J. (2017). Kate Millett Obituary.
- Htun, M., & Weldon, S. L. (2010). When Do Governments Promote Women's Rights? A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Sex Equality Policy. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(1), 207–216.
- Hussain, N., & Kirmani, M. (2010). *Gender Differences: A Case Study of, Malda District of West Bengal*. India: Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies.

- Huyink, C. J. (2015). A Dramatistic Analysis of Sexual Politics by Kate Millett. *Women's Studies in Communication*.
- Lorber, J. (2010). *Gender Inequality*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved January 27, 2022
- Millett, K. (1970). *Sexual Politics*. Columbia University Press.
- Thakur, R. (1997). *Rewriting Gender: Reading Contemporary Chinese Women*. London: Zed Books.