

## The Representation of Gender Inequality in Mulan (2020) Movie

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### Abstract

Literary work is one the ways that a person uses to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in the form of a work that is represented aesthetically. Nowadays, there are many issues regarding gender inequality that occur in society. This is one of the problems for women regarding rights that are not obtained as women. This study discusses the Mulan (2020) movie which was released on 9th March 2020 where the movie shows the reality of life that adheres to a patriarchal ideology in which women are considered weak. This research aims to determine the representation of gender inequality in Mulan (2020) movie which uses descriptive qualitative research method and feminism approach. Gender inequality is shown through 4 indicators, limited opportunities in utilizing resources, limited opportunities to participate in an activity, limited authority in making decisions, and limited recognition in decision making. The representation of gender inequality can be seen through the characters, setting, events, and style. The reason of Niki Caro addressing gender inequality in the Mulan (2020) movie is found in the personal life of the director where the director is an activist for women's rights.

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality; Feminism; Movie; Literature

### INTRODUCTION

Literary work is one of the ways that a person uses to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in the form of a work that is presented aesthetically. According to Esten (1978:9) says that literature is one way to express facts artistically and imaginatively that is used for the manifestation of human life which is conveyed through language and has a positive influence. Literary work is one part of people's lives because in literature it shows the phenomena that occur in society. The existence of literary works that describe phenomena, conflicts, symptoms, and tragedies that often occur in society will provide awareness for the audience to face and overcome social conditions that often occur in society. That is, the author's idea in creating a literary work can be useful for other people too.

Nowadays, there are many issues regarding gender inequality that occur in society. This is one of the problems for women regarding rights that are not obtained as women. The rise of the ideology that women are considered weak, women do not deserve to be used as leaders, women's position is below men, women should not do things that men should do, and so on. This causes the existence of a patriarchal ideology that is unconsciously always passed down from generation to generation. Patriarchal ideology is an understanding that assumes

that the role of men's position is above women where men have the rights to have power over women.

Issues related to gender-related discrimination do not arise as before because of the influence of the feminist movement that has been carried out by women in demanding their rights as women. However, the feminist movement that has been carried out by women does not completely eliminate gender discrimination at this time. Thus, the movement to voice gender equality needs to be carried out continuously so that women are treated fairly, both in the political, social, economic, and so on.

This study discusses the Mulan (2020) movie which was released on 9th March 2020 where in the movie shows the reality of life that adheres to a patriarchal ideology in which women are considered weak. The problems contained in the Mulan (2020) movie are one of the realities that still occur in society. This makes the representation of gender inequality in the Mulan (2020) movie able to influence the audience regarding gender equality which should be implemented in today's life. Based on the explanation, the researcher tries to show the representation of gender inequality that appears in the Mulan (2020) movie. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting research and compiling research with the title "The Representation of Gender Inequality in Mulan (2020) Movie".

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Previous Study**

Previous studies that are relevant to this research until now are classified into 2 studies, namely linguistics studies, translation studies, and literary studies. The first research that is relevant to this research is the research by Sirikit A. Usman Meis Sintia, Mifta Sulistia Tamola, and Ridho Ishak (2021) entitled An Analysis of Gender Equality of Chinese Culture in Mulan film (2020) where the study concluded that there is a gender issue against law and tradition in Chinese society. The second research by Zhengyang Gong and Yuan Tian (2020) entitled A Feminist on the Live-action Disney Film Mulan where the study concluded that the struggle of the main character in the gender equality movement where a woman has the same power as men. The third research by July Susanti Br Sinuraya, Anang Anas Azhar, and Hasan Sazali (2022) entitled Analysis of Semiotics Representation of Feminism in the Mulan Film 2020 where the study concluded that there are scenes of the main character showing the representation of feminism in the film Mulan 2020.

### **Underlying Theory**

#### **1. Representation**

*Representation is an action used to represent a person, event, story or object.*

#### **2. Gender**

*Gender is non-biological differences in sex which are determined through the nature or behaviour in social life.*

#### **3. Feminism**

*Feminism is a movement that is carried out by women in taking actions that are considered capable of overcoming gender injustice, discrimination, and marginalisation of women.*

#### 4. **Movie**

Movie is a series of live pictures and has a storyline that is presented by utilizing a light which in the story gives a message that will be addressed to the audience or connoisseur of a literary work.

### **METHOD**

This research uses descriptive qualitative research with a feminist literary theory approach to analyse the representation of gender inequality in the Mulan (2020) movie. To get the information, the researcher used 2 references data source in this study, including primary data sources that the researcher is the Mulan (2020) movie published by Walt Disney Pictures in English with a duration of 115 minutes where in the movie there are movie elements in the form of characters, dialogue, scenes, conflicts, storylines, and so on. The researcher also used secondary data sources obtained through internet sources, articles, and literature relevant to this research. To complete the data in this study, researchers used literature studies and references relevant to this research.

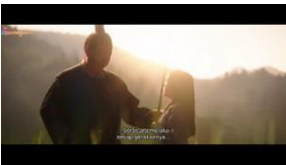
The researcher used observation, documentation, and data triangulation for data collection techniques. Observation where the researchers directly observed and examined the Mulan (2020) movie. In this stage the researcher downloads and watches the Mulan (2020) movie directed by Niki Caro, the researcher observes the scenes in the movie then records the scenes or arts related to the data in the study, namely the representation of gender inequality in the Mulan (2020) movie. In this study, researchers conducted documentation by screenshotting scenes or dialogue related to gender inequality in the Mulan (2020) movie. Thus, the data triangulation technique in this study refers to data resources that have been collected in various ways. In this study, the researcher uses various journals, theses, documents, websites that are relevant to the research where in checking the validity of the data the researcher involves the indicators in the representations of gender inequality in Mulan (2020) movie. Technique of analysis data that used by researcher using Miles and Huberman theory and theory of John Fiske.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **A. The Indicator of Gender Inequality in Mulan (2020) Movie**

##### **1. Limitation Opportunities in Utilizing Resources**

**Table 1. Limitation Opportunities in Utilizing Resources**

<b>Scene</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Denotation</b>
	00:00:41 - 00:01:26	Mulan's life when she was little where Mulan trained her chi and skills to fight.

In table 1. it can be seen that Mulan is training her chi and ability to fight and then her father approaches her when Mulan finishes practicing. After watching Mulan finish practicing, Mulan's father spoke to himself that he thinks chi can only be used by a man and is not suitable for a woman to do it.

## 2. Limited Opportunities in Participate in an Activity


**Table 2. Limited Opportunities in Participate in an Activity**

Scene	Duration	Denotation
	00:11:04 - 00:11:25	A king gives orders to his soldiers to convey to his people.

In table 2. shows that one of the soldiers said that an attack had occurred and triggered another attack elsewhere. This triggered a king to give an order to ask his people to hand over one male member in each family to take military service to prepare for war by the enemy. This shows that a woman is not given the opportunity to take part in a training in preparation for fighting against enemies because a woman is considered a weak person and unable to fight.

## 3. Limited Authority in Making Decision


**Table 3. Limited Authority in Making Decision**

Scene	Duration	Denotation
	00:20:50 - 00:21:23	Mulan provokes his father's anger because he doubts his father to fight.

In table 3. it can be seen that Mulan's father did not want to be underestimated even though he was not strong enough to prepare for war. Mulan is worried about her father's condition and plans to replace his father in war. However, Mulan's plan was denied by Mulan's father and told Mulan to recognize her position. Next is table 4. Limited Recognition in Decision Making.

#### 4. Limited Recognition in Decision Making.

**Table 4. Limited Recognition in Decision Making**

Scene	Duration	Denotation
	01:12:08 - 01:13:15	Mulan shows her identity as a woman to her troops.

In table 4. it can be seen that Mulan decided to show her identity as a woman when she succeeded in fighting the enemy. Even though Mulan was able to protect her troops and fight her enemies, Mulan's identity was not recognized by the war leaders because Mulan had brought disgrace to her family.

#### B. The Representation of Gender Inequality in Mulan (2020) Movie

##### 1. Through Figures or Characters

##### a. Stereotypical Gender Perpetrators



**Picture 1. Stereotypical Gender Perpetrators**

In picture 1. it can be seen that Mulan's mother was concerned about Mulan's behaviour which was considered inappropriate as a woman. Based on the scene, it can be seen that Mulan's mother is a stereotypical gender perpetrator where Mulan's mother has the belief that a woman must be feminine.

##### b. Stereotypical Gender Victim



**Picture 2. Stereotypical Gender Victim**

Based on picture 2, it shows the scene where Mulan negotiates with her father regarding Mulan's participation in military training to replace her father's role. This is because the main character Mulan acts as a victim of gender stereotypes in her life. Mulan's father believes that women have no right and are not appropriate to do things that are considered capable of bringing disgrace to their family.

## **2. Through Setting**

### **a. Military Base**

The king gave the message that each family member must submit 1 male member for military training. In this case the imposition of requirements for military training is considered to be very unfair where only men are allowed to participate in military training.

### **b. Mulan's Residence**

Mulan's residence is a village in China called Tolou. The area where Mulan lives is predominantly populated with an ideology towards patriarchy. This ideology has become the belief of the people of Tolou village that must be obeyed because this belief has been passed down from their ancestors.

### **c. Battlefield**

The existence of regulation regarding gender causes Mulan to continue to hide her identity as a woman even though she has done her best for her troops. The military commander is very strict about the regulations that have been made, thus the military commander will not tolerate anyone who violates the rules for any reason. The war took place in a very chaotic manner where each military force defended its troops from being attacked by the enemy. Mulan's ambition to fight enemies causes Mulan's hair to fall down to reveal her true identity as a woman.

### **d. The Northern and Southern Dynasties**

The Mulan (2020) movie is set during the Northern and Southern Dynasties where the dynasties took place in the 4th to 6th centuries in China. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties in China there was significant gender inequality where at the time women received limitations in the fields of education, employment, and political participation. At the time, women were dominated to do household chores and take care of the family.

### 3. *Through Events*

#### a. *Forced Marriage and Looking Beautiful*

One day, Mulan and her mother went to meet a matchmaker. But on the way, Mulan and her mother met several women on their way to the matchmaker's place. Several women met on the way gave stereotypes about women and told Mulan about the appearance of a good wife for a good man. This incident supports the notion that gender roles are portrayed as tools for sharing societal beliefs that apply to individuals and are based on gender.

#### b. *Mulan's Meeting with the Matchmaker*

Mulan finally met a fairly well-known matchmaker in her village who was going to set her up with several men. In Grandma Fa's room, there were several women who told Mulan the specific criteria to achieve the perfect wife in the future. So, Mulan must have special criteria to create a good household, including good taste, calmness, obedience, working fast, developing well, and having a small waist. From this incident, it can be explained that gender roles are the result of interactions between an individual and the environment around him.

#### c. *Women's Explanation regarding the Differences in the Roles of Men and Women*

In Grandma Fa's room, there were several women in the room explaining the different roles between men and women in serving a country.

All : "You'll bring honour to us all."

"We all must serve our Emperor."

"Who guard us from the Huns."

"A man by bearing arms."

"A girl by hearing sons."

Woman 6: "When we're through, you can't fail, like a lotus blossom, soft, and pale."

How could any fellow say, "No sale"? "You'll bring honour to us all."

Fa Li : "There, you've ready."

The excerpt from the dialogue above shows that men and women have different ways of serving a country, men participate in war relying on their strength. Meanwhile, women are different from men in that women have to give birth to children and then care for them. But as a daughter, Mulan doesn't only serve her father, she must also prepare herself to be a good woman for her husband.

**d. *The Chaos caused by Mulan***

Mulan causes chaos in the ceremony with her attitude and behaviour. Mulan covered the spiders falling from the sky with a teapot, but the matchmaker insisted on placing the teapot in the middle of the table. As a matchmaker, Fa's grandmother believes that a woman must have good manners to get a good man, but Mulan is destructive and careless during the ceremony. Mulan disappointed her family, who hoped that she would be the perfect bride. From this event, it can be shown that women's lives are more focused on the family than the wider community.

**e. *Arrival of Chinese Soldier to Mulan's Village***

Soldiers came to hear the emperor's announcement to send one man from each family to serve in the army. The Fa family has no sons, so Mulan's father decides to leave. However, Mulan forbade her father because she was too old and intended to replace her father, but she received discrimination from royal soldiers where there were differences in treatment between men and women. Thus, there is gender inequality between men and women regarding treatment.

**4. *Through Style***

**a. *Tone***

Tone is one of the styles in a movie that supports the feeling or mood in the movie. The tones in the *Mulan* (2020) movie are divided into four parts, namely white, blue, red, and orange. The white tone in the movie shows humility, peace, serenity, innocence, snow, and kindness. Then the second tone is blue, this tone gives an image of loyalty, confidence, harmony, unity, trust, stability, etc. Furthermore, the red tone indicates strength, speed, war, power, greatness, passion, etc. And finally, the orange tone shows the embodiment of a symbol of self-confidence, adventure, enthusiasm, balance, and persistence.

**b. *Sound Effect***

Sound effects have an important role in a movie. There is one of the most prominent pieces of music in this movie, namely *Reflection* sung by Christina Aguilera. This "reflection" provides an expression of Mulan's feeling about her desire to show the people



around her and even the world who she really is. Apart from that, there are several sound effects, such as swords, that show the strength on the battlefield shown by Mulan, then another sound effect is the sound effects of animals, such as horses, where the struggles carried out by Mulan are carried out on horseback.

### **C. *The Reason of Niki Caro Address Gender Inequality in Mulan (2020) Movie***

#### **1. *The Director is Women's Right Activist***

The director of the Mulan (2020) movie is Niki Caro who is a woman from New Zealand. As a women's director and an activist for women's rights, Niki Caro wants to voice women's rights that should be obtained by women. Through the movie she directed, Niki Caro wanted to show the existence of gender inequality that occurs in the movie industry.

#### **2. *The Director Wanted to Campaign for Women's Rights***

Niki Caro has a desire to campaign for women's rights throughout the world. Niki Caro and Jessica Chastain conducted a campaign on women's rights in 2017 which coincided with the 2017 Women's Parade in Warsaw, Poland. The existence of a campaign on women's rights that Niki Caro participates in and voices shows that Niki Caro pays attention to the phenomenon of gender inequality in her life

There are several studies that are similar to this research because they both examine the Mulan (2020) movie. There is Sirikit A. Usman, Meis Sintia Umar, Mifta Sulistia Tamola. Dan Ridho Ishak (2021), Zhengyang Gong and Yuan Tian (2020), Juli Susanti Br Sinuraya Anang Anas Azhar, and Hasan Sazali (2022). The difference in previous research lies in the topic of discussion. Sirikit A. Usman (2022) analyzes gender equality in terms of Chinese culture. Zhengyang Gong (2022) discusses the struggle for gender equality. Meanwhile, Juli Susanti Br. Sinuraya (2022) discusses the struggle for women's rights. The difference between the three studies and this research lies in the form of perspective analysis of gender inequality in which this study uses John Fiske's theory.

### **CONCLUSION**

After discussing and analysing the data, the researcher draws conclusion based on the representation of gender inequality in Mulan (2020) movie as follows:

- 1) There are four indicators of gender inequality in Mulan (2020) movie, which are limited opportunities in utilizing resources, limited opportunities to participate in an activity, limited authority in making decisions, and limited recognition in decision making. In general, gender inequality is caused by an ideology that believes that men are considered stronger than women.

- 2) The representation of gender inequality can be seen through the character, setting, event, and style.
- 3) The reason of Niki Caro addressing gender inequality in the *Mulan* (2020) movie is found in the personal life of the director where the director is an activist for women's rights who wants to voice that a woman's position is equal to that of a man in any case.

This research analyses the gender inequality in *Mulan* (2020) movie which contains certain moral values. Therefore, this research is expected to be a reference for other researchers for this research with the same research object. The *Mulan* (2020) movie has many moral values that are very relevant to everyday life, thus this movie can be a reference for other researchers to analyse with different theories or perspectives.

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