

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN *LITTLE WOMEN* MOVIE (2019) BY GRETA GERWIG: AS A FEMINISM STUDY

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Abstract

Feminism is one of the problems that happened in women's daily lives, especially gender discrimination. The gender discrimination found can be in the form of economic, social, or cultural. This study discusses the gender discrimination that occurs in the *Little Women* Movie, especially in the main character Jo. The object to be studied is in the form of injustice received by Jo in publishing writing and being single. The findings show that Jo finds injustice when he wants to publish his story because it is not based on like society. Besides that, Jo also wants to live independently without a man in her life. The cause of this problem is the patriarchal society that dominates society. In this case, the researchers concluded that women must marry and cannot live alone.

Keywords: feminism, gender discrimination, publishing writing, being single, married.

INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination is unequal or disadvantageous treatment of an individual or group of individuals based on gender (Maroto et al., 2019). Gender discrimination can be in many ways. It is based on her or his genders; they are suffering from it in several causes. Especially for women, they are mostly getting discrimination in several aspects such as education, workplace, marriage and other things. The position of women in society mostly is controlled by men and women do not have freedom of their life. Women have struggled for equality and against oppression for centuries. This is including of freedom of living without violence and discrimination.

Due to of that cases it means that women still have some discrimination even right now we have law for it (Bunch, 1990). For example in big city like New York there are some cases that women treated differently than men. Even they have same job there is difference in payment. Women will have payment less than men. Other example discrimination is when women have interview they will be asked if they married or they already have children. Even like time require is shorter than men. For the law of employment there are many of it, but some company illegally have their decision to make women treated differently.

The phenomenon of gender discrimination above, there are many movies have some theme gender discrimination, for example *Hidden Figures*, *Bombshell*, *Legally Blonde*, *Suffragette* and *Little Women*. Based on the example of a film that depicts gender discrimination, researchers took *Little Woman* to show the discrimination towards women that is shown through this film.

Little Women is one of coming-of-age period drama film. This movie was directed by Greta Gerwig. *Little Women* (2019) is the seventh film adaptation on the same novel by Louisa May Alcott. Greta Gerwig wanted to take the setting look like in that time of novel, she make the detail inspiration using the novel. *Little Women* premiered at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City on December 7, 2019. This film received critical claim, which is good of performance of the cast.

This movie tells about life the four girls in New York. The time was after the World War 2. The character names are Jo, Beth, Amy, Meg, Laurence, Ms. March, her Aunty, Frederic and other. This story wants to describe about feminism in that era, women do not have power to get work that men have, especially for Jo, and she is writer. For example, she wants to publish her short story, but she cannot because she is women and her story does not have characteristic to that era. She wants to criticize about women who have power and do not need to get married. But as always her book cannot publish before she rewrites it. Feminism in this story, Jo sister, who is Amy, she wants to learn drawing, painting and etc. but she is woman. Before she goes to the France she cannot learn normal at that time. In the end Amy just married and goes to the New York. For the Jo, she practically succeeds because she has basic teacher and she gets house from Aunty March, she builds school to children.

Based on those statements, researchers want to analysis the gender discrimination toward women in film *Little Woman*, especially the character Jo who is the main lead in this movie. She gets the discrimination when she wants to publish her book because it contains of the movement of women in that era.

METHODOLOGY

The research will use the feminism theory in analyzing main character in the film *Little Woman*. The research applied Judith Butler in her book: *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990). Butler said that one in all the central assumptions of feminist theory is that there still exists an identity and a subject matter that need representation in politics and language. For Butler, “women” and “woman” are categories complicated by factors like class, ethnicity, and sexuality. Moreover, the universality presumed by these terms parallels the assumed universality of the patriarchy and erases the particularity of oppression in distinct times and places. Butler thus eschews identity politics in favor of replacement, coalition feminism that critiques the idea of identity gender. She challenges assumptions about the excellence often made between sex and gender, in line with which sex is biological while gender is culturally constructed.

This research will be identifying the cause and impact gender discrimination in *Little Woman* movie. For the data researchers will find it from watching movie, read the script, identifying the object and then researcher can find the gender discrimination towards the character Jo’s.

The data that researchers will use for this study is qualitative method. Careswell said that qualitative research is a research method to explore and understand the meaning that some individuals or groups of people think come from social or human problems (Martin et al., 2013). Therefore the analysis will describe the phenomenon of gender discrimination.

This study will discuss the events experienced in the *Little Woman* movie by examining the scenes in the script that relate to gender discrimination. The analysis will be linked to the theory used. After combining the two, it will be known that in today's life they are still very attached to society which will be concluded at the end of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Causes of Gender Discrimination in *Little Women* Movie

This movie is present in the 19th century in New York City. *Little Women* movie is one of the feminist movies that represent that era. Women tend to do housework or domestic job, and they should marry instead. In this chapter the researcher will find the gender discrimination towards Jo as the main character. The researcher’s classification of two

gender discrimination is gender discrimination in publishing writing about women and gender discrimination in being single.

Patriarchal System Applied in the Society

Gender discrimination from one of these is the biggest obstacle for the main character of this film. Jo is someone who has ambitions to have a better life. From one of her goals in life, she wanted to publish a book about a woman's struggle in choosing her career and ended up being successful but not married. This story is one of Jo's own life stories. When brought to the publication office, a short story written by Jo was not worthy of circulation. The publisher refuses the stories. The citation below.

MR. DASHWOOD

"The country just went through a war. People want to be amused, not preached at. Morals don't sell nowadays." (pointedly) Perhaps mention that to your "friend."

Jo looks again at her completely altered story.

JO

What do you - that is, what compensation -

MR. DASHWOOD

We pay twenty-five to thirty for things of this sort. We'll pay twenty for that.

JO

(money over art)

You can have it. Make the edits.

Jo hands over the story, Mr. Dashwood hands over the money, business done.

(Page 2)

In the statement Mr. Dashwood people do not want stories that to realistic because people read a story to entertain. The citation "*The country just went through a war people want to be amused, not preached at. Morals don't sell nowadays.*" This movie presents the 19th-century era of that movement first-wave feminism. Even if there is already known as the feminist movement people still discriminate against women who cannot take control of what they want to do even in the story.

Jo still curious of other things that might help of her writing, so she as that probably he wants another story. The citation below.

JO (CONT'D)

(then)

Should I tell my, my friend that you'll take another if she had one better than this?

MR. DASHWOOD

We'll look at it. Tell her to make it short and spicy. And if the main character's a girl make sure she's married by the end.

(casually)

Or dead, either way.

(Page 3)

Mr. Dashwood said clearly "*Tell her to make it short and spicy. And if the main character's a girl make sure she's married by the end.*" it will be good that short story that the girl is married or dead instead. The citation above is clearly that women should married even in the story.

In the other citation that Jo's book is always women is main character. The citation below.

DASHWOOD

Frankly, I don't see why she didn't marry the neighbor.

JO

Because the neighbor married her sister!

DASHWOOD

Right, of course. So, who does she marry?

JO

No one. She doesn't marry either of them.

DASHWOOD

No. No, no, no, that won't work at all.

JO

She says the whole book that she doesn't want to marry.

DASHWOOD

WHO CARES! Girls want to see women MARRIED. Not CONSISTENT.

JO

It isn't the right ending.

DASHWOOD

The right ending is the one that sells.

Jo thinks. Dashwood pounces.

DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

If you end your delightful book with your heroine a spinster, no one will buy it.

It won't be worth printing.

Jo shifts. She considers.

JO

I suppose marriage has always been an economic proposition. Even in fiction.

DASHWOOD

It's romance!

JO

It's mercenary.

DASHWOOD

Just end it that way, will you?

JO

Fine.

(Page 116 – 118)

Mr. Dashwood reviews the book from Jo again. The first thing that he said after a read of the story is married. “*Frankly, I don't see why she didn't marry the neighbor*”. The way that he thinks women do not want to be married is weird. He even insists that the main character should marry. The citation “*WHO CARES! Girls want to see women MARRIED. Not CONSISTENT.*” Mr. Dashwood thinks that the best is if the main character women should marry is happy ending in that era. The best seller story is about the normal man and women do. The citation “*If you end your delightful book with your heroine a spinster, no one will buy it. It won't be worth printing*”. Jo is one of those women who think women don't need to get married. Women can also live and have a better life. From Jo's perspective married is economic proportion. The citation “*I suppose marriage has always been an economic proposition. Even in fiction*”. After all that argument Mr. Dashwood still resists but he does not want to take the risk if the book is unsold.

In this incident, it is clear that Jo is limited in doing something because the things he writes are related to morals or feminism. The stories he wrote did not match the norms prevailing at that time. This obstacle makes gender inequality free to be creative with what you want. This writing was hampered because, at the end of the story that he was about to publish, the main character did not get married. This was immediately opposed by Mr. Dashwood himself as the person in charge of Jo's writing. Gender discrimination that Jo gets in publishing her book is from Mr. Dashwood. The publisher is representative from patriarchy people that women should married.

Male Dominance over Female

Gender discrimination that Jo gets not only when she want to publish her work, she get discrimination when she do not want to get married. One by one his sister began to marry with their respective choices of life. Some were asked to get married because they wanted a better life, but after they got married, it turned out that their life was not much different from what they experienced before. The citation of being single is when Aunt March said if Jo wants had better live she should married. The citation below

AUNT MARCH

(examining her)

You mind yourself, dearie, one day you'll need me and you'll wish you had behaved better.

JO

(carefully)

Thank you, Aunt March, for your employment and many kindnesses, but I intend to make my own way in the world.

AUNT MARCH

No one makes their own way, not really, least of all a woman. You'll need to marry well.

(Page 38)

The citation above presented if women want to have a better life, they should marry. The citation “*No one makes their own way, not really, least of all a woman. You'll need to marry well*”. Aunt March is one person that thinks women should marry. She thinks if women are not married, women cannot get a better life.

The second citation when her friend wants to married with Jo, but she declined because she does not want to married. The citation below.

LAURIE

I've loved you ever since

I've known you Jo – I couldn't help it, and you've been so good to me -- I've tried to show it but you wouldn't let me; now I'm going to make you hear and give me an answer because I can't go on like this any longer.

JO

I wanted to save you from this, I thought /you'd understand.

LAURIE

(not listening to her)

/I've worked hard to please you, and I gave up billiards and everything you didn't like, and waited and never complained for I hoped you'd love me, though I'm not half good enough --

JO

Yes, you are, you're a great deal too good for me, and I'm so grateful to you and so proud of you, I don't see why I... I can't love you as you want me to.
(Page 96-97)

The citation above is when Laurie wants to confess to Jo but Jo does not want to hear nor accept it. Even though Jo knows Laurie is good to him, she cannot accept his feelings. The citation “*Yes, you are, you're a great deal too good for me, and I'm so grateful to you and so proud of you, I don't see why I... I can't love you as you want me to*”. Laurie wants to make clear the relationship between them but instead, he gets the answer he gets the rejection.

The third citation is when Jo's mother also suggested why Jo didn't get married even though he was already quite old among his friends. Jo still wants to have ambitions to publish his work and create a school for all children. Getting married was something Jo didn't think about at the moment. The citation below.

MARMEE

But do you love him?

JO

(tearing up)

I know that I care more to be loved. I want to be loved.

MARMEE

That is not the same as loving.

JO

Women have minds and souls as well as hearts, ambition and talent as well as beauty and I'm sick of being told that love is all a woman is fit for.

(Page 100)

The citation above is present that Jo often hearing that love, married, and have family is the women should do. The citation “*Women have minds and souls as well as hearts, ambition and talent as well as beauty and I'm sick of being told that love is all a woman is fit for*”. Even she has ability to get better live, society will critic Jo.

In daily life, Jo is also get treated that if a woman wants to get better live she must marry. In this case, "marrying" is a must in a woman's life. There is nothing else women need to do besides marry and take care of the household. Even though there are many things that women to get better than getting married. This inherent norm limits the space that women have. Women cannot do what she wants, it is related to Butler's theory, that gender is not determined by gender but by the activities that lead to masculinity or femininity. However, because of the privileged culture and norms in society gender equality has begun to be shaken and unstable. This instability is the basis of society that women cannot live alone and requires them to get married, while men lead everything in daily activities.

Female is Voiceless

Because women are delicate beings, they need a life partner. This particular partner is a male. In a patriarchal society, men will always take the lead over women. Women who are unmarried or live alone are discriminated against in this system. Because of this instability, women are unable to live alone and must marry, and men take charge of all daily activities, as shown in the reference below.

JO

What is *wrong* with me? I've made so many resolutions and written sad notes and cried over my sins but it doesn't seem to help. When I get in a passion I get so savage, I could hurt anyone and *enjoy* it.

(Page 56)

Jo wants to live her ideal life. She had to give up some things, though, in order to pursue her ambition, due to the dynamics of her family. She claimed that this demonstrated Jo's desire to fulfill her various goals. She hopes to never wish to cause trouble or damage other people. Jo wants to have a good time. However, not everyone is aware of Jo's intentions.

Women are also not permitted to live how they like. In daily life, women already have their own set of rules. Having an opinion will not be taken seriously by the general people.

Impact of gender discrimination

Negative impact of gender discrimination in little women movie

Jo experiences the harmful effects of gender discrimination in her life, such as experiencing male oppression in a patriarchal culture and female discrimination in the patriarchal society.

Being oppressed by the male creature as patriarchal society

In this film, Jo experiences discrimination due to her single status and publishing career. She experiences the effects in her everyday life. As evidenced in the reference below, one effect is that she lacks the desire to compose a story again.

BETH

(nods, then)

I love to listen to you read, Jo, but I love it even better when you read the stories you've written.

JO

(self-conscious)

I don't have any new stories.

BETH

Why not?

JO

Haven't written any.

(Page 72)

This reference makes it quite obvious that Jo gives up creating stories because she believes they will never sell because no one will buy them. The distinction in a story at that time is that ladies and men will get married in the end. When Jo learns that the best-selling narrative at the moment is different from what she wrote, she becomes depressed. She cannot switch to a new story since she prefers the ones that most closely mirror her own life. She simply took a short break while assisting her mother in caring for her younger sister. However, she probably never wrote her story again before the sister asked.

Being discriminate as female creature in the patriarchal society

In this situation, Jo is adamantly opposed to leading a life by herself. With his decision to live alone, she has always been thought to be odd. Her urge to live alone is growing greater despite the fact that all of her sisters had previously found love and settled down because she observes her eldest sister, who is married but does not seem to be living well. The patriarchal society prevents women from living the lives they wish. They fail to realize that getting married is not a way to solve financial or other issues. Like in this reference, she is ignorant of the fact that women want a man's love before they can be content.

JO (CONT'D)

“What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known?”

(to Beth)

How great is that?!

(Page 71)

This quote demonstrates how the way of life at that time is repeating due to the lovely love and affection between women and men, which Jo cannot understand. This is so that women can obtain the love of their spouses through marriage, which is their only alternative option.

Positive impact of gender discrimination in little women movie

Keep motivated to speak her voice

Her youngest sister, Beth, inspires Jo to write. She frequently commends Jo's articles and requests that she read them, such as the quote below.

BETH

You have pencil and paper. Sit here and write me something.

JO

Uhh. I can't, I don't think I can anymore.

BETH

Why?

JO

It's just, no one even cares to hear my stories anyway.

BETH

Write something for me. You're a writer. Even before anyone knew or paid you.

I'm very sick and you must do what I say.

Jo smiles and then lays back.

BETH (CONT'D)

Do what Marmee taught us to do. Do it for someone else.

(Page 72)

It is clear from the exchange above that Jo is uninspired to produce any new writing. All the scripts they performed were written by Jo himself, unlike when they used to be allowed to perform and Make Theater plays at home. Because Jo's essay stood out from the competition, Beth enjoyed it. She constantly takes pleasure in it and concurs that Jo's writing is excellent because it is appropriate for the circumstances.

When her sister marries and Jo is left behind, gender prejudice in the film Little Women has another advantageous effect. She invents a number of tales to express her stress. She

wants to change her strategy from the past due to the psychological fallout from the first narrative and the fact that the most of her sisters are married. Even though the ladies in the story are successful and single, she still wants to see their story published. The following citation illustrates it.

INT. MARCH HOUSE. JO & MEG'S ROOM/ATTIC. NIGHT/DAY. 1869.

Jo starts awake –

She looks around the room: she's all alone, everyone is truly gone. She lights a candle. She goes to the drawer where she keeps her writing, and pulls out the stack.

She feeds a published story into the fire. Then she burns more stories, printed, unpublished, half-finished, she burns them all. It is a potlatch, a total burning down of everything she has made up until this point.

She finds one last piece, and is about to give it over to the fire, when she reads on top: "For Beth." She stops. Jo makes her way up to the attic, and sits in her old writing chair, looking at the story. She takes a fresh sheet of paper and starts writing.

She writes all night, and into the next day, piling up page after page. She spreads them out in the attic, like a quilt, building outwards. Candles are lit and re-lit, the sun rises and sets.

Marmee brings her some food and then leaves her alone. Jo nods off for a second then keeps writing. She revises, she scratches out, and she changes orders. She falls asleep on her blanket of papers.

She's re-connected with her childhood, and out of the depths of despair has found hope and inspiration. Jo finishes and carefully ties up the first few chapters of this experiment and writes a letter to Mr. Dashwood:

JO

Dear Mr. Dashwood: Enclosed are the first few chapters of a piece I've only begun working on. It could suit as a story for young people, but I think it is probably quite boring. However, I'm sending it to you just in case it has something of value, though I doubt it.

(Page 106-107)

She visits her chamber after her sister got married. She begins composing some tales for Mr. Dashwood. She wants to tell a tale that would work for that time period. When Jo writes something that she feels is subpar, she burns it. She holds up the last stories for which she has written a great deal. Jo reread what she had written and discovered that her name is "Beth." Jo recalls having once written a novel to Beth while Beth was ill. Jo keeps on writing about herself in an old story. She works through the night till daylight, then sends it right away to Mr. Dashwood. Jo received another response from Mr. Dashwood after she had submitted it. Even if the narrative might not be great, he stated he would give Jo another shot if she came up with a better one. Even if the narrative doesn't satisfy Mr. Dashwood, she will offer another one in the next reply that could.

Get respect from her male friend

The favorable influence his closest friends have on her, who always support Jo's interests. Appreciate and support all of Jo's decisions. For example, see the citation below.

LAURIE

(shaking his head)

You will care for somebody, and you'll love him tremendously, and live and die for him. I know you will, it's your way, and you will and I'll watch.

(Page 98)

In this instance, a few people continue to support Jo's efforts to realize his aspirations. This is her closest buddy, who always encourages her and offers guidance when other people find Jo's ideas odd since they do not make sense in the context.

Be persistence with her choice

In this situation, Jo may publish her story without modifying it at all. She continues to send Mr. Daswood her desired story in writing.

JO

She says the whole book that she doesn't want to marry.

DASHWOOD

WHO CARES! Girls want to see women MARRIED. Not CONSISTENT.

JO

It isn't the right ending.

DASHWOOD

The right ending is the one that sells.

Jo thinks. Dashwood pounces.

DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

If you end your delightful book with your heroine a spinster, no one will buy it.

It won't be worth printing.

Jo shifts. She considers.

JO

I suppose marriage has always been an economic proposition. Even in fiction.

DASHWOOD

It's romance!

JO

It's mercenary.

DASHWOOD

Just end it that way, will you?

JO

Fine.

(Page 116 – 118)

Even after writing a lengthy novel, she continues to stress to Mr. Dashwood that her main character should remain single. Even though the main character is not married, Mr. Daswood does not like it, Jo still publishes it since she thinks her narrative might be popular. Even if the primary plot doesn't sell as well as she would want, she still likes to maintain it that way.

When Jo struggled with her decision to publish his book, it had a beneficial effect on her. Mr. Dashwood or her role as a presenter of such a patriarchal culture did not influence Jo's decision to shift the main character to marry or pass away. Jo is free to publish his work however she pleases thanks to his argument and tenacity.

CONCLUSION

The gender discrimination it happened to the main character Jo in this Little Woman movie is discrimination in publishing writing and being single. In publishing writing, Jo received unfair treatment from the book publisher, namely Mr. Dashwood. Because the story he wrote contains morals and not a woman who ends happily choosing to marry. This unfair treatment leaves little scope for Jo.

Gender discrimination is in his daily life, Jo gets a lot of statements about why he does not choose to get married. This firm stance has been questioned several times by some of his closest people, such as his mother and brother. His wish is to live independently. In fact, by living alone, Jo will be able to achieve his dream to become a writer and create a school for the children around his house. The environment that does not support women to live alone is something that will continue to follow throughout her life.

The theory written by Judith Butler said that women are women themselves. Gender here does not refer to women or men, but over time the norms and culture in the environment change, making women and men have different identities or behaviors. So in this case, women are the ones who get the few opportunities to do activities related to the outside world. In this case, the main character Jo gets injustice in various things in his life which he wants to achieve by living independently and publishing his story.

SUGGESTION

Based on the problems that occur in this film, it can be inferred that gender discrimination occurs because of the patriarchal society that exists in society. The researcher hopes that with the existence of a different culture in today's society which is not too close to the space for women to be able to write the books or stories they want without fear in society.

The researchers also hope that readers can choose their path in life without fear of being hated or ostracized. In this advanced life, anything can happen and be done. Just because women want to live alone does not rule out the possibility that women can get a better life than choosing to marry but not wanting to be themselves.

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