



WOMEN SUBORDINATION AND STRUGGLE
IN *THE BREADWINNER TRILOGY*: A FEMINISM APPROACH

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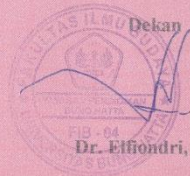
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ORIGINALITY STATEMENT

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WOMEN SUBORDINATION AND STRUGGLE IN *THE BREADWINNER TRILOGY*: A FEMINISM APPROACH

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Abstract

In this paper, the writer analyzed about women subordination and struggle in Afghanistan during Taliban regime which is described in *The Breadwinner Trilogy* by Deborah Ellis. The novel captures the treatments which are experienced by women characters as subordinate in Afghanistan's society and also they struggle through many efforts as forms of their resistant toward the subordination. The analysis has two goals which are describing the women subordination and women struggle. The writer uses Feminism theory and historical approach. The technique that is applied by the writer is close reading to gain understanding the structure of the novel. The writer finds four kinds of treatment which is done to women. The first is being discriminated that consist of lack of educational opportunity and lack of job opportunity. The second is being disregarded in decision and opinion. The third is being controlled. They are being controlled in their mobility and also appearance. The last experience is violence. Furthermore, to resist from subordination the women struggle. The first is establishing women existence that consists of running secret school and disguise for job to earn money. The second is striving to be regarded that consist of making decision for themselves and encourage women's awareness through opinion. The last is ignoring male's authority. In conclusion, the Taliban had positioned Afghan women in subordination. The subordination triggers the struggle of these women to fight for the rights to be equal.

Keywords: Feminism, Subordination, Struggle, Taliban, Afghan Women

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reason for Choosing the Topic

The Breadwinner is a trilogy which is written by Deborah Ellis. It has three different titles in each of book. The first book has titled *The Breadwinner* which first published in 2000, this book describes about main character's life; Parvana. In addition, it also tells about Afghanistan women condition living under Taliban regime. For the second book of the trilogy, the title is *Parvana's journey* which published in 2002, this book tells about a journey that Parvana did to find her family and survive under the Taliban government strict rules. The third book of trilogy has titled *Mud city* which published in 2003, this book tells about Shauzia who tried to survive to achieve her dream as Afghanistan's women. It is one of those literary works about Afghanistan women's life.

The Breadwinner Trilogy is international best seller published in 2000 with Afghanistan as setting. Afghanistan is country which has a strong culture and ideology about women's status. It is a country that full of war journey, Taliban regime is one of most terrific era for women that happen in Afghanistan. Taliban had taken control and became super power in 1995- 2001. Recently, Taliban takes control and making policy for women and put Afghanistan's women as subordinate. Many men in society agree with the policy because the society believes that women must have an honor because they are women.

The novel pictures the condition of Afghanistan during Taliban government. The government makes the policy for women and makes women get different treatment in society. *The Breadwinner Trilogy* takes several places as

setting in Kabul Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, there are strict rules which make by Taliban that makes especially for women, the rules that made women as subordinate. Being subordinated makes women get discrimination in economic and in social aspect.

It reflected on women characters in the novel; Parvana, Nooria, Shauzia, Parvana's mother and Mrs. Weera. Parvana which comes from a well-to do family, but because of the Taliban government rules, everything changes in her environment. Her mother who is a writer is forced to resign from her job as writer and Mrs. Weera also have to leave her job as teacher because of Taliban rules. In the other hand, in educational aspect, Parvana and her friend Shauzia and Nooria also are forced to quit from their school because of they are women. In addition, women also get different treatment in social aspect, they cannot go outside the house without man which can be seen from the Parvana's mother, Miss. Weera and Noriia. They have to use burqa to hide their part of body. Furthermore, making the condition worse, every house has a black window to make sure that women cannot be seen from outside.

Based on the condition, the women characters such as Parvana, Parvana's mother, Miss Weera, Shauzia and Nooria try to struggle, to raise their right and survive during the subordination. As conditions for the family growing desperately, only one solution emerges. Getting discrimination as a girl, Parvana willingly pretends to become a boy and dressed like a boy to get a job, Parvana later has her struggle in order to survive her situation. She cuts her hair and pretends to be a boy to continue her father's job reading letters for people who cannot read in the city. Beside Parvana is not only the one who struggling under

the rules. Shauzia is also not allowed for having job, so she did the same way like Parvana, be a boy to get job as waiters in tea shop and as cleaning service officer. Furthermore, the other women such as Miss Wera and Parvana's mother make alliance in hidden place. They want to show that women in Afghanistan are not desperate with their condition in aiming to support and influence other women.

Deborah Ellis is Canadian. She is a counselor and a writer, but most notably, she is an activist for women and for peace. In 1996, she visited Afghanistan to visit with women after hearing about their mistreatment under the Taliban. During her visit, she interviewed a girl who pretended to be a boy in order to support her family and made it into a novel entitled *The Breadwinner Trilogy*.

The interesting of this novel is this novel based on true story. Deborah Ellis shows how women in Afghanistan as subordinate in society, what discrimination they get because of the position and their unusual struggle for raising their existence to get their right as human being. Another reason why this novel interested to analyze, because Deborah Ellis writes and shows worst condition of women in Afghanistan who adopted Patriarchal culture because of Taliban regime. It has been oppressed Afghanistan's women in all side.

This novel is also quite different with others Deborah Ellis's novel. Most of the work by Deborah Ellis talk about children who living in war country, but *The Breadwinner Trilogy* more focus on women, it deeply talks about the discrimination that they get and their struggle under society rules. In this research, the writer uses *The Breadwinner Trilogy* which published in Canada and the USA

in 2009 by GroundWood Books, where this edition is the comparison of the first, second, and third book which are become one novel *The Breadwinner Trilogy*.

According to the synopsis of the novel, it can be seen that the suitable theory is feminism. Feminism theory is “A theory of literary work that concerned with the marginalization of all women that is with their being relegated to secondary position by patriarchal culture” (Guerin L. Wilfred in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 196). Feminism has many branch such women’s movement, gender inequality, women image in society, women struggle, women’s attitude, women’s subordination, etc. Women’s subordination and struggle in the novel are interesting to analyze and add more analysis in this literary works. This analysis looks carefully to the sign of women’s subordination and struggle in *The Breadwinner Trilogy*.

1.2 The Objective and The Scope of The Study

This research is analyzed by feminism approach. There are two objectives of the research:

1) To describe the women’s subordination as seen in *The Breadwinner Trilogy*.

2) To describe the women’s struggle against subordinate position as seen in *The Breadwinner Trilogy*.

Afghanistan is a country that had several governments during the past until now. For the scope of the study, it just focuses on the women condition under Taliban government in 1995-2000 which makes women in Afghanistan being subordinated in society as portrayed in first book until third book.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

According to the objective and scope of the study, the problems of this research are formulated as follow:

1.2.1 How are women's subordination portrayed in Deborah Ellis's *The Breadwinner Trilogy*?

1.2.2 How are women's struggles toward the subordination as seen in Deborah Ellis *The Breadwinner Trilogy*?

1.4 Review of related literature

1.4.1 Previous Study

The discussion of *The Breadwinner* has held by some previous researcher like Ozlem sensoy and Elizabeth marshall, 2010 entitled *Missionary Girl Power: Saving the 'Third World' One Girl at A Time*, the result is in *The Breadwinner*, and similar historical fictions aimed at youth, wittingly focus on the real and/or imagined plight of 'other' girls/women. These are representations is built upon a care ethic central to the project and history of school in the West that in turn, has results in the stabilization of colonial relations of domination between white women/girls and colonialized women. In the analysis *Sensoy and Marshall* used reader response as approach and talk about the power of the book and how the book can influence the reader.

Today, the writer analyzes the same book with different theory; feminism theory to analyze Afghanistan's women condition as subordination and women's struggle as seen in the novel. In addition, the writer also analyzes based on

cultural and historical side, which focus on women condition under Taliban government.

1.4.2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter is focus on explanation of theory that is applied to conduct this research. Feminism theory is chosen to Analyze *The Breadwinner Trilogy*. According to Guerin L. Wilfred in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* “Feminism theory is a theory of literary work that concerned with the marginalization of women with their being relegated to secondary position by patriarchal culture “(196).

From the theory, it can be seen that feminism theory is theory that concern about women position as secondary or subordinate in society which made by male dominance in society, and all power are in hands of men.

Abeda Sultana said “Subordination is the situation in which one is forced to stay under the control of other. So, women subordination means the social situation in which women are forced to stay under the control of men” (8).

The writer also uses historical approach. The writer tries to find Afghanistan historical in order to relate the connection between the novel and the history. According to Busha, the definition of historical approach is:

Historical approach values the aspect which can be considered as history, such as information, documentations, and also images which have happened in society or nation. In this approach, not all experiences happened in the past are considered as history, only those historical experiences which related to the creation of the literary work can be considered as supported history. (91)

Discrimination on women has appeared in daily level, Sultana also divides the form of subordination of women at daily level:

The subordination that we experience at a daily level, regardless of the class we might belong to, takes various forms – discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence – within the family, at the place of work, in society. (7)

Thus, based on Sultana “the feeling of powerlessness, discrimination, and experience of limited self-esteem and self-confidence jointly contribute to women subordination” (7).

According to Sultana, there are the specific forms of discrimination on women:

a specific form of discrimination and a particular aspect of patriarchy...Such as, son preference, discrimination against girls in food distribution, burden of household work on women and young girls, lack of educational opportunities for girls, lack of freedom and mobility for girls, wife battering, male control over women and girls, sexual harassment at workplace, lack of inheritance or property rights for women, male control over women’s bodies and sexuality, no control over fertility or reproductive right. (7-8)

According to Sultana “men are superior to women and women are part of men’s property, so women should be controlled by men and this produces women’s subordination” (8). It can be known that women are powerless, because of the powerlessness women are being control and men can put women in

subordinate because of their dominance. Furthermore, the subordination has made women powerless and must obey under male dominance.

In the other hand, women do not always accept the discrimination that they get as subordinate. They also have consciousness about their condition and try to raise their position through struggling toward the discrimination under male dominance. According to Millet :

Women must revolt against the power center of their culture that is male dominance, will enable women to be aware of their situation both in the society and at home, to form their self-consciousness as women, to demand their equality with men and to obtain their autonomy. The resistance is the one way to achieve equality, dignity, right (such as right to education, right to birth control, right to divorce, and to participate in decision-making). (Sexual Politic: Chapter 2)

It can be seen that women can resist and struggle against male domination by self-consciousness of their position and situation. As subordinate in society, women should notice their situation that they are being force to be subordinate by men. If women have self-consciousness, women can establish their existence. Establishing their existence is a self-consciousness of theirs that they use to struggle the discrimination that made by male dominance and get their human right.

Bell hooks in *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* described about women struggle:

everything people do in life is based on theory and education is an underlying theory which shape people's though and practice in fighting

against patriarchal system...”Women was need to get outside the home, and work –to case being “just” housewives. Work outside the home...work they argued, would allow women to break the bonds of economic independency on women, which would in turn enable them to resist sexist domination. (19-95)

From the statement, it can be known that job and education can be empowered of the women. In addition, those are forms to struggle the discrimination and raise the position of women in society. If women are getting the education, they can fight the male domination.

Seeing these, the women in Afghanistan as portrayed in *The Breadwinner Trilogy* have the several bad treatments from society as subordinate. Women in this book pictured that they are being discriminated and also being controlled. In the other hand, to struggle the subordination, women prove their self-consciousness as subordinate in society through establishing their existence.

1.5 Method of Research

The research on *Women Subordination and Struggle in The Breadwinner Trilogy* is conducted by applying close-reading method based on Jacobuss (1995). According to Jacobuss, the method is that the researcher notes specific use of language, such as imaginary, symbol, repeated terms, pattern of expression, to tone of speaker and the main ideas the writer introduces.

In this research, the note of the elements is based on the feminism approach (Abeda Sultana, 2011), (Kate Millet, 1969), and (Bell Hooks, 1984) with the focus on the women’s subordination and their struggle, women are

getting discrimination in Afghanistan as seen in *The Breadwinner Trilogy* and historical approach (Busha, 1980) with focus on any history of Afghanistan during Taliban regime. The elements are examined in details to understand how women's subordination in Afghanistan's society through examining the discrimination which they get as women in Afghanistan society and their struggle through examining their effort to rise their existence in society.

To be detailed based on Robert (1997) in his book *Writing Literature*, the women's subordination and struggle can be known through the character's way of speech, dialogue, action, and comment by other character and through setting. In addition, the writer also does close reading to do the research. This below is the description of those steps:

First, the writer reads the novel correctly and analyzes which part in the novel that show women's subordination as reflected in explicit and implicit meaning through the women characters conversation and speech. Second, the writer also takes notes and highlights the data which are related to women's subordination and women's struggle according to women act, thought, and dialogue. Third, the writer sorts the data to get more relevant data. Thus, the irrelevant data were excluded. Fourth, the data are processed to be analyzed from theoretical point of view.

Fifth, the writer writes the categorized data in a table of data collection and classification, and then the writer also reads any relevant literature of the Deborah Ellis background which can help the writer to relate the work. Sixth, the writer also searching and reading the source and journal of any other people who

has been analyzed the same novel for previous study. Therefore, the writer will know if the analyzing would be same as the other person and build the difference among another. Last, the writer also searches any relevant historical of Afghanistan to support the analysis of the data. Based on the method, it will be known and found the women's subordination and struggle in Afghanistan.