

## THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHY ON A WOMAN'S LIFE: A STUDY ON THE LIFE OF NORA IN HENDRIK IBSEN'S *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

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**Abstract** : This research is intended to reveal the impact of patriarchy in Hendrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. In conducting this research, the researchers use the qualitative method. The data are collected in the form of words and need the researchers' active participation and also the deep analysis of the research. The researchers use the Marxist Feminist approach that considers describing women's basic material weakness and women's status and class in the family. The researchers also use the three structures of patriarchy by Walby (1989) to analyze dan classify the data. The first result is the impact of patriarchy on economic control. The second result is the impact of patriarchy on cultural structure such as woman's subordination and gender stereotype, and the third result is the impact of patriarchy on violence such as violation of Women's rights and Verbal violence.

**Keywords** : *Patriarchy, Economic Control, Culture, Violence, Marxist Feminist.*

### INTRODUCTION

*A Doll's House* is one of Hendrik Ibsen's works. This play is interesting to study because this is Ibsen's masterpiece and is a great work on women's development and emancipation society. The playwright's goal is to emphasize women power in order to repress men dominance and tradition. Not only Nora in *A Doll's House*, for a long centuries women in the traditional social order and system have always been considered subservient to men. Men are privileged in their occupations and positions. In society, only males have the authority to make critical decisions, and women only accept what men decide. This directly violates the idea of gender equality. (Rahmawati, 2016). Through his play, Ibsen offers a new culture, it is human freedom and equal gender. A literary work that effectively fulfills its role as a

form generator of human consciousness and has a significant power to touch the deepest sense that can produce flawless awareness (Wuntu, 2015).

Literature is an essential record of what people have experienced, thought, and felt about aspects of life that are of the greatest immediate and long-term interest to all of us. It is essentially a way for life to be expressed through language. (Hudson, 1919). Literature has become a medium for language learning, such a novel story with a lot of text that can help a student learn a language (Bataha, et al., 2008). As seen in Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, it portrays what Ibsen expects. He offers a new culture that he wants to convey through this drama. The freedom as human being, Men and women have the right to give their opinions and make a decisions. Ibsen also wants to describe how woman's life is controlled by a

patriarchal and capitalist system. It also related to function of literary text: even if they are fictions, reading literary works exposes students to real-world situations and the connections between local culture and its citizens (Maru, 2014).

*A Doll's House* is written in 1879 and considered as his groundbreaking play. It was written while Ibsen was in Rome and Amalfi, It was published in a time of revolution in Europe. In his play *A Doll's House* Ibsen pictured out about Nora, as a wife and a mother. In the play *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen describes Nora as a sweet and pretty women. Nora's role as a wife is influenced by an environment that adheres to a patriarchy and capitalism system. Torvald wants to always dominate and Nora is not allowed to take a big roles in the family, such as making and taking decisions and earning a living. Torvald is the most dominate in the family. Without Torvald's permission Nora cannot give her contribute in her family.

There are several previous studies that had been done by other researchers, those are: *Featuring an Ideal Woman in Ibsen's Ghost* written in 2014 by Mister Gidion Maru and *Nora Helmer in Hendrik Ibsen's A Doll's House (Character Analysis)* written by Rafika Runtu in 2010. The distinct difference among the previous researches and this research is the researchers focused on the impact of the patriarchy in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. This study used qualitative method with the Marxist Theory. The researchers also used Walby's Structure of Patriarchy (1989) to classify and analyze the impact of patriarchy as reflected in Ibsen's a doll House. This research used the data that collected from two sources, first from the play itself and articles that is related to the topic.

Normally, every human being has rights and freedom. Making decisions, work, socialize, and take control of their own life. Men have the right to lead, and women have the right to make decision. In married life, husband and wife must collaborate to create justice and happiness. However, in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, a husband takes all control of his wife's life. Torvald dominates Nora's life and he treats Nora like A Doll. Nora becomes frustrated because of the social system that oppresses her. That is why, the researcher will dig out the impact of patriarchy in Ibsen's work.

The word patriarchy literally means patriarchy or patriarchal rule. Originally, it is used to describe a particular family that was dominated by males. Large patriarchal families including women, youth, children, slaves, and maids all came under this rule. It is now more widely used to refer to male domination, male domination in women's power relations, and systems in which women are still subordinated in some respects (Bhasin and Katjasungkana, 1996). Patriarchy is social system that puts men in control of life, household and environment. Men dominate women's life and control women like a doll. Patriarchy effects on women's mental, it makes women depressed.

In *A Doll's House*, Nora's life is dominated by Torvald. He takes a control in all aspects. Nora is not allowed to give her own opinion and work. He expects Nora to be an obedient and innocent wife. Nora becomes depresses and decide leaving house. She wants to find her real identity. Kandiyoti (1988) characterizes the Patriarchy partriarchi as follows:

- The oldest man has authority over woman the family. He is taught to has the

utmost respect for the male in their families. Despite the fact that man has only recently reached puberty, their authority is greater than older woman. Girl is pressured to marry at young age. It is because women are used as a gift to be given in order to establish a good relationship in politics and economic. Woman in Patriarchal Society has no claims to her patrimony, if women ask for their inheritances, they risk losing their brother's favor.

### **The Nineteenth Patriarchy and Marxist in Hendrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House***

Marxism and Foucault's philosophy have both had an impact on materialist culture, which investigates how power and ideology shape cultural and material interactions as well as the tension between accepted culture and cultural forms of resistance (Parvini, 2012). Williams (1983) asserts that although dominant cultures influence people's ideas and worldviews, individuals may nonetheless come into contact with new cultural aspects that are fundamentally in opposition to or incompatible with their own. He thus thought that there wasn't actually a producing process. Additionally, there is no dominating culture. Human intention and energy are used in human practice.

The 19th-century marriage system also restricted women's freedom because they were dependent on males for emotional support and practical guidance in patriarchal families, where men were the family head and women were considered men (Hartmann, 1976; Joseph, 1994). The government-imposed system at the time had an impact on men's beliefs. They believe that women

are helpless. They solely regard women as men's objects.

Torvald is a symbol of the capitalist philosophy that allows the wealthy to oppress and mistreat those who are less fortunate (Duzgun, 2018). According to Marx, as described in Mulhern (2014), in a capitalist society, money serves as an individualist force that gives its holders the authority to oppress and dominate those who do not possess it (159). As a male capitalist, Torvald thinks that women who are uneducated about the economy should not be allowed to own property. Torvald wants to manage the funds for his family. He had little faith in women's ability to make money. He didn't realize Nora was an economist. Money is envisioned by capitalism as a method of obtaining "freedom" and "beauty" (Eagleton, 2006).

### **RESEARCH METHED**

In this study, researchers analyze Hendrik Ibsen's *Doll House* by using qualitative method with the Marxist feminist theory. The data collected in this research were in the form of words, not numbers or graphs. Qualitative method was used since this research was descriptive in nature. The researcher results refer to data to describe and strengthen the presentation (Bogdan and Biklen, 1997).

To collect the data, the researchers divided the sources into two categories. Two types of evidence relate to essays about literature itself, with secondary sources consisting of facts or opinions outside of the work itself (Robert and Jacobs). The researchers used Hendrik Ibsen's "*Doll House*" as the main source. For the secondary source, the researcher used related books, articles, journals, and internet.

To do the data analysis, the researcher use the method data analysis proposed by Creswell & Creswell (2017). The methods consists of six steps which are organizing and preparing the data, reading the entire data, coding the data, sorting the data, interrelating description, and interpreting the meaning of description (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researchers employ Marxist feminist theory to analyze the play. Marxist feminist theory, which examines social aspects of human interaction like sexuality, domestic labor, and the family (Bertens, 1991). According to Tong (2009), the goal of Marxist feminism is to outline the fundamental material weakness of women, the connection between the production model and women's statuses, as well as the application of feminine theory and class to the function of the home.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The purpose of Marxist Feminist theory is to find out the relation between man and woman in family, where man dominates woman, and woman lives under pressure. In *A Doll's House*, it occurs in Nora as a female character. By using structures of Patriarchy by Walby (1989) to classify the impact of Patriarchy, the researcher found that patriarchy has an impact on three structures, such as Economic Control, Culture and Violence.

### **Impact Patriarchy in Economic Control**

Patriarchy has impact on all structures of domestic life, including the economy. A husband who has power in the household will not allow his wife to work. They assume that a woman cannot be allowed to take a role in the public; the role of woman is only about managing

the household. This of course makes the economy completely dependent on a husband. A person who makes money is considered to have more power, so, a woman who only dependent on her husband must be willing to accept some unfair actions.

Nora : *"You might give me money, Torvald. Only just what you think you can spare, then I can buy myself something with it later."*

Helmer : *"But, Nora"*

Nora : *"Oh, please do, dear Torvald, please do! Then I would hang the money in lovely gift paper on the Christmas tree, wouldn't it be fun?."* (Ibsen, 1879 - Act 1, p. 5-6)

The dialogues above show how Nora is very dependent on her husband. Nora economically dependents on her husband, because she cannot earn her own money. Women focus on domestic work, and Men focus on public work (Tong, 2009). In the economic scope, Torvald controls the family finance in the household.

Torvald is the only financial sources for their family. As a result, he has power to take control and manage in all aspect. Nora cannot buy anything without Torvald's permission. When Nora needs money, she must wait Torvald to give it. Nora does not master materiality; therefore, Nora must be submissive and obedient to her husband.

### **Impact Patriarchy in Culture**

In patriarchal society, there is a negative labeling of women. The differences are in norms and values between men and women. Such as the stereotype, which is believed that women are not irrational, thus making them unfit to make and take a decision. Women receive discriminations, such as subordination. This makes their social

status cannot be juxtaposed with men. Men are encouraged to be superior, and in other hand women are forced to be superior.

### **Women Subordination**

The term "women subordination" describes the oppressive patriarchy that women experience in the majority of nations, as well as the inferior status of women, their position, lack of access to resources, and decision-making. Women's subjugation so refers to their lower status to men. lack of confidence and experience, coupled with a sense of helplessness.

Nora : *"Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with my father, he used to tell me all his opinions, and I held the same opinions. If I had others I concealed them, because he would not have liked it. he used to call me his doll child, and play with me as I play with my dolls. Then, I came to live in your house."*

Helmer : *"What an expression to use about our marriage."*

Nora : *"I mean I passed from father's hand into yours. You settled everything according to your taste, and I got the same tastes as you, or I pretend to. I don't know which both ways perhaps. When I look back on it now, I seem to have been living here like a beggar, from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks of you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It is your fault that may life has been wasted."* (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 114)

From the dialogues above, it shows how hard Nora's life as a victim of patriarchy. She becomes a subordinate in her family, both her father and husband. She was not given the opportunity to give an opinion and making a decision. She keeps concealing her opinion and decision. Nora has the lowest position in her family, an important position. The

roles are as a doll and beggar. Nora exists just for amusement.

Nora : *"Well, Torvald, it's not easy to say. I really don't know, I am all at sea about these things. I only know I think quit differently from you about them. I hear, too, that laws are different from what I thought, but I can't believe that they spare her dying father or to save her husband's life, I don't believe that."* (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 118)

Women are required to be passive. Nora could not save the lives of her father and husband. Nora is described as a passive femininity, who has no control over what to do. Women as inferior do not have the power to give participation or against men as superior.

### **Gender Stereotype**

Stereotype is a combination of the Greek terms *stereos* and *typos*, which imply solid-rigid and model, respectively. Stereotypes are generalizations that attribute specific traits to an individual or group of individuals based on a subjective category, just because they originate from that group (in group or out group), which can be good or negative (Fiske, et. al., 2018).

Nora : *"During eight whole years and more ever since the day we first met we have never exchanged one serious word about serious thing."*

Helmer : *"Was I always to trouble you with the cares you could not help me to bear?"*

Nora : *"I am not talking of cares. I say that we have never yet set ourselves seriously to get to the bottom of anything."* (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 112-113)

From the dialogues above, Nora wants to solve her problem with her own ways, but Torvald always underestimates her. Torvald never took Nora's advice seriously, because Torvald thought Nora was like a child who could not think

seriously. In eight years of marriage, Torvald has never treated Nora like a normal wife. Nora was never involved in decision making. Women are considered as emotional and irrational people in making decision. Masculinity requires assertiveness, active, agile, rational and quickly take the initiative and femininity requires cooperation, passive, gentle, irrational and emotional (Walby, 1989).

### **The Impact of Patriarchy in Violence**

Violence against women is often experienced by people who adhere to a patriarchal system. Men use their physical strength to control women. The types of violence are not only physical, but also verbal violence. Men also limit women's movement, thus makes women unable to get their own rights as human beings. Verbal violence that is usually done by men is cursing, insulting, and threatening. Violence is a form of male superiority.

After marriage, both men and women face the traditional gender roles in environment. Women leave their family home and live under their husband's power. Men's power over women can lead to men harming women, which is why domestic violence frequently occurs in the family's inferior group. Men felt justified in retaliating violently in response to what they perceived as threats to their masculinity identity behavior by the victim that they considered demeaning or disrespectful (Chrisler, Golden, and Rozee, 2012). In the play, the researchers find that Torvald violates Nora's right and doing verbal violence.

### **Violation of Woman's Right**

One of the most common types of violence on which Ibsen focuses in violence against women. Male dominated society violates women's right. By

depicting his protagonist character, Ibsen tries to show us the oppression and suppression inflicted on woman.

Helmer : *"As for ourselves, we have always done, but of course you will continue to live here. But the children cannot be left in your care. I dare not trust them to you."* (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 108)

Nora has made a mistake. She owes some money from Krogstad to save her husband's life, but her husband did not want Nora to do it. Nora has sacrificed her life for her family, but Torvald violated her rights and abused her. He did not allow Nora to stay and take care of her own children. He ruined Nora's right as a mother.

Parent's rights have been defined as the right to care of, custody, and companionship of their children, as well as the right to make decisions effecting their children's welfare without interference from the government, except in compelling circumstances (Hendricks 454). Children are always in need of their mothers and her presence is critical to their well-being.

Nora : *"I mean to what was my home. It will be easier for me to find some opening there."*

Helmer : *"Oh, in your blind experience."*

Nora : *"I must try to gain experience, Torvald."* (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 116)

Nora is lack of experience. Her rights are bound by the limits of freedom that happened in private and public life. She cannot even behave freely. Her right is only known as a mother and wife. Limitation is violence against women's choice to decide freely what they want. She lack of freedom and experience. This is contradictory to the theory which states "Women have personal freedom to

determine their lives, future, etc,” (Kristin et al., 2019). It is difficult to live in a particular culture for an extended period of time. Those women should let their dreams and happiness go away just because society thinks their place are at home (Sedayu, 2018).

### Verbal Violence

Torvald is authoritarian husband. Because he understands that his power is absolute, he refuses to obey any orders. According to the Newfoundland and Labrador on Violence preventive initiative, verbal abuse happens when a person uses language, whether spoken or written, to hurt another person. Examples include expressing unfavorable expectations, threatening, yelling, lying, insulting, swearing, undermining, and withholding crucial information.

Nora has been suppressed, oppressed, and violently treated. She confirms her feelings when she said “*I have love you beyond all else in the world*” (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 100). She does love her husband and has done everything she can to save his life, but Helmer denied it and treated Nora rudely. Certain features and characteristics of healthy relationships make them that way. It is practically hard to discuss partnerships without bringing up loyalty, love, and trust (Kessek, et al., 2021).

Nora has been degraded and deprived of any hopes. Her feeling is hurt and ignored. More violence is shown when Helmer said “*You have destroyed my whole happiness. You ruined my future,*” (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p.107). He has accused Nora of ruining his future and happiness.

Helmer : “*True! Is true what he writes? No, no it cannot be true.*”

Nora : “*It is true. I have love you beyond all else in the world.*”

Helmer : “*Pshaw, no sill evasions.*”

Nora : “*Torvald!*”

Helmer : “*Wretched woman! What have you done?*” (Ibsen, 1879 - Act III, p. 106)

From the dialogues above, we can clearly see what Torvald has done to Nora is suitable to the theory which prove he uses verbal violence to underline Nora. In this case, Torvald reads the letter written by Krogstad about forging signature and borrowing money. Nora did that to save her husband’s life, but Torvald did not accept it.

Helmer’s authoritarian feelings lead him to believe that he is the most powerful person in the house, and that only he has the authority to make decisions for the benefit of the household, his wife is merely a passive observer who can only accept what has been decided. When a wife crosses the boundaries that have been established, it becomes a threat and an insult for her husband. Traditionally, men have the unilateral right to divorce, the conduct of women bears the greatest weight in terms of family honour, good reputation, or the negative consequences of shame (Moghadam, 1992)

### CONCLUSION

For long centuries woman considered powerless, passive, irrational, obedient, and has no right to make decision. Men are encouraged to be dominant in the family, they take control of the household including control over their wives. Nora has lowest position in her family. She has not opportunity to give an opinion and making decisions. Torvald does not accept any order because his realize his power is ultimate. After

discussing more, the researcher comes to conclusion that patriarchy is a culture of discrimination against woman.

In addition, through his play Ibsen offers a new culture, it is human right and equal gender. He makes women aware toward condition which oppresses them and stimulates men to understand and realize women's necessities.

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