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*I Am Malala: A Woman's Struggle for Her Rights in Education*

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# *I Am Malala: A Woman's Struggle for Her Rights in Education*

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**Abstract:** The right to experience an education is a basic right for everyone to have. Men and women should have the same opportunities to get a proper education. However, some society seem to differentiate the opportunity for men and women's education. One of the society that differentiates this is Pakistan. The novel, *I Am Malala* novel, which is written by Malala Yousafzai is one of those that deals with the inequality of women in education. This article discussed about a research that used qualitative method to describe about woman's rights in education by using Liberal Feminism. The result of the novel's analysis showed the struggle of the main character, Malala, who received a number of wrong perceptions from her society, family and tradition about the position of women. The wrong perceptions became the reason why she suffered from the inequality of education between man and woman.

**Key words:** woman struggle, education, liberal feminism

**Abstrak:** Hak untuk merasakan pendidikan adalah hal dasar yang harus dimiliki oleh semua orang. Laki-laki dan perempuan harus mempunyai kesempatan yang sama untuk mendapatkan pendidikan yang layak. tetapi, beberapa masyarakat terkesan membedakan kesempatan memperoleh pendidikan bagi laki-laki dan perempuan. Salah satu masyarakat yang membedakan adalah Pakistan. Novel *I Am Malala*, yang ditulis oleh Malala Yousafzai adalah salah satu novel yang berhubungan dengan ketidaksetaraan pendidikan bagi perempuan. Jurnal ini mendiskusikan tentang penelitian yang

*menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mendeskripsikan tentang hak perempuan dalam pendidikan dengan menggunakan Feminisme Liberal. Hasil dari analisis novel menunjukkan perjuangan dari tokoh utama, Malala, yang menerima banyak persepsi yang salah dari masyarakat, keluarga dan tradisi tentang posisinya sebagai perempuan. Pandangan yang salah menjadi alasan mengapa ia mengalami ketidaksetaraan pendidikan antara laki-laki dan perempuan*

***Kata kunci:*** perjuangan wanita, pendidikan, feminisme liberal

## INTRODUCTION

Every human being has rights that cling since they were born. The concept of human right is that every single human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights without distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion based on national or social origin, property, birth or status. According to Osler and Starkey (1996), human rights are overused so that laws about human rights arise.

The Council of Europe states that there are recommendations that encourages teaching and learning about human rights in school. The definition of human rights includes some aspects, such as the right to get an education. Not only men, but women also have the rights to receive free education. Subrahmanian (2005) states that rights within education refer to the right of men and women to non-discrimination in education opportunities. Every human being is equally entitled to their human rights without discrimination. Thus, education should be for everyone, whether man or woman.

The discrimination between men and women sometimes comes from an ideological social characteristic. One's sex, male or female, is determined at birth. One's gender, however, is a social construct, being created by cultural ideas and norms. Consciously or unconsciously conformity of cultural ideas is established for them by society. The conformity is the images of men who are aggressive, self-assertive, and domineering; whereas women are passive, meek and humble, thus in society, men are defined as more dominant than women. It also happened in education. This is why society believes that education for women is unnecessary because in the end, a woman's role is just to become a housewife.

According to (2007) education for women should not make them have the same intelligence as men because people believe that education for women is necessary only to make women become more effective wives for their future husbands and more effective mothers and teachers for their future children. Unfortunately, this cannot happen unless women also have the same opportunities for education.

Education is the first step toward empowering youth. Society must allow women to show their opportunity in the spotlight. Women have the same rights as men to develop their ability and to employ them freely. Women also struggle to fight for their rights in education, especially in a patriarchy culture. It is an undeniable reality that the domination of patriarchy culture in women's life such as getting educated is really obvious when perceiving women as biologically and socially inferior that they become subordinate to men.

Rosemarie Tong (1989) states that patriarchal society uses certain facts about male and female, i.e. in their chromosomes, anatomy, and hormones, as the basis for constructing a set of masculine and feminine gender identities and behaviors that serve the empowered men and disempowered women. Women in a patriarchal society are being labelled as inferior and always under men's shadow. In education, women also should not get an education because the role of women in a patriarchal society is biologically as mothers of their children, and socially as housewives and those that take care of houses.

The novel *I Am Malala* described a girl named Malala who struggled to get her rights in education in Taliban society. The patriarchal culture in Pakistan was the obstacle for Malala to reach her dream to fight for education for all women in Pakistan. This becomes the reason why the researchers will analyze *I Am Malala* by relating to the protagonist with the issue of a woman's struggle for her rights in education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Novel

According to Sumardjo (1998, p. 29) a novel is a fictitious prose narrative of book length portraying characters and actions that is credibly representing a real life in continuous plot. A novel is a story with the prose

form in long shape because the story includes the elements of a complex plot, that has many characters and various settings. The division of the elements for a novel is the intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

### **B. Intrinsic elements**

Intrinsic elements are the elements that become the foundation of a literary work. Intrinsic elements play the role as the builder of the story. There are three intrinsic elements used in this article. First is character and characterization, second is plot and the last is setting.

According to Nurgiyantoro (2010), the main character of a literary work has a round characterization that experience development. Unlike flat characters, who stay undeveloped, the main character is described fully and experiences a climax and resolution towards the end of the novel. The plot is the story line that contains the sequence of events that connects one event to another. In addition to having a climax and resolution, a complete plot of a novel would have an exposition, conflict, and an end. The setting of the novel is the place, and time. In the story, *I am Malala*, the story is set in Pakistan.

### **C. Extrinsic elements**

Extrinsic elements are the elements that are beyond the work of the novel as a work of art. In this article the extrinsic element looks into the sociological perspective, which includes the discussion of the patriarchal society. The patriarchal society in this case is about the male-dominated society found in Pakistan. The gender perspective of the extrinsic elements also play an significant contribution in the discussion of the main character of the novel *Malala*.

### **D. Women's rights in education**

Kate Gordon said that woman's education, like a man's education, should fit her to make a free and intelligent choice of a life occupation. Studies on women's education have emphasized the demand for equitable education and have drawn attention to increasing access for women (David, 1990). A woman's education should place within her reach the possibility of economic independence; that is to say, the possibility of competing with men. However unfortunately, sometimes women's education is considered unimportant. The images of women who are passive, weak and powerless

make people think that women did not need a higher education. Women should be at home cooking or housekeeping.

### **E. Women's struggle in education**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an inequality exists between men and women. In society, the gender inequality has caused various problems. Some gender issues are related with gender relation, gender roles, and also gender unfairness experienced by women and men (Fakih, 2006, pp.8-19). Women have been, and continue to be, at the forefront of struggles worldwide to challenge inequality and discrimination in education. Many believe that education was necessary to make women more effective wives, mothers, and teachers but clergymen claimed that women's colleges posed a threat to the family by tempting women away from their natural and proper role. Men and women should have the same opportunities to have a good education. Education is the first step toward empowering youth; it is not the only sector that needs reformation to adequately provide a supportive environment for girls and women.

Men have been trained to have good future, by acquiring well-paid occupation. That is why, good education system is being prepared for men. Meanwhile, women's future seems not to be as important as it is for men. Women's future is set to only be a good wife, who is good in cooking, taking care of children and home. Women have, thus, been treated as subordinates of men's shadow. Because of this gender inequality, feminism movement arise.

### **F. Liberal feminism**

Liberal feminists wish to free women from oppressive gender roles because it is from those roles that there have been excuses or justifications for giving women a lesser place, or no place at all, in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace. Tong is of the opinion that:

It is sometimes argued that men, no less than women, are also the victims of de facto gender discrimination—that even if the law has always been kind to men, other vehicles of social control have not. Thus, men's liberation activists complain about parents who never hire male babysitters and about nursery schools that prefer to fill their staff positions with women. Although liberal feminists sympathize with men who find it difficult to pursue child-centered careers because of de facto

gender discrimination, they still think the kind of de-facto gender discrimination men experience is not nearly as systematic as the kind that women experience. Society remains structured in ways that favor men and disfavor women in the competitive race for power, prestige, and money. (2010, p. 34)

Liberal feminism originates from the liberal political theory which focuses on equality. Liberal feminism argues that women should have similar rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities. In more detail, Jaggar explains:

Liberal feminism is grounded squarely on an acceptance of this traditional view. It is presupposed by the feminists' argument that an individual's sex is irrelevant to her rights and by the feminists concern to prove that women are capable of full rationality. So far, then, the liberal feminist position seems to be that male and female natures are identical; or, to put it more accurately that there is no such thing as male and female nature, there is only human nature and that has no sex. (1983, p.37)

The quotation above stated that honestly there is no male and female nature. There is just human nature that shows that there should be no differences between men Liberal feminism originates from the liberal political theory and thus focuses on equality. Liberal feminism argues that women should have similar rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research since it explained about woman's rights in education. Creswell (2009 p 201) stated that qualitative research method is the research that takes place in the natural setting, relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection.

The analysis was conducted by reading the novel, identifying, inventorying, selecting, and reporting the data of women's rights in education using liberal feminism. After the data were collected, the researcher did some steps in analyzing the data viewed from liberal feminism analysis approach. They include the researcher's explanation about the struggle of woman for her rights in education, which is depicted by seeing how women is treated unequal from the men based society's beliefs and

family tradition. A scholar believes that women should not have the same education level with men because society believe if women have a good education they will forget about their natural and proper role.

## DISCUSSION

*I Am Malala* is a novel written by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb. It was published in 2013. There was a character in the novel, named Malala Yousafzai who bravely fights for her rights to get an education. There were many obstacles that Malala had. The novel depicted the inequality between men and women in many aspects. The factors that made the inequality between men and women are various. The factors can be from society, family, tradition etc. The main character of this novel, Malala, tried to fight against all the factors that make the inequality between men and women happen. She is a brave girl that is not scared with the Taliban that takes all the authority in her homeland, Mingora. She was doing everything to get her and other girls rights, especially in getting the rights for a proper education.

In the novel, women's future is considered as not important. Yousafzai wrote, "There seemed no point in going to school just to end up cooking, cleaning and bringing up children" (2013, p. 38). Women's future in other words is only prepared to becoming a good wife, who is good at cooking, taking care of the children and home. Women in this case, are treated as subordinate and be under men's shadows.

### **A. Malala Yousafzai as a Pakistani woman**

The main character of this novel is Malala, tried to fight against all the factors that make the inequality between men and women happened. She was a brave girl who is not even scared of the Taliban, in which they took all the authority in her homeland, Mingora. She is a girl from Pakistan.

According to the novel, Pakistan has a history of military coups. A general called Zia Ul-Haq seized power. The situation under Zia's regime made women in Pakistan restricted. There were a lot of policies and laws that make women not feel free.

Under Zia's regime, life for women in Pakistan became much more restricted. Jinnah said, "No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men. ... But



General Zia brought in laws which reduced a woman's evidence in court to count for only half that of a man's. Soon our prisons were full of cases like that of a thirteen-years-old girl who was raped and became pregnant and was then sent to prison for adultery because she couldn't produce four male witnesses to prove it was a crime. (Yousafzai, 2013, p.29-30)

The situation under Zia's regime made women in Pakistan felt restricted. There were a lot of policies and laws that made women feel not free. One of the reasons why Malala should fight to get woman rights was the situation in that time that was really bad. Women were totally being discriminated in every single aspect. Not only in education, but women's role in society was also being reduced. Women's voices were not being heard. of They were defined as a second sex.

In the novel, we can find the power from one of the politicians in Pakistan, i.e. Sufi Muhammad, who is founder of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammad (TNSM). was one of the politicians in Pakistan, who favored with General Zia Ul-Haq's regulations about women in education. He claimed that there should be no education for girls at all. He said that Islam does not allow girls to go to school. Islam taught that girls who would stop going to school will be congratulated because Islam women should only be housewives who takes care of children at home. If women still continue to going to school, then they would be referred to animals because they get to be called on as buffaloes or goats.

One day Sufi Mohammad proclaimed from jail that there should be no education for women even at girls' madrasas. 'If someone can show any example in history where Islam allows a female madrasa, they can come and piss on my beard,' he said. Then the Radio Mullah turned his attention to schools. He began speaking against school administrators and congratulating girls by name who left school. 'Miss So-and-so has stopped going to school and will go to heaven,' he'd say, or, 'Miss X of Y village has stopped education at Class 5. I congratulate her.' Girls like me who still went to school he called buffaloes and sheep. (Yousafzai, 2013, p. 109)

Muhammad said that Islam did not allow girls to go to school. They warned girls to give up going to school, and have even mentioned how they would congratulate girls who stop going to school, by broadcasting it in the Radio.

## B. Pakistan's social setting

Inequality between men and women could actually come from anywhere. One of the examples was from society. In Malala's case, the social setting of Pakistan has become one of the most important factor that influenced her struggles. Jaggar (1983, p. 128) exclaims that a woman could not be separated from the society, in which she is embodied, because she will reflect what society has been idealizing about women's place in society. In the novel, Yousafzai informs:

As in most families, the girls stayed at home while the boys went to school. "They were just waiting to be married," says my father. School wasn't the only thing my aunts missed out on. In the morning when my father was given cream or milk, his sisters were given tea with no milk. If there were eggs, they would only be for the boys. When a chicken was slaughtered for dinner, the girls would get the wings and the neck while the luscious breast meat was enjoyed by my father, his brother and my grandfather. "From early on I could feel I was different from my sisters." (Yousafzai, 2013, p.27-28)

Having men receive the best kind of food, like described above, entails that in Pakistan, only the men should have the health and nutrients for being intelligent beings at school. Drinking milk rather than tea would give men the energy and nutrients they need to think cleverly at school. In contrast, women drinking tea would help them survive by not being dehydrated, however, the kinds of vitamins and minerals they would get is much less than the men. With the consumption of only tea, women are prone to be less intelligent when it comes to doing school work. This is similar with the case of giving breast chicken meat to the mean and the bony wings of the chicken for the women.

The different treatment from society toward men and women was really undeniable in Pakistan. All of the best things seem to be created only for the men. It was like women were created to not need good things. This effects the educational field as well, where men and women are being treated differently. Men were allowed to go to school, and women were not because staying at home was their place in society. Pakistani men believed that there seemed no point for women to go to school because most women should just end up cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children at home.

The obstacle to getting proper education not only came from society. In Pakistan, the obstacle can also come from the family and tradition. In the novel *I Am Malala*, different treatments between men and women have been experience ever since they people were babies.

In our tradition on the seventh day of a child's life we have a celebration called Woma (which means "seventh") for the family, friends and neighbors to come and admire the newborn. My parents had not held one for me because they could not afford the goat and rice needed to feed the guests, and my grandfather would not help them out because I was not a boy. (Yousafzai, 2013 p.55)

The tradition of the family in not making a feast for Malala, who is the main character of the novel, showed that women are second class to men. Being labeled as the second class, women is clearly shown to be unequal to men. Those who has the opportunity to speak up are only the men. In the novel, Yousafzai exclaimed that, "In our culture, speeches are usually written by our fathers, uncles or teachers" (2013 p.73).

The fact that women should not speak up as they are inferior and being treat as weak, unimportant and fragile made Malala struggle to try and change the condition. Knowing that school was not for women, Malala protested by trying to change women in her area to agree to having a good education as men would have. In the novel, Malala expressed her wish about women as follows:

Peace in every home, every street, every village, every country—this is my dream. Education for every boy and every girl in the world. To sit down on a chair and read my books with all my friends at school is my right. To see each and every human being with a smile of happiness is my wish. (Yousafzai, 2013 p.293)

### C. Malala as a woman character

In the beginning of the novel, readers are given the information that Malala was a student at a girl's school. Malala said:

"They cannot stop me. I will get my education if it is at home, school or somewhere else. This is our request to the world- to save our schools, save our Pakistan, save our Swat." (Yousafzai, 2013 p.149)

She was doing everything to get her and other girls' rights, especially in education. After the Taliban began attacking girls' schools in Swat, Malala gave a speech in Peshawar, Pakistan, in September 2008. The title of her talk was, "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?"

In early 2009, in reality, Yousafzai began blogging for the BBC about living under the Taliban's threats to deny her an education. In order to hide her identity, she used the name Gul Makai. However, she was revealed to be the BBC blogger in December of that year. With a growing public platform, Yousafzai continued to speak out about her right, and the right of all women, to an education. She believes that men and women should have the same education.

Her activism resulted in a nomination for the International Children's Peace Prize in 2011. That same year, she was awarded Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize. When she was 14, Malala and her family learned that the Taliban had issued a death threat against her. On October 9, 2012, on her way home from school, a man boarded the bus Malala was riding in and demanded to know which girl was Malala. When her friends looked toward Malala, her location was given away. The gunman fired at her, hitting Malala in the left side of her head. The bullet then traveled down her neck, and two other girls were also injured in the attack.

The shooting left Malala in a critical condition, so she was flown to a military hospital in Peshawar. A portion of her skull was removed to treat her swelling brain. To receive further care, she was transferred to Birmingham, England. Once she was in the United Kingdom, Yousafzai was taken out of a medically induced coma.

Malala is a girl who survived and continued to live in Swat Valley, Pakistan. She has dark brown eyes and dark brown hair. She often wears a colorful veil over her head because of her religion. It is a tradition in Pakistan for "Women in the village hid their faces whenever they left their purdah quarters and could not meet or speak to men who were not their close relatives" (Yousafzai, 2013 p.63). Yet, for Malala, her veil is not just showing what religion she has, but it is proof that she was a survivor for her rights in education. After being shot by the Taliban man, she could not smile on the left side of her face, due to the bullet shot she had on the left side of her skull.

## CONCLUSION

The novel, *I am Malala*, tells about a young Pakistani girl who fought for her rights in education. The reason for her fight was due to the Pakistan society's belief that women do not need the equal opportunity for education. As members of a Moslem society, women have been taught to only become housewives who should not show herself in front of others because the place for women is only in the kitchen and become mothers for their children. The condition of making women as second class has even influenced the different kinds of drink and food that women and men can consume. From the novel, it was basically learned that men can enjoy the best of things, in order to keep women unintelligent and uneducated. Although Malala was still a young girl, she managed to show some of her protests before she was finally shot by the Taliban man.

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The logo for 'Celt' is rendered in a light blue, stylized font. The letters are thick and have a white outline, giving it a 3D or embossed appearance. The 'C' is particularly large and rounded, while the 'e' and 'l' are more compact and blocky. The 't' is also blocky and has a small crossbar. The overall style is modern and clean.