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CONTENTS

THIS IS NOT THE WAY WE DO TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM: THE LITERATURE COLLEGE PERCEPTIONS ON ANA KARENINA’S LIFE

Aam Alamsyah, Santosa, Radik Darmawan

.....1

STUDENTS’ DIFFICULTIES AND FACTOR OF USING MEDIA NETFLIX FOR LISTENING LEARNING AT ELEVEN GRADE OF SMAN 9 BANDAR LAMPUNG

Muhammad Alfu Syahrin, Yanuarius Yanu Dharmawan

.....10

EFFECTIVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION THROUGH EMAIL: THE DO’S AND DON’TS

Caecillia Devy Kurniawati

.....25

THE PERFORMANCE OF NEURAL MACHINE TRANSLATION IN THE INDONESIAN TRANSLATION OF THREE FUNDAMENTAL CATHOLIC PRAYERS

Harris Hermansyah Setiajid, Marchelline Berliandika Saksono, Alma Anindita, Diksita Galuh Nirwinastu

.....33

STUDENTS’ LEARNING MOTIVATION IN BLENDED LEARNING IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF UNIVERSITAS BANDAR LAMPUNG

Dewi Retno Sari, Dameria Magdalena Sidabalok

.....42

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE (PERSONIFICATION, METAPHOR, SIMILE) IN SELECTED SONNETS BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Riska Fitriyatul Mar’ati

.....66

THIS IS NOT THE WAY WE DO TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM: THE LITERATURE COLLEGE PERCEPTIONS ON ANA KARENINA'S LIFE

Aam Alamsyah¹, Santosa², Radik Darmawan³

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Technocrat

² Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Technocrat

³ Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Technocrat

Corresponding e-mail: alamsyah_expert@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study analyzed the concept of feminism based on the readers' perceptions, who are the active literature students. The study was conducted in mixed method in order to allow the researchers to employ more instruments and eliciting more varied data. There were 20 students of the literature students, who were recruited purposefully. These students were the ones, who have completed the novel in their previous semester.

The findings indicated that, despite being viewed as an interesting novel, most of the participants tended to perceive that the main character's behavior was not always morally acceptable. In fact, the action in committing adulterous relationship with her illegal partner was considered immoral. Despite supporting the action of the main character in pursuing happiness as the main objective of marriage and partially accepting divorce as one of the potential solutions, most of the participants perceived that adultery is not an acceptable way to solve the problem.

The participants also considered that dialogue between the couple should be done so that they could solve their problem amicably. In sum, most of the participants agreed that feminism is important as it can provide the women with the chance to stand on a par with the other counterparts. However, they believe that feminism will never endorse such betrayal in the name of equality of women's right.

Keywords: *feminism, struggle, adultery*

INTRODUCTION

Novel is long written works that aims to arouse its readers while conveying certain messages. It typifies a depiction of imaginative character in believable settings. Despite being merely fictitious, it is usually fabricated as if it were true. One of the topics commonly offered in the novel is feminism. It generally refers to the idea, which highlights the fate of women, or seeing the life from the women's perspective. Admittedly, women are as important as men. In fact, women are the only important and humane partners for men. Without them, human population will probably stop regenerating and perish.

Up to now, there are numerous literary works portraying the sad facts or the poor stories of females, rather than males. These

stories have also triggered those adopting feminism to continuously fight for the sake of the same treatment between the two sexes. One of the most interesting novels ever read by the readers worldwide is *Anna Karenina*. This novel tells about the struggle of a women to reach her dream which is to stand on a par with the other sex. As the main character, Anna Karenina is described as a very smart and brave woman.

The novel is very interesting as it shows a brave woman who tries very hard to achieve her dream to be a happy person. By reading the novel, the readers can get experience and knowledge on the potential fact experienced by those facing discrimination, particularly in relation to gender. Anna Karenina is the story of one

woman's love and her passionate struggle against the constraints of bourgeois convention. The conflict and the intricacy of Anna Karenina's experience in the novel are things that attract the readers to observe deeper.

Up to now, there have been some studies analyzing Anna Karenina's life. However, many of these studies are conducted qualitatively. In fact, most of the studies tend to focus on the novel itself as the main source of data and the researchers as the main instruments (See e.g., Sianipar, & Jasmaya, 2019).

The study conducted by Sianipar and Jasmaya (2019), for instance, tends to focus on the analyses conducted by the researcher as the main instruments (Frankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012), thus resulting in more potentially subjective findings, rather than objective one. Sianipar and Jasmaya's (2019) finding indicates that there are two important factors affecting Anna's tragedy, namely unfulfilled love and belonging needs.

Unlike the above study, the present study tends to elicit the data from the students who read the novel. The readers' perceptions are more important as they can possibly provide more elaborate and objective data to the researchers; this relinquishes the researchers' potential bias. Based on the above elaboration the problem formulations are arranged below:

- a. What do the students think of the main character's description in the novel?
- b. What do the students think of the concept of feminism described in the novel?
- c. What do the students think of the most suitable solution for the main character's problem?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, novels can be considered as having the same characteristics as science, which are naturally narratives (Shreeve 2006 as cited in Goodyer, 2008, p. 7). The terms narratives can be defined as 'a sequence of events having the beginning, the middle, and the end (Shreeve 2006 as cited in Goodyer, 2008, p. 7). Unlike short story, which is commonly more simplified,

novel is commonly considered as having a lot more complex structure. Abrams (1999) eloquently states that the term novel can be applied to a great variety of writings that share the attribute of being extended works of *fiction* written in prose. As an extended narrative, the novel is different from the other short stories and from the work of middle length called the novelette, thus permitting a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes (p. 190).

Actually, there are various elements that can be discussed as parts of the elements of a novel. For the sake of simplicity, the following section only discusses the most important elements of the novel, such as character, characterization, plot, and point of view.

Character

A character is commonly considered as the most important aspect in a novel. A character is usually narrated or described as human being. However, it is possible that the character described or narrated is an animal or non-human. In some instances, it is also possible that the main characters changes into positive or negative traits based on the story written by the author. The character, which is categorized having positive trait is perceived as protagonist.

On the other hand, the character that changes into the negative one is categorized as antagonist (Delf, & Williams, 2022). Abrams (1999, pp. 32-33) postulates that characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying in the dialogue and from what they do. From the above excerpts, it can be interpreted that character is the figure, which is given a particular moral, intellectual, or other specific qualities narrated and constitute the most important part of the story.

Characterization

Character is different from characterization. The term ‘character’ refers to the main person, object, or idea presented in the novel. The term ‘character’ usually refers to the most important person/object frequently discussed or described in the novel. On the other hand, the term ‘characterization’ refers to the way the character described in the novel (See e.g., Abrams, 1999).

Plot

Plot is the sequence of the story. It is the up and down of the story created by the writer. Rogers (2014, p. 123) classifies plot as the map of the story, which may turn out in the end to be wrong in some respects, or even entirely useless. Despite this possibility, plot is still important to the arrangement of the story. In relation to character, Barnet, Burto, and Cain (2008) simply state that “Character is what people are, and plot is what happens” (p. 209).

Point of view

Al-Alami (2018, p. 911) suggests that point of view refers to the way the author or the writer presents or describes the story. In this case, every writer will usually have a certain way in presenting or describing an object, topic, or a person in the story. In narrative, however, a point of view is the narrator’s position in the description of characters and events. Simpson (2010 as cited in Al-Alami, 2018, p. 912) thinks that point of view embraces the angle of narrating in fiction. Point of view is important because it filters everything in a narrative. It determines the amount of information the narrator shares with the reader. It can also influence the degree to which the reader can identify with the protagonist (Al-Alami, 2016; 2013).

The concept of feminism

The concept of feminism in the present study signifies a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. In simple terms, feminism is the belief in social, political and economic equality of the sexes, and a movement organized around the belief that gender should not be pre-determinant factor shaping a person’s social

identity or socio-political or economic rights (Freedman, 2002 as cited in Anggawasita, 2010, p. 10). According to some scholars (Tong as cited in Perawati, 2018) the concept of feminism is commonly categorized into several kinds, such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, and Marxism feminism.

The concept of perception

As there are numerous definitions on perceptions, the study only adapts the definitions, which is mostly relevant to the finding and the concept of the study. Pepe defined perception as “The way that someone thinks and feels about a company, product, service, etc.” (2016, p. 18). From this explanation, it can be inferred that perception merely focuses on the thinking and the feeling of the bearer. However, it does not cover the behavior of the bearer. Unlike the concept of attitudes which may cover more comprehensive aspects, such as cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Baker, 1992), the present study focuses merely on the aspects of the persons’ thinking or feeling and it does not analyze potential relation between their thinking/feeling with their future actions.

A brief story of the novel

The story tells about the main character Anna, who is actually married to Karenin, falls in love to the young military officer. This adultery finally makes Anna pregnant. Upon knowing the pregnancy, Vronsky urges Anna to leave her husband. However, she decides to stay with him as she wants to stay with her little child. Although, the story focuses on the extra marital affair of Anna and Vronsky, there are also some characters that are described and constitute important characters in supporting and making the story more complex (Andriyani, E., & Eryon, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The present study was a mixture of quantitative and qualitative concept, thus requiring more than one instrument. Mixed method is commonly perceived as a method, which requires the researcher to use multiple instruments in acquiring the

data (Creswell, 2008). In its application, the research method was supported by Likert scale questionnaire, which was administered to the students directly. Further, the limited interviews were conducted in order to support the findings. The interviews and the written questionnaires were conducted in the same day. The administration of questionnaires, which were conducted at the same time, allowed the participants to remember their choices/options given in the questionnaire better.

Participants of the study

The participants of the study were recruited from a class of literature department. The students were those who belong to the active students and have already read the novel. The participants recruited purposefully (Frankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). There were 20 students, who were recruited purposefully prior to the administration of the questionnaire. The students were recruited from one class of active students of literature program. The terms purposeful in the present study was related to the objective of the study, which was to identify perception of the literature students on the novel titled “Anna Karenina” and their appreciation toward this novel.

Instruments of the study

It should be noted that the instruments administered and given to the students were mainly written questionnaires and limited interviews conducted to those giving relevant answers leading to potential findings. The choice of written questionnaire is commonly considered helpful as these tools can possibly be done directly in class or after the learning process in the class is completed. Besides, the potential students’ questions, which commonly emerge before the application of the questionnaires, can be answered by the researcher shortly.

Unlike the use of digital questionnaire which is commonly sent through Gmail, and probably isolates the users/participants when filling in their questionnaires, the use of written questionnaire will generally

allow the participants to fill in their introspective statements more convincingly. Just like the other questionnaires, the options are followed with certain responding statements. The accompanying options consist of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. The ranges of the options indicate the most negative values from the left side of the options to the most positive values to the right side.

Students’ perceptions on the novel Instruments of the study

- a. I think the novel helps improve my English.
- b. I think the novel is interesting.
- c. I think the novel is easy to understand.
- d. I think the theme/topic in the novel is important.

Students’ perceptions on the concept of feminism described in the novel

- a. I think the concept of feminism is important.
- b. I think the concept of feminism is important to be adopted in Indonesia.
- c. I think the concept of feminism is not always relevant to our daily life.
- d. I think I think the concept of feminism is always relevant to Indonesian culture

Students’ perceptions on the most suitable solution on the problem faced by the main character

- a. I think I think having a dialogue or talking to each other is helpful.
- b. I think divorce is possible for them.
- c. I think the woman should choose to be faithful than committing adultery.
- d. I think it is okay to love the other man if you are not happy.
- e. I think the woman needs to adjust before deciding to take further action.

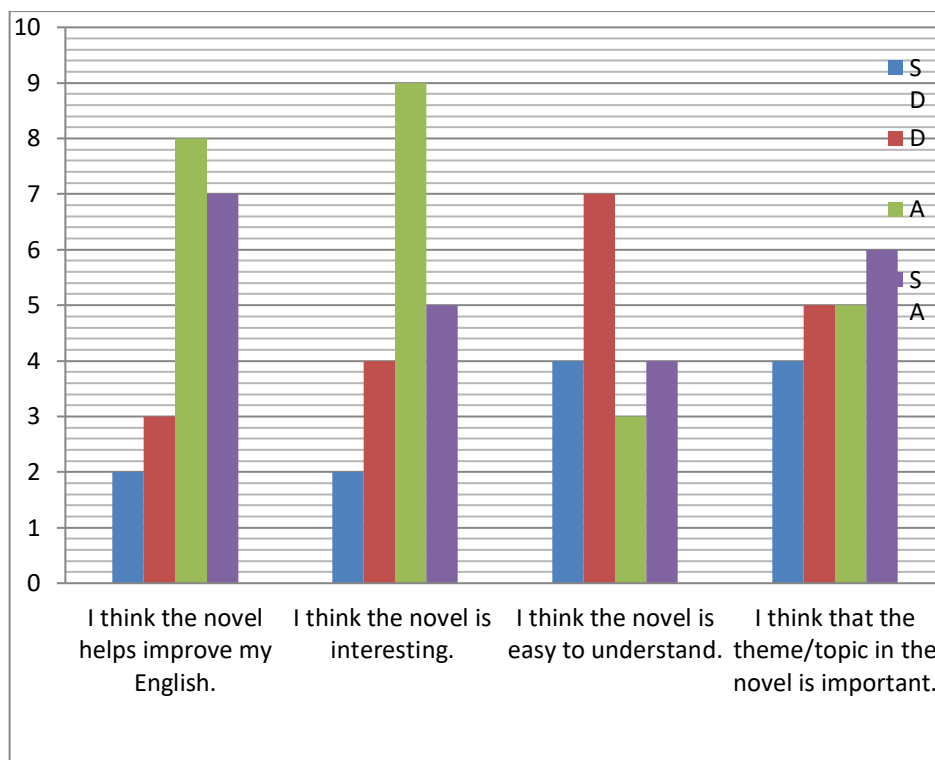
Data collection procedure

- a. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the participants were briefed shortly.
- b. The objective of the briefing was to help participants with the clear purposes of the study.

- c. The participants were gathered in one room and given questionnaires on their own tables.
- d. The participants recruited were the ones who have completed reading the novel titled ‘Anna Karenina’ in the previous semester.
- e. In order to provide a more complete comprehension of the description on ‘Anna Karenina’, the students were also given some time to read the novels. The chance to read the novel during the class was given for approximately one hour.
- f. After reading the novel, the participants were given the written questionnaires to their own tables.
- g. The participants filled in the distributed questionnaires directly. The participants were not allowed to share or discuss their potential answers.
- h. The interviews were shortly conducted after the written questionnaires were tabulated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Students’ perception toward the description of the main character in the novel

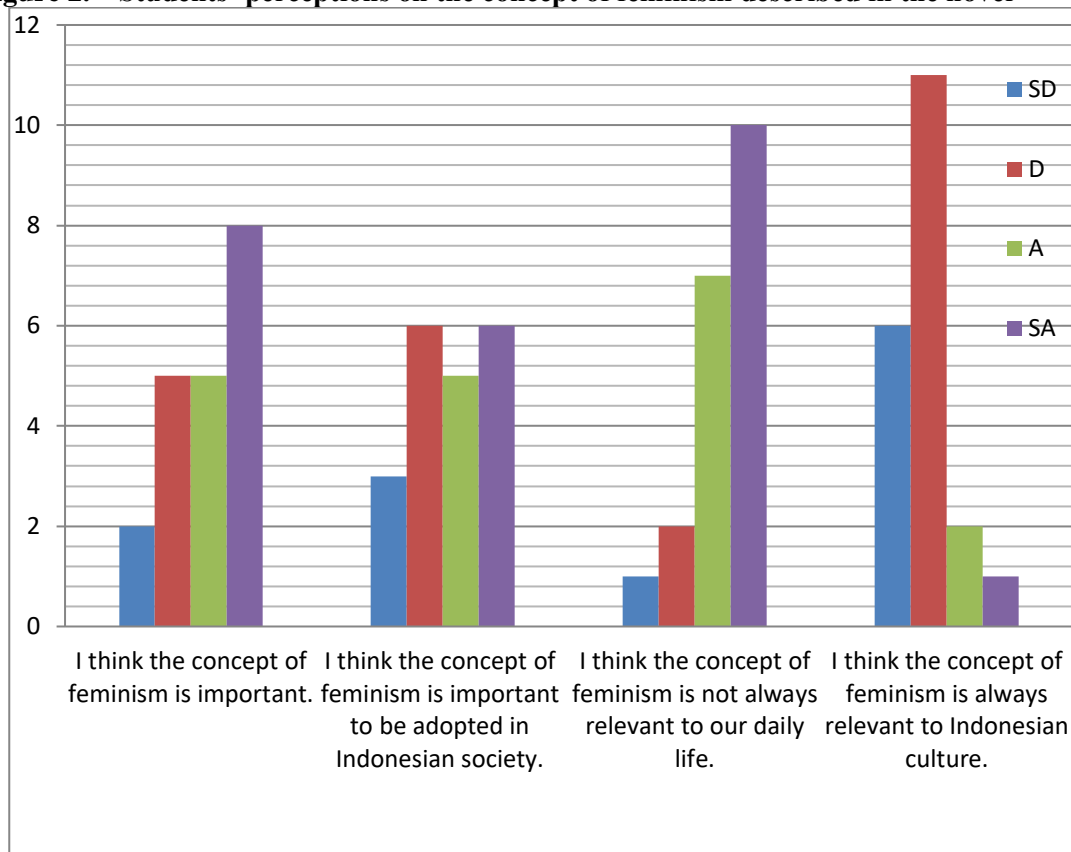
Figure 1. Perceptions toward the description of the main character in the novel



Based on the above data, it could be interpreted that most of the students perceived that the novel was useful in improving their English skill. Besides, they

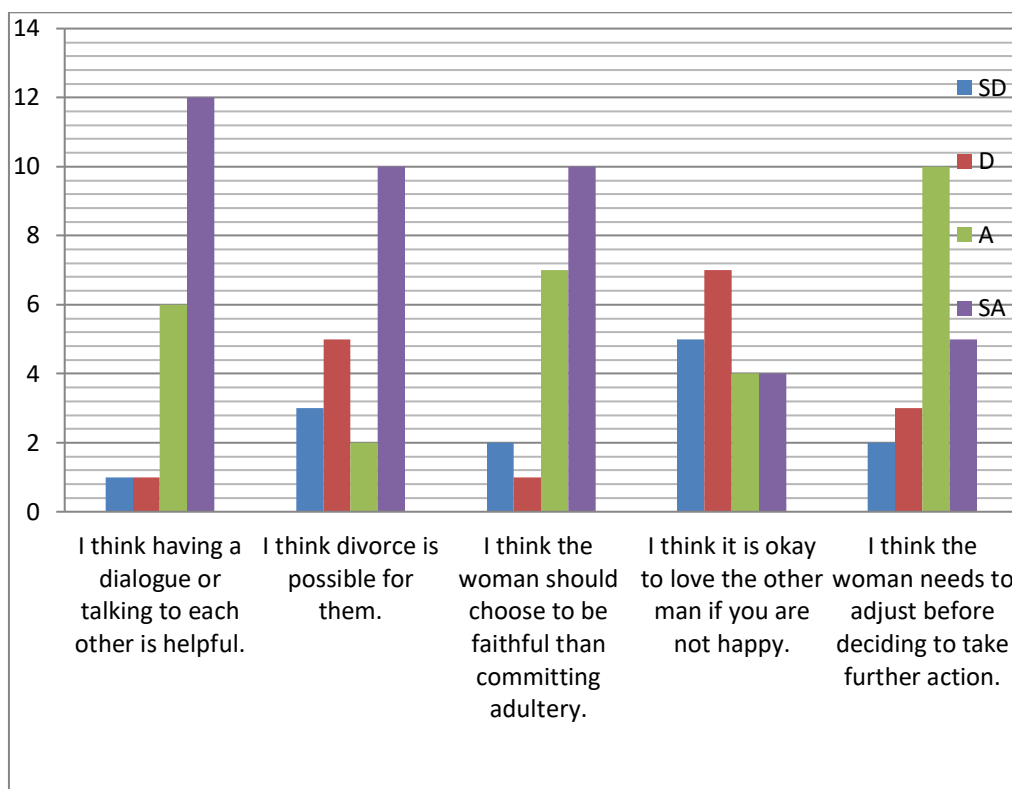
also thought that the novel was interesting for them. They also thought that the themes/the topics of the novel were important to learn.

Figure 2. Students’ perceptions on the concept of feminism described in the novel



Despite indicating positive attitudes toward overall linguistic aspects of the novel, the students also thought that the concept of feminism offered in the novel was not always relevant to their life and cultures.

They also indicated their ambivalent attitudes toward potential application/adoption of feminism values in Indonesia.

Figure 3. Students' perceptions on the ideal solution experienced by the main character

Most of the participants also perceived that dialogue was important to help resolve the conflict amicably. Even though they thought that divorce might be viewed as one acceptable alternative taken by Anna, they strongly considered that Anna needs to adjust with the so called 'paternalistic' environment well before finally deciding to take further action. It means that most of the participants tended to believe that adultery was not an acceptable solution. Despite being in difficult situation, Anna needs to remain faithful, and need not to use her conflict with her husband as a pretext to commit adultery.

A good English reading source but a less morally acceptable literary work

It is interesting to find that most of the participants tend to perceive that the novel is only good for reading literary work and for the sake of improving their English. Further answer can be found that basically the participants tend to perceive that committing adultery is thing to be avoided despite facing the conflict. Despite

justifying the reasons for loving the other spouse when someone is not happy, most of the participant do not agree with the choice committed by the main character.

In fact, some of the participants prefer to solve the problem by divorce rather than committing adultery. Further study should be conducted to the same novel along with the larger participants so that the participants' perceptions toward this novel can be more justified. It is also interesting to note that most of the participants being interviewed tend to focus on the actions, and the conflicts of the main character described in the novel rather than the concept of feminism, which is perceived as being a mere picture of liberal feminism (Septian, 2021).

Some of the participants being interviewed also confirmed that while appreciating the role of women in Indonesian society and positively viewed the concept of feminism as an important means for supporting the equality between genders, the actions committed by Anna does not necessarily

reflect the morally acceptable action in their societies.

A more acceptable solution for a family conflict

Most of the participants also agree with the possible dialogue, which they considered more humane rather than following their carnal desires in the name of the happiness or loneliness. Despite arguing that loving someone is basically reasonable for those wishing to find happiness or even solving the problem through the court, they strongly claimed that these solutions do not justify the affair, which was described as sinful acts committed in the name of the main character's suffering and depression. The emerging participants' perceptions also negate the important rule of patriarchy as the main cause of Anna's adulterous behavior (Adhani, 2018, p. 9).

In fact, most participants tend to perceive that being amicably faithful and adjustable are considered as parts of important steps in determining and solving the main character's life. This finding is relevant to what Webber (2006, p. 2) postulates that environment is very important, thus requiring the people who live within the boundary of certain environment to be faithful to their surrounding norms/cultures in their society.

CONCLUSION

Basically, feminism is a modern school of thought which can be followed and adopted by the women and men. The idea to provide equal right and responsibility in every aspect of life is actually important. The imbalanced quality life among people in numerous countries in the world caused by several potential factors such as wars and unemployment have forced people regardless of their sexes to share their burdens to survive in difficult situations.

Feminism is further adopted as a new way of thinking, which is not always adopted well in certain societies, especially in a culturally bound patriarchal society. The need to partially and wisely adopt the concept is therefore considered important so that the society can still accept this

concept. The story of Anna indicates that the possible problem occurs when Anna starts to pursue another means for searching her happiness and probably not due to the concept offered in feminism. In sum, despite her modern feministic view, the action of finding another satisfaction through illegal means is certainly against the law.

The need to wisely learn from this novel is important as most Indonesian women are mostly traditionalists and tend to consider that feminism is not always relevant to Eastern culture. Further, it should also be noticed with caution that regardless of their paradigm, women should also know their right and responsibility when serving their families.

Further study on this novel can be done in some other aspects such as psychological condition of the character so that the readers or the researchers can possibly find the reasons behind the affair committed in the story. The need to analyze culture when the main character was described is also important so that it can be used as a comparative analysis between the main characters and their society in which the main characters lived. The need to further analyze the concept of feminism is also important since feminism can also incur more debatable arguments, and disagreement, especially those supporting radical feminism or liberal feminism.

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