

## Feminism's Analysis of Discrimination to Female Characters in the Novel "Persuasion" by Jane Austen

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### Abstrak

Diskriminasi gender bagi perempuan adalah perbedaan perlakuan yang diterima oleh perempuan, yang membatasi kebebasan perempuan, melanggar hak-hak perempuan, dan membatasi akses atau kesempatan perempuan dalam masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi ungkapan-ungkapan yang mengandung diskriminasi terhadap tokoh perempuan dalam novel dan untuk menyelidiki jenis-jenis diskriminasi yang terjadi pada tokoh-tokoh perempuan dalam novel *Persuasion* karya Jane Austin pada abad ke-19 di Masyarakat Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode dokumentasi untuk mengumpulkan data tentang ungkapan-ungkapan yang mengandung diskriminasi terhadap tokoh perempuan dalam novel *Persuasion* karya Jane Austen; teknik pengumpulan data yang diterapkan dalam penelitian ini adalah close reading. Metode analisis isi diterapkan untuk menganalisis data dengan menggunakan perspektif Wolf (2002) untuk mengklasifikasikan data tentang jenis diskriminasi gender. Temuan penelitian ini adalah ungkapan tentang diskriminasi perempuan yang ditemukan dalam ungkapan dari Kapten Wentworth kepada Anne, yang menyatakan bahwa perempuan dibenci ketika mereka menyatakan pendapat bijak mereka. Dalam novel ini, ada tiga jenis diskriminasi terhadap tokoh perempuan dalam novel *Persuasion*, yaitu diskriminasi gender dalam pendidikan, pernikahan, dan kebijakan dalam negeri.

**Kata kunci:** *Kritik Sastra, Feminisme, Diskriminasi terhadap Perempuan*

### Abstract

Gender discrimination for women is the difference in treatment received by women, which limits women's freedom, violates women's rights, and limits women's access or opportunities in society. This research aims to identify the expressions containing the discrimination against female characters in the novel and to investigate the types of discrimination that happened to the female characters in the novel *Persuasion* by Jane Austin in the 19th century in the English Society. This research used the documentation method to collect data about the expressions containing the discrimination against female characters in the novel *Persuasion* by Jane Austen; the technique for collecting data applied in this research is close reading. The content analysis method is applied to analyze the data by using Wolf's (2002) perspective to classify the data about the type of gender discrimination. The finding of this study is the expression about women's discrimination that was found in an expression from Captain Wentworth to Anne, who stated that women are hated when they state their wise opinions. In this novel, there are three types of discrimination against female characters in the *Persuasion* novel, namely gender discrimination in education, marriage, and domestic policy.

**Keywords:** *Literary Criticism, Feminism, Women Discriminations*

### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of feminism is a phenomenon that has indeed been a social issue from the past until now. *Feminism* is an action taken to realize that women have authority, opportunities, and equal rights with men. This gender inequality is often called feminism (Rutven, 1948). Feminists often voice the liberation of a woman to have the right to express opinions, to be entitled to equal treatment without discrimination between men and women, and to protect women's political, social, and monetary rights. In the end, women as individuals must be free to make

choices regardless of the dominance of the male role in their lives. Feminism occurs because of patriarchal understanding in terms of the role of men, who are considered more dominating. Patriarchal understanding has become a standard view in society; patriarchy is used as a hegemonic tool to give voice to men more, where men are the only ones who deserve to lead the family, who have the right to work because they are physically stronger than women (Raday, 2003). The existence of patriarchy in society has a significant impact on women; society has a patriarchal perspective, which then discriminates against women.

Because there is an inequality of rights between women and men, discrimination against women cannot be avoided. When there is unequal or unfair treatment in the distribution of resources or opportunities among various social groups, it is said to be discrimination. Similar to this, gender discrimination is when society mistreats women. Gender discrimination for women is the difference in treatment received by women, which limits women's freedom, violates women's rights, and limits women's access or opportunities in society. (Beauvoir, 1949). This gender discrimination cannot be ignored; many writers of literary works speak out about feminism and gender discrimination for changes in how women should be treated in society. In other words, feminist literary criticism serves to mislead and empower women to be treated equally with men, not to avenge sexism or otherwise undermine the feminist belief that equality is a product of humanity. Feminist literary criticism is an action feminists take to express concerns or important issues about feminism as the primary mode of writing literary works. This research is interested in taking the topic of feminism, especially gender discrimination, because the issue of feminism, especially gender discrimination, still exists today in society, and this is often poured into literary works. This allows this study to see the phenomenon of feminism or gender discrimination in novels as a form of how social phenomena, namely gender discrimination, are presented in literary works.

One of the literary works suitable for discussing feminism and gender discrimination in the 19th century is the novel *Persuasion* by Jane Austen. The story highlights the problems of treatment toward women in England in the 19th century when men were still patriarchal holders in society. This study aims to identify the expressions containing the discrimination against female characters in the novel and to investigate the types of discrimination that happened to the female characters in the novel *Persuasion* by Jane Austin in 19<sup>th</sup> century in the English Society.

Earlier research on the same topic was reviewed to compare this paper with the former research. An article in the international journal and an article in the national journal were reviewed to support this paper. An article entitled *Feminism in A Room with View Novel: A Critical Analysis* was done by Putri (2022). This study aimed to find feminism issues and the act of women's rights in *A Room with View* novel. The data were collected by documentation method to collect the data. The techniques and methods of data analysis should be explained in this study. This study uses feminist approaches to analyze the data. This study concludes that many feminist issues occur in the novel "*A Room with a view*," although there are still some obstacles to understanding language style.

In Contrast to this paper, the previous study has some similarities and differences. Both researchers used the same method of collecting data. There is documentation. Despite the similarities, both research studies used different issues. The previous research used the feminism issue and the act of women's rights in the novel. At the same time, this paper discusses identifying the expressions containing discrimination against female characters and investigates the types of discrimination that happened to the female characters in the novel.

The article titled *The Application of Feminism Literary Criticism in "Jane Eyre" Novel by Charlotte Bronte* was written by Yulianto (2014). The purpose of this study is to find out the aspects of literary criticism presented by Charlotte Bronte in her novel, find out the types of critical theory of feminism contained in the novel, and find out how Bronte's life is reflected in her novel entitled "*Jane Eyre*." The method of collecting data for this study was library research, and this research needed to explain the methods and techniques of data analysis used in this study. This study uses feminist approaches to analyze the data. The findings of this research were that Jane Eyre was a Liberal feminist. Jane Challenges the old tradition, the male domination, and the subordination of women. In challenging the old tradition, Jane challenges the patriarchal system, where males

dominate society so that women become subordinate. Secondly, there are similarities between Charlotte Bronte's life and Jane Eyre's in the novel.

Compared to this paper it has similarities with previous research, namely using the feminist approach to analyze the data. The difference between this paper and previous studies is that it uses a different method of collecting data; the previous studies applied library research to collect the data, and the previous study needed to explain the methods and techniques of data analysis. At the same time, this paper applies documentation methods to collect the data and content analysis to analyze the data. The previous study and this paper also use different issues.

## **METHOD**

### **Data Source**

The data from this research is a novel entitled *Persuasion* by Jane Austen, the original and first edition of this novel was published in 1818, but for this study take the data source from the novel *Persuasion* which was republished in 2013 by Canterbury Classics, this novel containing of 205 pages. This novel was chosen as a data source because this novel highlights the phenomenon of feminism that occurred in England in the 19th century and the author Jane Austen was a feminist who often expressed her concerns about the phenomenon of feminism that existed in the social environment in England in the 1800s. Besides that, in this novel there are many phenomena of discrimination against women at that time which of course makes this novel an appropriate source of data to fulfill the aims of this research

### **Data Collection**

According to Creswell (2018) in his book entitled *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixes Method Approaches* documentation method is a data collection method by reading and collecting written data such as archival materials, books, etc. because the data from this study were in written form, namely novel, this study used the documentation method to collect data about the expressions containing the discrimination to female characters in the novel. This study uses close reading techniques to collect data; the following steps are carried out by this study to obtain data:

1. Using close reading, by reading the novel carefully and thoroughly.
2. Identify expressions containing gender discrimination to the female characters in the novel by noting the expressions included in the expressions that show gender discrimination against female characters in the novel. One of the expressions included in gender discrimination against women is the stereotype in society which states "women should just stay at home taking care of children and housework; it is nature as a woman". this expression shows that women do not have the freedom to work according to their talents, explore their abilities and as if only men have the right to succeed.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, content analysis method is applied in relation to analyze the types of woman discrimination that accrued in the novel. To analyze the data this study classifying the data by applied Wolf (2002) Perspective about gender discrimination to find out the types of discrimination gender that experienced by female characters in the novel *Persuasion* by Jane Austin in the 19th century in English Society.

This research is within the scope of a feminist approach from literary criticism theory by analyzing gender discrimination in education, marriage and domestic policy from the perspective of one liberal feminist, namely Naomi Wolf in her book entitled *Become A Woman in Our Society* in her book explains the unfair treatment received by women and the types of discrimination that often occurs in society. The wolf perspective is used to find out what types of gender discrimination exist in the novel *Persuasion* experienced by female characters, and what expressions of gender discrimination exist in the novel that are carried out by the social environment in the novel either from society or family.

Feminism approach use a deconstruction method to describe social problems that affect women and then attempt to express those feelings through their literary works to create their

idealized worlds. Feminist approach and type of feminism theory by Wolf (2002) lends support to this analysis of gender discrimination in this study by illuminating the steps involved in comprehending the social structure that led the author to recognize the subjective nature of gender discrimination.

There are several types of gender discrimination according to Wolf (2002) namely:

1. Gender discrimination in marriage refers to the discriminatory role played by the spouse at home or other unfair treatment in the marital role or matters related to the topic of marriage (Wolf, 2002:29). An example of discrimination that often occurs in marriages is the society that classifies women in marriage only in charge of taking care of household chores and children and fathers outside the home to work. (Hawke, 2007). Divorce is also a problem in marriage, being a widow is considered a disgrace by society (Wolf, 2002:59).
2. Gender discrimination in economic forms is unequal or unfair treatment of women in the economic field which concerns the welfare of women in terms of their own economy (Wolf, 2002:20). One example of gender discrimination in the economic field is the giving of wages to men who are greater than women and prohibiting women from working when they are married.
3. Gender discrimination in health is the unfair treatment that women receive when they receive their right to health care, whether it is carried out by society or family. (Wolf, 2002). The relation between gender discrimination in health care and family policies in Europe. According to the results, the health disparities between men and women are higher in central, southern, and Eastern Europe countries with traditional family policies (contradictory policies). Some people think that these disparities are caused by the conditions of women who work unpaid jobs.
4. Gender discrimination in education is the treatment that women receive unfairly in accepting their right to receive education, namely going to school (Wolf, 2002). Wolf in his book entitled *fire with fire* states that men are always treated better than women, for example women are required to finish their schooling at an early age before they grow up and are required to complete education and choose to marry because they are already at an adult age.
5. Domestic policy discrimination based on gender: unfair treatment of gender stereotypes (Wolf, 2002). An example of this discrimination is discrimination in domestic politics where women do not have freedom in family and social policies.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Synopsis

The majority of Jane Austen's novels from the year 1999 in England focused on women of in the 19<sup>th</sup> period. She was born in Hampshire, England's Stevenson. Her works, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma*, served as critics of the system of outdated dogmatism and over time altered public perceptions of women's duties. Her most recent book, *Persuasion*, which is regarded as a heroine novel, features the strong woman (Anna) as the main character who encounters discrimination in the society around her. Jane Austen's posthumous novel *Persuasion* was released in 1817. *Persuasion* (written in 1815–16), this novel develops the comedy of manners and character through subtle satire. This novel is set in 1814 in England, the novel tells about the story of a second chance, or old love rekindled between Anne Elliot and Captain Frederick Wentworth, Anne Elliot must be willing to let go of her lover, Frederick Wentworth, because Anne's extended family considers her to be unequal to the noble Elliot's great name. Anne also remained alone, ignoring the proposals from other men. Eight years have passed since the painful parting; Frederick is back in front of her. The man acted as if they did not know each other. On the other hand, Anne tried to hide her nervousness every time she had to look at the man she still loved. After serving in the Napoleonic Wars, Wentworth returned with prize money and the respectability of a naval rank. He is now a qualified suitor who is accepted by Anne's aristocratic father and his circle, and she realizes how strong her love for him still is.



### **Identify the expressions containing the discrimination to female characters in the novel**

Discrimination against women is often made through the expression of words or verbally. This is seen through conversation with Anne and Captain Wentworth about women and ship, Captain Wentworth was in a heated debate with Anne, they both had strong arguments until Captain Wentworth got emotional and took out his sarcasm. ***“But I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentlemen, and as if women are all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all days.”*** (p. 55). From that expression it can be seen that men here are considered as the higher sex than women, from Captain Gothwort's statement it can be seen that women do not have the right to argue and speak wisely as if freedom of expression only belongs to men. Society in the 18th era dictated that women could only speak in private spaces and only men could argue in public spaces.

### **The type of gender discrimination**

There are several different types of gender discrimination against women; the following are the types of gender discrimination was found in *persuasion* novels

#### **1. Discrimination to female characters in marriage**

At the beginning of the 19th century there was a lot of discrimination on the topic of marriage for a woman at that time. one of them was a woman who was widowed and wanted to remarry was considered a social disgrace which was very shameful. Sir Walter Elliot and Lady Russell are widows because they are of the same age, and lady Russel already has children they should not think of a second marriage ( Andersson, 2009). It is illustrated Widowed women at that time were considered inappropriate to remarry, especially if they already had children. Women at that time were considered not entitled to be happy and were subject to social sanctions, which made second marriage a shameful thing. It show in this sentence *“Lady Russell, with a steady character and age, and already very well off, should in that condition not think about second marriage, she doesn't need to apologize to the public or society, which is rather inclined to ridicule and discontent when a woman remarries. But when Sir Walter continues his singleness requires an explanation for the loneliness he feels”* (p.2-3). The second marriage was part of the embarrassment in society, society at that time subconsciously made fun of women who had second marriages, rather than men, men who were lonely and then had second marriages were more supported by society at that time.

#### **2. Discrimination to female characters in education**

Gender discrimination in education also occurred in the early 19th century in England, at that time only aristocratic women received proper education, women who had a middle economic class chose to stop in the middle of their education or did not receive education at all. Miss Hamlington left the school because she was married off by her father (Nadeu, 2009). It is illustrated that in that period women were still considered unimportant to continue their education because at that time in society women were considered only to have the nature to take care of the house, raise children and cook. Women's decisions before marriage were still under family or father orders so women at that time did not dare to give her opinion on their own life decisions. Society does not care about women's education so that many women have short education, and when women experience puberty their parents stop paying for school and find a mate for their daughter. An example of this phenomenon in the novel is shown by the following sentence *“...and Miss Hamilton, a woman who was three years older than herself (Anne), but still from the need of a near relationship and settled home, remaining another short year at school, it good to her in a way which had considerably lessened her misery and had been useful for her, and she could never remember the difference. All Anne knew about Miss Hamilton was that she had left the school because she had a recent marriage, and was rumored to have married a wealthy man. The governess's story, which was just, clarified but drastically, altered Miss Hamilton's status.”* ( p.121).

#### **3. Discrimination to female character in domestic policy**

In this novel also shows gender discrimination in domestic policy, where at that time more family wealth was inherited by sons, and the birth of daughters was deemed inappropriate to inherit it. Sir Walter Elliot felt that he was a man who lacked the proper

generation to elevate his family status and carry on his family legacy (Philips, 2006). It is illustrated that women at that time were considered incapable of managing family inheritance or inheriting family wealth, society still implemented a patriarchal system in which a man was the heir to the family and that was of course a form of discrimination against women, where his father's wealth should also be inherited by him like the house and other property must be given to their distant relatives or male cousins. The birth of a daughter who is not so desirable can be seen in the following novel excerpt *"Having three girls, the eldest sixteen and the second fourteen, is one terrible inheritance for a mother to pass down, a terrible task because they will not inherit the family fortune, to tell the authority and guidance of a ridiculous father who proud."* (p. 2)

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the analysis above, it is clear that the novel *Persuasion* alludes to the injustice that women got in the early 1800s. Jane Austen as a feminist writer has succeeded in showing how a woman gets discriminated against in a persuasion novel that can be seen from the expression Captain Wentworth said to Anne who stated that women are hated when they state their wise opinions. Besides that, it can be concluded that in *persuasion* novels there are several types of gender discrimination, from the 5 types of gender discrimination, in this study only found 3 types of discrimination against female characters in the novel *persuasion*, namely gender discrimination in education, marriage, and domestic policy.

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