

Gender Inequality in the Novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram Use Helene Cixous's Perspective

Nety Novita Hariyani^{1,*}, Wildana Wargadinata², Abdul Muntaqim Al Anshory³

¹ Student of Arabic Language and Literature, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

² Lecture of Arabic Language and Literature, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

³ Lecture of Arabic Language and Literature, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: novita.nety1306@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aims to: (1) describe the forms of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram; and (2) describe the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram use Helene Cixous's perspective. This research is descriptive-qualitative, as the researcher's purpose is to describe the research problem. The technique used in data collection is reading and taking notes. The data analysis techniques in this study are data reduction, data display, and conclusions. The results of this research are: (1) the forms of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram are stereotypes, violence, and marginalization; and (2) the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram are a factor of community customs and traditions and factor of helplessness.

Keywords: *Gender Inequality, Helene Cixous, Novel.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is a system and structure that makes women or men victims. Fakih said that gender inequality shows the difference in treatment between men and women under society's stigma [1]. This gender difference occurs not because of God's nature or destiny but because of human creation through a long social and cultural process. Gender differences are often equated with the term sexual differences formed in society regarding the nature, status, position, and roles of men and women as seen from their biological characteristics [2].

Gender differences are not a problem as long as they do not result in gender inequality, but precisely, these differences that give rise to various inequalities or discrimination [3]. Such inequality or discrimination takes the form of actions that lead to unequal conditions between men and women [4]. Women are often victims of various forms of gender inequality. This one starts from the assumption that women are irrational or emotional, so they cannot lead, then the position of women becomes unimportant [5].

In a literary work, Endraswara [6] reveals that the female character is a figure of interest as an object of storytelling. Many literary works represent various

inequalities that women often experience. This inequality raises gender issues such as gender bias, subordination, and gender stereotypes [7]. Fakih said that gender inequality occurs in various forms, such as marginalization, subordination, stereotypes or negative labeling of women, violence, and workload [8].

Based on the problems above, the researcher wants to discuss the gender inequality of female characters found in the novel entitled *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram. This novel tells the life journey of a woman who experiences forms of gender inequality during her lifetime. The researcher sees that the novel's author tries to write about women's problems to increase the reader's awareness that gender inequality is still common today.

Concerning literary works that raise about gender inequality experienced by women, the most appropriate approach to use is feminist literary criticism. Humm [9] states that feminist literary criticism can describe a literary work that tells about the oppression experienced by women. Feminists, in this case, are trying to fight against the practice of inequality or discrimination against women in society [10].

Helene Cixous is one of the postmodern feminists who avoids phallogocentrism or 'male'-style thinking

[9]. She thought that phallogocentrism gave birth to various inequalities against women, which positioned women as the second human being [11]. Berthens [12] mentions that Cixous said that, in general, traditional society places women in an inferior position or occupies a second position after men. Women will become objects, not subjects. It causes women to have no power and become victims of an unfair system.

Cixous revealed that women are neither objects nor production machines for men. To get out of the stereotypes or negative labeling of the past, women must have the courage to change them. Women in the past have been torn apart by the domination of masculinity. Through literary works, these stereotypes can be resisted and stopped [13]. According to Cixous, writing feminine literature aims to express women's bodies or sexual pleasures, which have been dominated by men's writing [14]. Cixous explains the binary differences between men and women based on a patriarchal perspective, including: Activity/Passivity; Sun/Moon; Culture/Nature; Day/Night; Father/Mother; Heads/Emotions; Intelligible/Sensitive; Logos/Pathos [15].

Cixous explains masculine procedures in the struggle for equality. A new socio-symbolic framework must accompany women's liberation. According to Cixous, sexual differences are essential in determining gender behavior, with their capacity to uphold or challenge existing constructs, not merely anatomical differences. Women who are described in the socio-symbolic system as only part of men are dismissed by Cixous by offering the idea of 'Ecriture feminine'. Cixous shows that the practice of feminine writing under the inscriptions of women's sexuality and history can reorganize the prevailing order [16].

Cixous then initiated the idea of 'Ecriture feminine' or the practice of feminine writing associated with the body. Cixous assumes that the difference between women lies not only in sexual differences but also in the linguistic realm. According to her, the practice of feminine writing has a purpose in voicing and writing related to positive representations of femininity. Masculinity, a symbolic language, is expected to be overthrown through this writing practice [17]. He rejects the practice of masculine writing, which has a binary opposition hierarchy and positions women in harmful, passive, object, and inferior terms, while men are the opposite. It shows that women are out of mind or unthinkable [18].

In this study, the researcher analyzes the novel by utilizing a feminist literary criticism approach based on the perspective of Helene Cixous. So far, the study of feminist literary criticism from the perspective of Helene Cixous is still widely discussed in several studies, including (1) Yuliana Evita and Wening Udasmoro [19] researching women's resistance to gender inequality in the novel *La Tresse* by Laetitia Colombani based on theories related to gender inequality and women's resistance by Teresa de Lauretis

and Helene Cixous; (2) Yeni Puspitasari and Eva Farhah [20] examined violence against women in the text of the novel *Banatu'r-Riyadh* by Raja' As-Shani'i based on the psychoanalytic theory of feminist literary criticism from the perspective of Helene Cixous; (3) Asep Dikdik Sodikin and Siti Chamamah Soeratno [21] examine women's resistance to gender inequality in Okky Madasari's novel *Entrok* based on the theory of feminist literary criticism from the perspective of Helene Cixous.

Based on the previous studies above, this study has similarities and differences. The similarity lies in the research approach used, namely the feminist literary criticism approach from the perspective of Helene Cixous. The difference lies in the study's focus from Helene Cixous's perspective. This study focuses on the study of the forms of gender inequality experienced by the main female character in the novel and the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality based on the perspective of Helene Cixous, which has not been widely discussed far. Another difference lies in the object of research, and this study examines a novel entitled *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram. There is no previous study that discusses the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram. The aims of this research are: (1) to describe the forms of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl*; and (2) to describe the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl*.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes the theory of feminist literary criticism related to gender inequality based on the perspective of Helene Cixous. This research is descriptive-qualitative, as the purpose of this research is to describe the forms of gender inequality and to describe the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality found in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl*. This thing in line with the definition study descriptive-qualitative as one type of research that describes carefully in the form of description or words [22].

The data sources used in this study are primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources used are quotes in novels *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* creation Hassan Salih Baram, while secondary data sources used are related books and journals with study research. Data collection techniques in the study this is read-note technique. The researcher read careful whole novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl*, then took notes on citations of alleged research data.

After the data is collected, this research following analyzed uses analysis descriptive with a data analysis model according to Miles and Huberman [22]; (1) data reduction, the researcher only selects relevant data with the issue of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl*; (2) data presentation, by noting and then grouping quotations according to the forms of gender

inequality and the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl*; and (3) withdrawal conclusion of the research. In the data analysis technique, this research also utilizes heuristic and hermeneutic reading.

3. RESULT

The novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* written by Hassan Salih Baram is a representation of the practice of gender inequality that still occurs today. The novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* is set in a remote village in Sudan which still applies the difference in treatment between men and women, where the position of men is more dominant in various aspects of life. Arafah, the main character in the novel, is a woman who tries to fight for her dreams through education. However, on the way to pursuing her dreams, she goes through various inequalities as a woman, so she is forced to stop getting the education she dreams of. The various inequalities she experienced occurred because of the cultural stigma that was built up in society, placing the position of women under men.

Hassan Salih Baram, a novelist, lives in Sudan, which is also the setting for the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl*. The researcher assumes that the topic raised by the novel's author is based on several events that are urgent to discuss, which often occur around the residence of the novel's author, namely Sudan. Although this assumption is not strong enough after further exploration of Hassan Salih Baram's biography, which is still not widely exposed on internet sites, it is difficult for researchers to trace the author's biography.

The practice of gender inequality experienced by a woman is usually formed by the stigma of the society around her. The view that women occupy an inferior position while men are considered superior gives rise to various forms of gender inequalities or discrimination [23]. Various inequalities or gender discrimination experienced by Arafah's character in the novel entitled *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Baram can be said to be victims of inequality from the stigma of the society where he lives.

Simone de Beauvoir [24] stated that from the time of Plato, women have indeed been positioned as beings who occupy the second class where the idea of men reigns in governing women. The novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* is a picture of a village with a dominating patriarchal culture which then creates inequality between men and women.

The researcher sees that the novel's authors try to write about inequality against women to increase the reader's awareness that gender differences that harm women are still common today. This is in line with Cixous's opinion, which calls for a feminine writing mode to approach writing related to sexual and gender differences as a way of deconstructing the patriarchal

system that hierarchies women in an inferior position [25].

3.1. Forms of Gender Inequality

According to Cixous, in the view of traditional society, women occupy an inferior position or object in contrast to the superior part of men or as subjects. Cixous added that men and women are divided into two sides in the patriarchal system: men are always on the positive side, while women are on the opposing side. Based on this thought, it is the cause of various oppressions that occur against women [26].

Myths and beliefs that are built in social construction position women as inferior to men. They view women as sex, not abilities, opportunities, or universal aspects such as intelligent people, reasoned, and having feelings [27]. In the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl*, the character Arafah is a concrete example of a victim as a result of social construction about women, which then gives rise to various inequalities or discrimination. The forms of gender inequality experienced by the character Arafah in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Forms of Gender Inequality Against Women In the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl*, Use Helene Cixous' Perspective

Gender Inequality	Forms of Gender Inequality
Stereotypes against women	Wife as the satisfaction of sexual desires and objects of pleasure
Violence	Victims of domestic violence
Marginality	Women are restricted, Mom lives in a separate room

Table 1. above shows the forms of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūḥāt fī Al-Waḥl* based on the perspective of Helene Cixous, as explained below.

3.1.1. Stereotypes Against Women

Stereotypes against women are negatively labeled as weak, passive, and obedient, so men tend to treat women as they please [28]. Stereotypes against women occur in the figure of Arafah, as in the following quote.

(١) ينظر إليها من ناحية جنسية فقط ويعتبرها كائن للمتعة متى ما أراد إشباع رغبته الجنسية يأتي إليها (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٣٢)

He only views it from a sexual aspect and considers it an object of pleasure. Whenever he wants to satisfy his sexual desire, he comes to her.

Based on data (1), the author describes the negative labeling of a husband against his wife in the form of the view that the wife's position is only as the satisfaction of sexual desire and an object of pleasure which is a form of inequality against women in the household realm.

The findings of this study state that the form of stereotypes against women in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* is the view of the husband who positions his wife only as the satisfaction of sexual desires and objects of pleasure. This study's findings align with Helene Cixous's theory, which explains that the patriarchal system puts women under the power of men. Men's control over women's bodies is a basic form of oppression of women [29]. The stereotypes inherent in women underlie women's position, which is often considered unimportant.

3.1.2. Violence

Another form of inequality found in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* is violence. Also, in the realm of domestic life, Arafah's character becomes a victim of violence by her husband, as quoted below.

(٢) حتى أصبح يتناول على زوجته بالضرب حين تسأله أين كان بالأمس... وأحيانا يظل يضرب الباب يكاد أن يكسره (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٣٢)

Until he started beating his wife when she asked him where he was yesterday, sometimes, he kept banging on the door, almost breaking it down.

Data (2) shows physical violence in the form of beatings experienced by Arafah from her husband. The author describes how the practice of gender inequality occurs even though the trigger is effortless, namely questions that are reasonable to ask a wife about her husband's whereabouts. These data indirectly represent how women are positioned as weak and do not dare to fight. The findings of this study state that the form of violence against women in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* is the victim of domestic violence.

3.1.3. Marginality

The situation of women in the patriarchal system is considered unimportant figure and a marginal group because society views everything, including women, from the eyes of men [30]. Men and women have the same position. In this case, men and women are 'different but equal' [31]. Society's perception of men who dominate in various aspects of life raises the marginalization of women in obtaining their rights [32]. As found in the following quote.

(٣) ففي القرى لا يحق على الزوجة أن تسأل زوجها أين يذهب ومتى يعود وماذا يفعل (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٢٨)

In the villages, the wife has no right to ask her husband where he went, when he came back, and what he was doing.

Data (3) illustrates how the patriarchal system marginalizes women. Social construction limits women in knowing where their husbands go, when they come back, and what activities he does. It shows us how low the position of women is through the strong view of society regarding women. Forms of gender inequality in the form of marginality are also found in the following quote.

(٤) إنها يزيد في تهميشه لها قام بتعديل المنزل ليتناسب مع ذوق زواره قام ببناء غرفة خارج المنزل في الفناء الخلفي للمنزل لأن والدته لا ترتقي لمستوى السكن بمنزله الأسطوري الجديد الأمر الذي أغضب الأم ولكنها إتزمت الصمت (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٦٠)

His son increased his marginalization against him. He modified the house to suit the tastes of his guests. He built a room outside the house in the backyard because his mother did not live up to the standard of living in his legendary new home, which angered her, but she remained silent.

Data (4) shows how a child marginalizes a mother's position by building a room outside the house because it does not meet her standard of living. This situation clearly shows the unfair treatment of a child towards a mother figure. The weak position of women makes them unable to fight and accept what has been determined. Today we find many similar cases that marginalize the figure of a mother. The findings of this study indicate that the form of marginality against women in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* is that women are limited in various activities and the position of the mother. She lives in a separate room with her child.

3.2. Factors Perpetuating Gender Inequality Practices

Fakih [33] revealed that the practice of gender inequality occurs because of gender-biased thinking, namely a social construction that positions women as traditional figures, weaker than men, and exploits only their physical potential. In the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl*, the researcher found research data showing that the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality are the customary and traditional factors of society and the powerlessness of women in carrying out resistance, as presented in the following table.

Table 2. Factors Perpetuating Gender Inequality Practices In the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* based on Helene Cixous' Perspective

Factors Perpetuating Gender Inequality Practices	Examples of Factors Perpetuating Gender Inequality Practices
Community Customs and Traditions	Women should learn to cook and take care of the family.
Helplessness	Coercion in marriage

Table 2. above shows the forms of gender inequality in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* based on the perspective of Helene Cixous, as explained below.

3.2.1. Community Customs and Traditions

Fakih [34] said that the negative view of women stems from the community's perception of women whose main task is to serve their partners. Then education for women comes second, as the following quote.

(٥) .. عرفة لا تصلح الشيء لا فائدة من دراستها، دعها تتعلم الطبخ والإعتناء بالمنزل ألا تدري عادات أهل القرية إن الفتاة التي لا تجيد الطبخ والخدمة المنزلية غير مرغوب بها للزواج (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ١٨)

Arafa did not fix anything. Her studies were in vain. Let her learn to cook and take care of the house. Don't you know the customs of the village people? A girl who is not good at cooking and taking care of the household is not desirable for marriage.

Data (5) shows how the customs and traditions of the village community control the stigma circulating in the community that women should learn to cook and take care of household affairs for the future rather than receive a formal education, which is considered futile. This negative view of women then hegemony society, especially traditional society. Women are only allowed to get an adequate education, assuming it is a form of love when imprisoning women in powerlessness [35].

Factors for the perpetuation of the practice of gender inequality in the form of customary factors and community traditions are also found in the following quote.

(٦) وفي قرية يسودها الجهل لا ينظرون للمرأة الأرملة والمطلقة سوى إنها كائن للمتعة والعلاقات المحرمة، طفلة الأمس تصبح في سن الزواج حسب عرف وتقاليدها (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٢٦)

In a village where ignorance is rampant, they do not view widowed and divorced women except that she is the object of pleasure and illicit relations. Many children enter the marriage age according to the people's customs and traditions.

Data (6) describes the condition of the village that lacks knowledge, the poor view of the village community towards widowed women, and many children who become victims of early marriage because they uphold the customs and traditions of the community that has been passed down from generation to generation. This community's customary and traditional factors greatly influence the many practices of gender inequality in the village environment.

The findings of this study state that the factor that perpetuates the practice of gender inequality in the form of stereotypes against women in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* is the view of the husband who positions his wife only as the satisfaction of sexual desires and objects of pleasure. This study's findings align with Helene Cixous's theory, which reveals that, generally, traditional society places women in an inferior position to men. Women will become objects, not subjects [12].

3.2.2. Helplessness

The powerlessness of women in carrying out resistance is one of the factors that underlie the perpetuation of the practice of gender inequality in rural communities. The following quote shows the powerlessness of Arafah's character in fighting against various inequalities against her.

(٧) وهي تزهق دموع الحزن وكأنها تقول ماذا فعلت لتعاقبني هكذا ايها القدر؟ ألم يكفيك أنك أخذت مني حلمي في التعليم ووالدي ها أنت الآن تأتيني بثوب جديد لتأخذ مني قريني وأمي وأخواني (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٣٠)

He shed tears of sorrow as if he was saying, What did you do to punish me like this, O destiny? Is it not enough for you to take from me the dream of education and fatherhood? Now you bring me a new life to take from me the village, my mother, and my brothers.

Data (7) shows Arafah's awareness of various inequalities in her life. Nevertheless, because of his helplessness, he can only blame fate. Arafah's dream of education which was dashed due to pressure from marriage and then she was forced to leave the village, shows how one by one, she experienced gender inequality without the courage to refuse. The powerlessness of Arafah's character is also found in the following quote.

(٨) مثل هذه النتيجة لا يمكن أن ترفض مهما كلف الأمر فوافقت الأم على الزواج دون علم إبنتها أو حتى وضع فرصة لتبديء عن رأيها بالأمر (برام، ٢٠١٩، صفحة ٢٦)

She cannot refuse such a marriage in any way. The mother consents to the marriage without the knowledge of her daughter or is even allowed to express her opinion on it.

Data (8) shows the imprisonment of women's rights in determining whom they will marry and when. Arafah was not allowed to express her opinion on the marriage decision that her mother had made. The data shows that gender inequality will continue as long as women do not dare to fight for their rights.

The findings of this study state that the factor that perpetuates the practice of gender inequality in the form of coercion is coercion in marriage. This study's findings align with Helene Cixous's theory, which states that women are often victims of an unfair system because they do not have power [12].

4. CONCLUSION

The novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* by Hassan Salih Barram describes various forms of gender inequality against women and the factors that perpetuate it, which still often occurs, especially in rural communities. The results of this study are (1) the forms of gender inequality found in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* are stereotypes, violence, and marginality; and (2) the factors that perpetuate the practice of gender inequality found in the novel *Tumūhāt fī Al-Waḥl* are the community's customs and traditions and the factor of women's powerlessness in fighting.

Based on Cixous's view, gender inequality can occur because patriarchal society assumes that women are always in an inferior position or object, so various inequalities often befall women. The theme of gender inequality in the novel shows that the author is interested in raising women's problems in his writings to describe and break the practice of gender inequality.

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