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## An Analysis of Women's Right Manifestation of Jo March in the Little Women by Gerwig 2019

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### ABSTRACT

In the 18th century, many women were unable to express their independence in their careers, marriages, and lifestyles. This contradicts Jo March's, she is support the gender equality that women and men have equal rights in all aspects. In line with this, this study aims to analyze the movements played by Jo March as the main character in the film Little Women in terms of liberal feminism. This study uses a qualitative approach method through content analysis techniques. Data collection in this study is observation which consists of watching, classifying, and cross-checking the movie. The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis which consists of coding, classifying, discussing, and reporting. Furthermore, the result of this study are eight of the twelve types of women's' rights. It consists of stating personal requirements, expressing personal feelings, expressing personal opinions, prioritizing personal priority, saying 'yes' or 'no' for myself, making mistakes, changing self-mind, and saying I don't understand.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Since 1890s, literature has been popular (Pittock, 2014). Literature has a huge influence on a variety of factors. as education, business, law, art, and many other sectors are all influenced. Literature is an art form that includes texts, music, theater, and other forms of art (Dewi & Medina, 2020). According to Klarer, drama, poetry, and epic are the three main branches of the literary heritage that make up the category of literary works. For the literary genres of novels and short stories, the term epic is now recognized as prose and fiction (Klarer, 2004). There are two categories of prose: nonfiction prose and fiction writing. Literature that originates from the imagination is referred to as fiction. The genres of fiction include mysteries, science fiction, romance, and criminal thrillers. On the other hand, nonfiction describes works of writing that are grounded in reality and cover topics such as history, languages, religion, commerce, food, health, and biography (Dewi & Medina, 2020).

One of the many subjects covered in literature is feminism. Globally, feminism is disseminated via literature. This compilation documents women's activity throughout World War II for emancipation, equality, and better living circumstances for themselves and their families. It is feasible to assert that there has been a worldwide movement regarding feminism in the last fifty years because of the activity that occurred in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa (Smith, 2000). One example of a literary work that contains a message of feminism is "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood. This dystopian novel, published in 1985, explores

themes of gender oppression and the consequences of a patriarchal society. The impact of feminist literature often extends beyond the pages of the book, influencing public discourse, shaping cultural attitudes, and contributing to social change by challenging established norms and advocating for gender equality.

In this study, the Little Women Movie is a movie that I will examine using liberal feminism interpretation. Little Women is a 2019 American adult period drama film written and directed by Greta Gerwig. Little Women is one of the classic movies about gender equality in its time. This movie tells about the lives of four March sisters- Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy-who grow up during the American Civil War.

Meg is the eldest child. She is gentle, loving, and tries to be a role model for her younger siblings. Meg dreams of having a stable and happy life through marriage. She wants to be a good wife and mother. Meg married John Brooke, faced financial challenges in her marriage, but still tried to balance her domestic role and personal desires. The second child is Jo. She is a vibrant, stubborn and independent character. She tends to be a tomboy and often rejects gender norms that restrict women. Jo aspires to be a famous writer and strives for personal freedom and financial independence. She moves to New York to pursue a writing career, rejects Laurie's proposal of a man who loves her to preserve her freedom, and eventually publishes her novel based on the experiences of her life and her siblings. The third child is Beth. She is the quietest and most gentle. Beth does not have big ambitions like her siblings. She was content with a simple life and enjoyed playing the piano. Beth suffered from fragile health and died young. The last child is Amy. She is an ambitious, artistic and sometimes self-centered. She cares about appearance and social status. Amy dreams of becoming a famous artist and marrying someone who can give her a comfortable and luxurious life. She married Laurie who is a man she fell in love with after understanding more about love and relationships. However, Jo March is the most dominant character among her three siblings because she is bold, rebellious, ambitious, inspiring, thus encouraging her siblings to pursue their own happiness. Jo March also plays a central role in the narrative of both the original novel and the movie adaptation. So she has a more prominent role than her siblings.

Along with plays, novels, and poetry, movies are also classified as literary works (Priyadharshini et al., 2021). Movies are a powerful medium that has the power to transform society. Although it's the finest source of amusement, it's also a useful source of knowledge, education, and propaganda for influencing public opinion. Every movie in existence is based on an ideology that is presented as fact. Over 4500 films are produced annually by the thriving film industries. The development of digital technology has made it possible to make and distribute movies digitally, and watching movies has always been a favorite form of pleasure.

Little Women is a 2019 American adult period drama film written and directed by Greta Gerwig. The movie is one of the classic that tell about gender equality in its time. Jo March's story looks back on her life from the past to the present, telling the story of the March sisters - four young girls who are all determined to live their lives according to their own choices. This can be seen and learned from their character, thoughts and behavior they face their uncomfortable lives. Jo March has a dominant and strong character trait of freedom, bravery, and valuing her personal freedom.

Women are entitled to accomplish more in life than what they often do. When women are able to fulfill roles in various fields, including those of president, minister, director, etc., there are several noteworthy advances. However, not all women in today's world are able to feel this way; many outside women continue to live by the conventional standards since their parents or the people in their area think that is just the way women are. The "right" has to take precedence above the "good," according to liberals (Hastuti et al., 2018). This implies that liberals have to grant rights to all people, and that reminding people of their individual rights should be of utmost importance. Its responses to empowerment, individual autonomy, and gender equality are forceful (Priyadharshini et al., 2021).

## 1.2 Research Questions

Two inquiries are developed in light of the study's backdrop:

What are the liberal feminism movements acted by Jo March as the main character in the Little Women Movie?

## 1.3 Literature Review

### 1.3.1 Literature

The core of literary works is imagination, or fiction as it is more commonly known (Johannsen, 2023). A literary work is an artistic creation, a subfield of writing that uses words to tell a meaningful tale, paint an image, or express an idea (Wang, 2019). A collection of written works, literature is a means of human expression. There are four primary genres for literary works. These include nonfiction, theater, media, poetry, and prose. Short stories, poetry, and novels are some examples of written works. In the interim, movies and short films serve as examples of visual creations.

### 1.3.2 Feminism History

Derived from the Latin word "femina," which means "woman," the term "feminism" was initially used to the women's rights movement and equality. Feminism is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a feminine

or womanly state. According to Webster's Dictionary, feminism is the idea that women ought to have the same political rights as men. According to Toril Moi (1985), the term "feminist" or "feminism" refers to political labels that express support for the objectives of the newly formed Woman's Movement that surfaced in the late 1960s. In a similar vein, Simone de Beauvoir contends that the genders are only employed symmetrically in legal documents for formal purposes (Young, 1997).

### 1.3.3 Kinds of Feminism

Based on (Beasley, 1999) page on 51-63 in the book "What is Feminism?" There are four subfields within feminism:

#### a. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism views women's place in society in terms of equal rights or "artificial" restrictions that prevent them from participating in public life outside of the home and family. It focuses on the public domain, as well as institutional, political, and legal battles for people's rights to participate in public life.

b. Radical feminism views sexual oppression as the main kind of oppression that women experience, or at the very least as a basic form of oppression (typically the former). According to radical feminism, all males are categorically seen as being in charge of at least some women.

c. Marxist feminism is focused on the public domain and, as it deals with the organization of labor, usually gives special consideration to how women are positioned in relation to paid labor.

d. The goal of socialist feminism is to incorporate the radical feminist theory that sexual oppression is not historically a result of class separation, while maintaining some aspects of marxism about the importance of labor and class differences.

This study solely addresses liberal feminism, which is concerned with equalizing women's status in the workplace, in society, and in the environment.

### 1.3.4 Liberality

Every human has the right to personal freedom. It is impossible to separate liberals and freedom from one another. Liberals are those who believe in the freedom to make decisions without any hindrances. According to the latest liberal views put out by specialists, this is one of the finest methods to provide individuals the freedom to live anywhere they desire. It stems from a suspicion of people's capacity to behave properly, which is partially caused by differences in racial, religious, gender, and sexual orientation. Liberal theory's introduction makes some individuals happy since it allows them to acknowledge their liberties and live the lives they desire without being constrained in any way.

### 1.3.5 Liberal Feminism

According to Tong (Tong, 2018) "Liberal feminists aspire to liberate women from oppressive gender roles—that is, from roles that serve as rationalizations or defenses for denying women equal standing in the marketplace, the forum, and the academy." It implies that liberal feminists may provide a platform, an avenue for women to pursue higher education, and a voice in the marketplace. As per the aforementioned statements, liberal feminism may provide women with the liberty to pursue their desires without facing discrimination, prejudice, or several forms of oppression. Liberal feminism is defined as an individualistic and fully free-spirited feminist perspective. This movement is founded on the separation of private and public spheres and the principles of liberty and equality. Women's emancipation has existed to eradicate gender inequality. Feminism is an ideology that seeks to end patriarchy, identify the underlying reasons of women's inequality, and offer solutions. According to (Dickson, 1982) stated that women have 'rights', as follows :

1. Stating personal requirements
2. Expressing personal feelings
3. Expressing personal opinions
4. Prioritizing personal priority
5. Treated with respect
6. Saying 'yes' or 'no' for myself
7. Making mistakes
8. Changing self-mind
9. Saying I don't understand
10. Asking for what I want
11. Refusing to take accountability for the issues of others
12. The freedom to interact with people without needing their permission

### 1.3.6 Main Character

According to (DiYanni, 2004) said a main character is a significant person who lies at the heart of the action or topic of the narrative. In a novel or play, it refers to the characters who are involved in the majority of the events that build a plot and settle disputes. In this study, there are four characters make appearances in the Little Women movie.

### 1.3.7 Little Women Movie

The movie *Little Women*, which was released on December 25th 2019, tells the story of the March sisters who live their respective dreams. They are Meg (Emma Watson), Jo (Saoirse Ronan), Amy (Florence Pugh), and Beth March (Eliza Scanlen). *Little Women* tells a story of sisterhood, hope, dreams and sacrifice. During the onset of the Civil War, the March brothers lived in Massachusetts with their mother, Marmee (Laura Dern). They struggled to make ends meet while their father was away at war.

#### 1.4 Review of Related Studies

For the proposed theoretical investigations to be supported, pertinent research is required. As references in this study, there are other papers that are pertinent to this research, including "Feminism Portrayed in Greta Gerwig's Movie *Little Women*; Analysis in Modern Era" by (Dewi & Medina, 2020). The topic of this essay was feminism in Greta Gerwig's 2019 film *Little Women*. This study sought to ascertain how feminism is portrayed via the main character and investigate the many forms of feminism that the main character alludes to Tong and Botts's theory. The author employed descriptive qualitative techniques to analyze the film's content. All of the information is provided in the form of words and sentences, and it was gathered through library research by reading and choosing quotes from the *Little Women* motion picture. As the findings identified feminism's components and classified them into several categories according to theory.

Secondly, the prior research pertaining to this study is organized by (Azizah & Fitri, 2019) with the thesis's title "The Representation of Liberal Feminism through the Main Character in "The Post" Movie". In this research the author intends to analyze the representation of liberal feminism through the main character found in "The Post" Movie. The researcher identified how liberal feminism is depicted in the film using feminism concepts. Focused Marilley theory and a qualitative descriptive approach were employed in this study. The data was gathered using the read-write approach. A feminist approach was used in the data analysis. The investigator discovered three varieties of liberal feminism. In this research, the feminism of personal growth and liberal feminism's portrayal in the film predominate over the feminism of equal rights, feminism of fear, and feminism of personal development.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses qualitative research. Qualitative research also includes social and behavioral sciences that unpack the meanings people give to build an understanding of some aspects of social life (Leavy, 2014). Therefore, the purpose of qualitative research aligns with this study which focuses on analyzing to have deeper understanding regarding the movements by Jo March as the main character as reflected in liberal feminism.

This study falls under the category of qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a versatile technique that use an inductive approach to comprehend text and images in order to formulate responses to questions that are thereafter intended to distill unprocessed material into themes or categories according to interpretation (W & Cresswell, 2012).

### 2.1 Data Sources

The data source in this research refers to the video movie *The Little Women* 2019 which can be accessed through Idlix. According to (Baran, 2011) audio-visual means to convey a message to a large group of individuals assembled in one location. The audio-visual characteristic of movies, which enables them to deliver a lot of information in a short length of time, makes them a powerful mass communication tool against the target audience. Meanwhile, Idlix is an accurate website that offers a variety of films covering various genres. In this case, Idlix is a website to watching many movies that can be accessed anywhere and anytime. The little women movie can be watched in the link, as it is presented below:

<https://vip.idlixofficial.net/movie/little-women-2019/>

### 2.2 Data Collecting and Data Analysis Technique

The researcher employs observation as a method of data collection. In this study the researcher seeing and making notes about the given data sources, the researcher's involvement in carrying out this study is non-participant observation. Due to this, the three phases of data collecting use in this study. Additionally, the following describes the explanation of the three phases use to collect data for this study. Firstly, the researcher watches *The Little Women* Movie carefully to make it easier to conduct the next step of collecting data. Secondly, the researcher focus on classifying Jo March's utterances that was indicated in the rubric based on the theory. Thirdly, the researcher does cross-checking the whole data related to Liberal Feminism theory. Then it is also adjusted to the script of *The Little Women* Movie.

In qualitative data analysis, various texts, materials, or cases are compared and generalized through the classification and analysis of linguistic data to draw conclusions about implicit and explicit dimensions, the structure of meaning-making in the data, and the content that has a subjective or social meaning (Flick, 2013). Therefore, the researcher used several steps in analyzing data, including coding, classifying, discussing, and reporting.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Findings

##### Types of Feminism of Equal Rights

Research shows that there are 12 types of equal rights feminism according to (Back, Dickson, 1982). However, in this research there are only 8 types of equal rights feminism expressed by Jo March in the film *Little Women*. The data includes 3 stating personal requirements data, 5 expressing personal feelings data, 5 expressing personal opinions data, 2 prioritizing personal priorities data, 1 saying 'yes' or 'no' for myself data, 2 making mistakes data, 2 changing self-mind data, and 1 saying I don't understand data.

##### Stating Personal Requirements

[1] Jo March: "I don't want you to leave. I want you to stay" (02:04:12-02:04:15)

[2] Jo March: "You keep your \$500, and I'll keep the copyright, thank you. Also, I want ten percent of royalties" (02:05:45-02:06:12)

[3] Jo March: "I've decided. I want to own my own book" (02:06:16-02:06:18)

Datum [1] and [2] and [3] show that Jo March expressed her personal need to articulate and fight for rights and needs independently. Datum [1] shows that Jo March wanted Friedrich to stay in Massachusetts where she lived because she loved him so there was no reason for Friedrich to move to California. Datum [2] shows that Jo March was negotiating and asking for the percentage of profits she wanted regarding royalties for her forthcoming book with Mr. Dashwood. Datum [3] shows that Jo March wanted to copyright her own book.

##### Expressing Personal Feelings

[4] Jo March: "I can't get over my disappointment in being a girl" (00:14:49-00:14:51)

[5] Jo March: "I want to help with the money I make and not worry her" (00:22:09-00:22:11)

[6] Jo March: "She doesn't deserve my forgiveness. I will hate her! I will hate her forever!" (00:48:59-00:49:05)

[7] Jo March: "I miss everything" (00:54:11-00:54:15)

[8] Jo March: "I just feel like women have minds and souls as well as hearts, ambition and talent as well as beauty and I'm sick of being told that love is all a woman is fit for. But... I am so lonely" (01:42:25-01:42:53)

Datum [4] to [8] show that Jo March expresses emotions and personal views on things without fear of discrimination or negative judgment. Datum [4] shows that Jo March felt disappointed at being born a woman because she could not fight with her father as a volunteer for the union troops. Datum [5] shows that Jo March told Friedrich that she wanted to help the family financially with her own income without making her mother worry. Datum [6] shows that Jo March refuses to forgive her sister Amy March for burning her writings. Datum [7] shows that Jo March expressed her feelings to her sister Beth March that she missed Laurie. Datum [8] shows that Jo March expresses feelings of sadness and disgust to her mother regarding society's opinion that women are destined only to be loved.

##### Expressing Personal Opinions

[9] Jo March: "We are not friends, you are not My friend. And I don't want your opinion because I don't like you very much so just don't talk to me anymore, thank you" (00:24:11-00:24:21)

[10] Jo March: "Thank you, Aunt March, for your employment and many kindnesses, but I intend to make my own way in the world" (00:35:20-00:35:26)

[11] Jo March: "I'm not scared of anyone! He looks stern, but my grandfather was much more handsome" (00:39:03-00:39:07)

[12] Jo March: "I'd rather be a free spinster and paddle my own canoe" (01:32:49-01:32:52)

[13] Jo March: "I suppose marriage has always been an economic proposition. Even in fiction" (02:03:26-02:03:29)

Datum [9] to [13] show that Jo March expresses personal opinion referring to an individual's right and freedom to voice their views, ideas and beliefs without fear of restriction or negative judgment. Datum [9] shows that Jo March did not accept Friedrich's criticism of her writing because Jo considered that they were not friends and Friedrich had no right to make negative comments. Datum [10] shows that Jo March denied Aunt March who said that Jo would need her so she had to act well and be careful. Datum [11] shows that Jo March comments on a photo of her grandfather Laurie. Datum [12] shows that Jo March who voiced the opinion to her sister Meg March that she did not want to get married and could fend for herself. Datum [13] shows that Jo March changed the ending of her writing to a happy ending with the main character finding love because she said that marriage is always an economic proposition even in fiction.

##### Prioritizing Personal Priorities

[14] Jo March: "Money is the end and aim of my mercenary existence" (00:05:46-00:05:50)

[15] Jo March: “Nothing more -- except that...I don’t believe I will ever marry. I’m happy as I am, and love my liberty too well to be in any hurry to give it up.

Datum [14] and [15] show that Jo March placing an individual's needs, desires, and goals at the center of the decision-making process to determine what is most important to them in their lives, in both personal and professional contexts, without being pressured by social norms or policies that may override personal needs or aspirations. Datum [14] shows that Jo March continued her work because her students had been waiting for her when Friedrich wanted to invite her to chat. Datum [15] shows that Jo March rejects Laurie's proposal because she is not ready to get married and prefer continue her carrier.

### **Saying 'Yes' or 'No' For Myself**

[16] Jo March: “I can’t change the feeling and it would be a lie to say I do when I don’t. I’m so sorry, Teddy, so desperately sorry, but I can’t help it...

Datum [16] show that Jo March makes decisions about what she accepts or rejects in her life based on her personal wants and needs. She was honest about her feelings and said that she didn't love Laurie at that time.

### **Making Mistakes**

[17] Jo March: “EUROPE! That’s CAPITAL! I shouldn’t use words like that” (00:14:20-00:14:26)

[18] Jo March: “If she had died it would’ve been my fault” (00:51:53-00:52:25)

Datum [17] and [18] show that Jo March has the right to make mistakes without experiencing punishment or unfair judgment because making mistakes is considered part of the normal human experience and is important in the process of personal and social growth. Datum [17] shows that Jo March slipped into speaking loudly to Laurie (not reflecting femininity) because women should speak softly. Datum [18] shows that Jo March regrets that she neglected her sister Amy March until her sister drowned in an icy lake and fell ill.

### **Changing Self-Mind**

[19] Jo March: “My dear Teddy, I miss you more than I can express. I used to think the worst fate was to be a wife, I was young and stupid. Now I have changed. The worst fate is to live my life without you in it. I was wrong to turn you down and to run away to New York” (01:44:48-01:45:10)

[20] Dashwood : “ Just end it that way, will you?”

Jo March : “Fine” (02:03:33-02:03:36)

Datum [19] and [20] show that Jo March has the right to change his mind because it includes personal reflection, adoption of new perspectives, changes in attitudes and behavior, as well as influence on policy and social structures. Datum [19] shows that Jo March confessed his love to Laurie after he returned from New York and rejected Laurie several years ago via letter. Datum [20] shows that Jo March ultimately agreeing to the royalty negotiations offered Dashwood.

### **Saying I Don't Understand**

[21] Jo March: “I don’t know, I’ve always been quite content with my family. I don’t understand it” (01:41:31-01:41:38)

Datum [21] show that Jo March say what he doesn't understand. It is an important step in the process of learning, dialogue, and social improvement. It involves acknowledgment of ignorance, readiness to learn, and openness to others' perspectives. In this way, individuals can contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and just society. Jo March is confused about her feelings when she hears the news that her sister Amy March is with Laurie in Paris looking after Aunt March who is sick. Jo says that she doesn't know what to do with her mother because she regrets rejecting Laurie too quickly.

## **3.2 Discussion**

Women in that era had challenges in obtaining their rights. Jo March believes that a woman can still be everything without getting married to a wealthy man because of her strength, power, and perseverance. However, culture and society dictated that women would be respected if they got married and committed their lives to raising a family. The problem of gender inequity, which affects both men and women, is brought up in the film. Women are perceived as inferior to males and unable to compete with them in all spheres of life. Stereotypes of women that limit women to their soft personalities and attractive appearance rather than recognizing their potential and abilities. Women are shown in the film as having beautiful looks. However, women have unique personalities. It's Jo March who defies the stereotype of the feminine. Women should be allowed to be who they want to be, free from social pressure to conform to expectations. Even with soft qualities, women might have high aspirations. Motherhood and or marriage do not take away a woman's ability to pursue a career in the public eye. The film

conveys the concept that women and men should be treated equally. Men and women must be treated equally in all facets of life. The fact that women have agency in their lives is one of the fundamental values that counts because they too have aspirations and goals in life to pursue, women enjoy the same freedoms as men and do not merely serve as objects for them. Furthermore, through March's sisters, especially Jo March depicts the struggle and independence of women in the 19th century. They stand for powerful women who are also kind and understanding of one another's decisions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that there are eight of the twelve types of women's rights according to (Dickson, 1982) utterances by Jo March. The types consist of stating personal requirements, expressing personal feelings, expressing personal opinions, prioritizing personal priorities, saying 'yes' or 'no' for myself, making mistakes, changing self-mind, and saying I don't understand. Therefore, from the types of women's rights, expressing personal feelings and opinions is one type that is used more often by Jo March. However, these 8 types are liberal feminist movements acted by Jo March as the main character in the Little Women Movie.

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