

The Representation of Women's Dependence on Men in *Little Women*

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Abstract—This study aims to describe the representation of women's dependence on men in *Little Women*. The descriptive qualitative approach was applied in this research. The data for this study were gathered from the talks of the characters in the novel's *Little Women*. The data of this research are collected from Cinderella Complex syndrome through their actions and words. The research results showed the level to which characters are affected by the Cinderella Complex varies depending on how the Cinderella Complex influences their thoughts and behavior, either consciously or unconsciously. Meg's most dominant Cinderella Complex is Fear of losing femininity, and the most dominant factor is self-concept. Jo's character showed only rely on man as the aspect and persona maturity as the factor. Meg and Jo were unconsciously reflected by Cinderella Complex syndrome.

Index Terms—women, dependence, *Little Women*, Cinderella Complex

I. INTRODUCTION

The women's dependence on men or Cinderella Complex is a type of psychological dependence in which a woman has a great need to be cared for, to be protected by others, particularly males. Dowling describes her own experience, as well as the experiences of other women who assisted in the discovery of the illness, in her book, as proof that the Cinderella Complex may strike any woman (1982, p. 21). Cinderella Complex is the desire of women to always be protected by men so that women cannot and do not dare to take advantage of their brainpower and creativity and make themselves tend to be less independent. Women have stronger needs for prestige than for power. As a result, women living in this contemporary and immediate period are susceptible because they will feel pressured to meet the requirements of their inner urges (Hays, 2013).

Literature can be defined as a piece of written work with artistic merits created by the author (Arafah et al., 2021). As a result of its limitless imagination, literature can build its own world (Arafah, et al., 2021). Since literary works are often a representation of life at one time, there are numerous advantages to the reader's life (Arafah, et al., 2021). Therefore, literature is too important to ignore (Arafah & Kaharuddin, 2019). Literary works are referred to as social products with several life benefits (Irmawati et al., 2020). Literature may take several forms: it can be written (as in poetry and novels) or performed (as in theatre). Literary works, regardless of genre, include many useful lessons and are a dependable source of information about people's lives and values in society (Purwaningsih et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, literature thrives by utilizing the wealth of technical breakthroughs while also enhancing its quality. The information technology era has revolutionized the way people throughout the world think (Arafah & Hasyim, 2019). Several multidisciplinary theories, such as sociology of literature, anthropology of literature, and psychology of literature, have been developed as a result of this growth (Kaharuddin & Latif, 2017).

Along with this development, changes in literary taste have been profoundly impacted by the periods (Afiah et al., 2022). This style includes the use of language in a literary work that is aimed to make the readers more interested in reading the literary works. Branding is required to add value to a product, and the same is true for literature. The author and his writing will become more popular with the correct branding, such as the use of beautiful language or the creation of a character with a writing style or literary work that addresses unique issues (Hasyim et al., 2020). ELITES saw literature as a culturally valued text reflecting human life (Arafah et al., 2020), similar to the Maccera' Bulung ceremony, which has cultural meaning and exposes some ideological and sociological values of the society (Sunardi et al., 2018). Readers may gain cultural information from reading a novel, for example, because the novel features characters from various socio-cultural backgrounds. The socio-cultural background from a literary work reflects how the condition of society at a certain time happened. It can reflect an author's thoughts, manners, behavior, and attitudes throughout their works by analyzing the style of the author's work (Fadillah et al., 2022). This kind of style includes the

language used of how the characters communicate in everyday life because literature can be a medium to introduce culture, social life, and human life reality (Mutmainnah et al., 2022). At the very least, the students will be aware of some aspects of how the characters live in the world described in the novel, such as their feelings, thoughts, beliefs, traditions, and customs (Arafah, 2018).

Character education can be learned from the characters, their actions, struggles, and life journeys, which can be seen explicitly in the description and character conversations, or implicitly throughout the story (Hasanah et al., 2021). Emojis in social media conversations, particularly Whatsapp, can express emotions and explain the sender's meaning (Arafah & Hasyim, 2019), in the same way, that text can describe certain objects, places, and events in great detail so that readers can feel both physically and emotionally what the author wants to explain in the text. A great way to deliver the words in a literary work by an author makes an important role in delivering messages because it is also a kind of communication from the author to the reader (Yulianti et al., 2022). Therefore, it will drive into good communication and avoid misinterpretation. Aside from the advancement of literature, the information age has changed the way people think and influenced human behavior (Arafah et al., 2021). The way people think in facing the advancement gives an impact in how a lesson, including literature, is delivered and needs to be improved (Anggrawan et al., 2019). Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888), an American novelist, wrote the novel *Little Women*. Its plot is based on the author's and her three sisters' experiences.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Freud's theory on human behavior continues to have a strong influence in the field of psychoanalytic treatment and literature analysis. His theory is based on repeating patterns of dysfunctional human behavior that he noticed while treating patients with emotional issues for many years (Puspitasari, 2019). The unconscious mind influences human behavior since it houses sensations of fear, memory, pleasure, conflict, and pain, among other things (Freud, 1920). Freud in Niaz et al., (2019) said in the unconscious, memories are largely from the past, especially from childhood, however Jung argues that these memories are not only from the past but also have future and current consequences. Also, dreams are a psychic product and because psychic life is considered by Freud as a conflict between psychic powers, he considers dreams as the embodiment of a conflict (Ogden, 1997).

Dowling describes Cinderella Complex as suppressed attitudes and anxieties, which corresponds to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic ideas (1982, p. 86).

Dowling describes the following aspects of the Cinderella Complex:

a. *Expecting Others' Direction.*

Women's reliance on them has stifled their initiative and inventiveness, and as a result, they are constantly hesitant to act. When a new action or decision has gone through the step of soliciting comments and guidance from others, it will be implemented (Dowling, 1982, p. 80).

b. *External self-control/External Locus of Control.*

A woman with a strong external locus of control believes that everything she has, whether success or failure, is the result of pure chance or misfortune. This notion has the potential to impair women's productivity at work and in their personal development. This is evident when women who have achieved a particular level of success prefer to stop at a certain point and do not desire to accomplish further. In addition, Dowling explains that women also tend to feel they have no control to solve their problems or to influence their surroundings (1982, p. 28).

c. *Low Self-Esteem.*

According to Symonds in Dowling (1982, p. 20), women frequently repress their initiative and abandon their goals. This is also linked to severe uneasiness and doubt about their talents and ideas. Women's anxiety levels are higher than men's when it comes to taking tests, examinations, or speaking in public, for example. Women suffer from an inferiority complex, which causes them to question their abilities to complete a task.

d. *Passive in Making Decisions and Developing Self.*

Women's feelings of inadequacy cause them to question their skills. As a result, women are more likely to act and behave passively, such as refusing to solve problems or make independent judgments (Dowling, 1982, p. 30).

e. *Avoiding Challenges and Competitions.*

Women have never been taught and will never be trained to face any problem alone. Although women are intellectually equal to males in terms of competency, emotional reasons such as fear of being incorrect, feeling terrible with friends, believing that you have asked other people, not being thrilled, and being less hopeful in life frequently impede this capacity. The problem stems from non-intellectual elements that drive women to shy away from challenges and competition (Dowling, 1982, p. 8).

f. *Rely on Men.*

Women become subservient as a result of their dependence and inexperience, and they prefer to rely on others, especially males both as a protector and as a source of income. This lessens the strong urge to be self-sufficient. Women tend to evolve into persons who are financially and mentally reliant on males (Dowling, 1982, p. 20).

g. *Fear of Losing Femininity.*

Gender terror is a concern that women would be judged unfeminine if they achieve success and independence at work. Women are frightened of losing their caring, refined, kind, calm, and cautious traits (Dowling, 1982, p. 57). As a result, if she works, she is motivated by a crisis or compulsion rather than a feeling of personal duty.

Dowling (1982, p. 3) states that the appearance of the Cinderella Complex in a woman cannot be separated from the factors that influence it, including:

a. *Parenting Style.*

Permissive parenting by parents has a significant influence on the development of Cinderella's complicated inclinations in youngsters. Because the greater the impression of permissive parenting that is established, the lower the propensity for the Cinderella Complex that happens in children, the lenient attitude of current parents will be inversely proportionate to the tendency of the Cinderella Complex. Children will develop into autonomous persons as a result of the permissiveness that emerges, leniency and lax restrictions, and flexibility in making judgments (Dowling, 1982, p. 105).

b. *Personal Maturity*

According to George (2006, p. 21) maturity is a continual process of an organism's system achieving behavioral maturity, which hardens organisms' reactions to their surroundings in such a manner that they can preserve the organism's integrity in line with the adult state, which is achieved through the cooking process.

c. *Self-Concept.*

As long as the other components are under control, a positive self-concept will generate positive energy in one's self and result in strong learning motivation (Arafah et al., 2020). Women develop Cinderella Complex as a result of the idea that stereotypes are absorbed and socialized by the environment, as well as poor self-esteem. Calhoun & Acocella (1990, p. 72) state that individuals with low self-esteem have a negative opinion of themselves and believe they are unimportant in comparison to others. Even though they are working women who are financially independent, they are still looking for men who have a higher position, social level, and financial stability (Fatimah & Istiani, 2020).

d. *Providing Excessive Help and Protection to Women.*

Women are viewed as delicate and helpless beings. Kitlinger and Wilkinson (1995) state that many women, see their transition to maturity as a challenging and arduous process.

e. *The stereotype of women as second-class people in society.*

Patriarchal culture is a condition in which women are expected to obey the decisions of men, particularly husbands, and to work in the shadows of men, making women appear as weak creatures and second-class citizens whose social status is always determined by the social status of their husbands and fathers (Barker, 2004, p. 445).

Dreams, literary works, and fictions are all creations of people's minds, but they all focus on a reality that isn't entirely true. Text dreams are intended to depict a specific reality, which may or may not be realized (Holland 1999). When a literary work's text is examined in its context, such as by studying the cultural discourse, it becomes more meaningful and complete (Arafah et al., 2020). The novel has more pages and is more complex in telling the conflict in it than other literary work (Abrams, 1999, p. 190). Besides it, there are also many vocabularies in the novel, so the readers will be able to improve his or her English skills by reading the novel (Baharuddin et al., 2021). This research focuses on women's ideas and mental processes in connection to psychology. So, this research uses psychoanalytic approach.

III. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study is conducted naturally using descriptive data. To identify literary works as psychology and literature, data was gathered. There was no mathematical work because this was a qualitative study (Purwaningsih et al., 2019). In this research, the researcher uses both volumes of Little Women's novel. In analyzing data, the researcher analyzes the behavior and ideas of the female characters in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women using psychoanalysis and Cinderella Complex to find aspects and factors of Cinderella Complex represented by female characters in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Researcher used identification and classification to look for and collect data during data collecting (Hasjim, et al., 2020). The data was gathered by taking notes from some of the talks in the Little Women novel. This study is about Cinderella Complex syndrome, which has a lot of reference to a thought or mental state of women that has a link with psychology, and the researcher believes that the psychoanalytic approach is the best approach technique for the study (Asriyanti et al., 2022).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Meg*

Meg (short for Margaret) was the oldest and (at least until Amy matured) the most attractive of the March sisters. She was also the most typical of the sisters. She can be described as the 19th century American girl from a respectable family should be. Meg had the fondness of luxury, beautiful or nice things, delicacies, and excellent manners toward society.

1. Data 1

Meg → Don't you wish we had the money Papa lost How happy and good we'd be, if we had no worries!" (Alcott, 1868, p. 5).

The character showing the Cinderella Complex was Meg. She mentioned the day her father lost money that affected her current family's condition. Meg's memorization of her father's loss of wealth in the past in this dialogue indicated an aspect of the Cinderella Complex, specifically, relying on a man. Meg had a thought about how prosperous they would be if the money was still in her father's possession.

The factor of the Cinderella Complex represented by Meg is self-concept. The reason is that Meg had an idea of guaranteed prosperity with the presence of her father's money, where in fact in her age where Meg was the oldest sister, she could have been worked and made her income, instead she was imagining an easy wealth from the help of her father's money which had been gone already.

2. Data 2

Meg → "are old enough to leave off boyish tricks...but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair" (Alcott, 1868, p. 5).

Meg's demand to her sister on this dialogue indicated an aspect of Cinderella Complex, specifically, fear of losing femininity. Meg had the idea of a woman should act like a lady to be seen as a nice woman, whereas her sister, Jo, has the idea of freedom, where she wanted to act and dress the way she wanted. Jo's contrary idea made Meg worried about her sister because she thought that Jo had come to the age where she needed to stop acting like a boy. The factor of the Cinderella Complex represented by Meg is self-concept. The reason is that Meg upheld the importance of lady-like behavior and appearance as if having those traits was a must. While the truth is that a woman can act independently based on what she desires as long as it is not cross the existed norms and rules.

B. Jo

Jo was depicted as a tomboyish, irritable, and geeky fifteen-year-old. She thrives on movement and cannot stand being on the sidelines. It irritated her that she won't be able to fight with her father, who had volunteered as a Chaplin in the civil war. Instead, Jo is forced to stay at home and attempt to adapt herself to the role of a nineteenth-century woman in the domestic sphere, which she found extremely difficult. It can be seen in her name as an example of her difficulties, where her full name is Josephine was a feminine name, but she went by the more masculine-sound name, Jo.

Data 3:

Mrs. March → "I'd want to know that John had a successful business that provided him with a sufficient income to keep him out of debt and provide for Meg... If position and prosperity come with love and morality as well, I should be glad and appreciate your good fortune, but I know from personal experience how much true happiness can be found in a simple modest cottage, where the daily bread is earned and certain hardships sweeten the few pleasures. I'm happy to see Meg start off modestly, because if I'm not incorrect, she'll be wealthy in the possession of a nice man's heart, and that's worth more than a fortune" (Alcott, 1868, p. 286).

In that conversation, Jo asked her mother about her preference on the type of man that Meg was supposed to marry. Jo's question to her mother on the dialogue above indicated an aspect of Cinderella Complex, specifically, relying on men, though in this context it was not about herself, but for the sake of her sister. Based on Jo's question, she indicated that her sister was supposed to marry a rich man for a better life.

The factor of the Cinderella Complex represented by Jo is personal maturity. Jo was depicted as the second daughter, at the age of around 15 or 16 years old, where her idea of happiness was not yet fully idealistic and still considered young. Her mother, on the other hand, provided with the more mature answer, wherein simple terms, she explained that happiness of a family was not based on the money that he had.

C. Discussion

Meg was the character who represented most of Cinderella's Complex aspects. The Cinderella Complex aspects that she represented were Rely on men and Fear of losing femininity. The aspects she showed were actually in line with how she was depicted in the novel. The dominant aspect showed by Meg was Fear of losing femininity. She is described as a girl who upholds the lady-like behavior and had a lot of fantasy about having a prosperous status in her future without having any intention to work for it, instead, wishing to have a man to marry her, which is supported by the second aspect, Rely on man. The most dominant factor of Meg's Cinderella Complex was self-concept. Meg's character which is described as an obedient girl leads her on having a self-concept where acting and dressing like a lady was a must for her, she even tried to make her tomboyish sister act like her. Despite being the oldest sister among the four daughters, the way she fantasized about having wealth by marrying a rich man was considered immature and irrational. The excessive help from her parents in the past and neighbor eventually led her to be independent and rely on others, which is the main trait of Cinderella Complex itself. Therefore, as the one with the most Cinderella Complex aspects, Meg is considered on having the Cinderella Complex syndrome and is deeply affected by it. The Cinderella Complex had been in herself since she was young, for she was described as the oldest daughter in the novel at the age of 17 years old, and it was the moment when she described her desire. The Cinderella Complex affecting on how she looked at herself and

what she desired in life, which based on the analysis, was mostly about having a husband who would give her wealth, servants, so she did not have to work at all. Though she was not fully aware of being unconscious about what she desired for was a sign of being dependent on man.

The next character assumed to have the Cinderella Complex was Jo, the main character. Jo represented the Cinderella Complex aspect, which relies on men. Even with her tomboyish character, Jo was also representing the Cinderella Complex, even though it was minor and nothing but an opinion, it was still considered as an aspect of the Cinderella Complex. It was when she thought that her mother prefer that her sister would marry a wealthy man. Jo was affected by the factor of Cinderella Complex, that is personal maturity. Due to her tomboyish character, Jo was far from being mature, especially in the first part of the novel. Following the explanation about Jo's Cinderella Complex aspects and factors, it can be said that Jo was not heavily affected by the Cinderella Complex syndrome, thanks to her tomboyish character where she never had any intention to marry and chose to be independent. Even when Jo eventually was married to a man, it was not because of money or wealth but as a complete interest to the man.

V. CONCLUSION

The novel *Little Women* tells the story of four sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy, born and raised in Massachusetts. Meg and Jo are used to represent the psychological dependence on men that occurs in the novel. The level to which Cinderella Complex affects a character depends on how Cinderella Complex impacts their behavior and thinking, whether consciously or unconsciously. Fear of losing femininity is Meg's most dominant Cinderella Complex, and Self-Concept is her most dominant factor. Meg was unconsciously affected by Cinderella Complex syndrome because she never mentioned how she relies on men, but she displayed many aspects of the syndrome. Apart from that, Jo displayed only Reliance on men and the factor is Persona maturity. Jo was barely affected by Cinderella Complex syndrome unconsciously because Jo's personality was mature.

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