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WOMEN, Chinese Film, Psychology, and Gender: Overview of Mulan and the Great Wall

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to descriptively explore women in two Chinese films, namely *Mulan* and the *Great Wall*, using the descriptive qualitative research method. The theory used in this study referred to the psychology and gender context. The data collection technique was carried out through library research, while the data analysis technique was carried out through identification, classification, reduction, interpretation, and verification stages. The results found three findings. First, women are not allowed to go to war because war is only for men. Second, women cannot be strong because strength belongs to men. Third, women are demeaned. The findings showed that Chinese society still supports the view that women are the second class in society, and women should be subservient to men and should not be superior to men.

Keywords: *Chinese films, gender, marginalization, psychology, women*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, research on women has been carried out by researchers in various segments [1], [2], [3]. This is due to the following factors. First, women's awareness to do research about women in various contexts. Second, the awareness of the researchers about gender justice in society. Third, the turning point of civilization showed that women have begun to occupy the important positions that have been occupied by men. The factors indicated that the current research on women is indeed a transnational trend.

Some empirical data showed that women are marginalized in a global context. Wang [4] released that marginalized women experienced trauma in their lives. This is due to many complex factors within them. The study conducted illustrated that women experienced injustice in multiple contexts. The injustice against women in these multi-contexts is caused by the ideology of a country that does not support gender equality [5], [6], [7].

In the context of the film, many researchers have conducted researches on Chinese women. First, Wang examined Chinese films concerning Chinese women [8] . Wang pointed out that Chinese films showed women in terms of gender, sexuality, trauma, and migration issues. Second, Farquhar[9] examined Chinese artists in Chinese and Hollywood films. The research showed that Chinese artists were famous in Chinese cinema and in international cinema, namely *Hollywood* films. Third, Yan raised a topic related to the existence of Chinese women writers concerning the context of feminism [9] . Fourth, Mann raised the topic of women writers regarding sex issues [10]. In this context, women were marginalized by men and constructed as the second class.

Based on the phenomenon described, to the researchers' knowledge, there is no research on Chinese films and women that specifically discusses *Mulan* and the *Great Wall*, the films that represented women in the context of war. Therefore, this article aimed to explore the marginalization of women in the Chinese films *Mulan* and the *Great Wall*. The benefits of this research are as follows. First, the results of this research are theoretically expected to give contributions to the field of literature and feminism specifically that focus on the context of film and gender. Second, the results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for researchers in the field of literature, psychology, or researchers in the field of the film regarding the topics of women, gender, and feminism. Third, for further researchers who research on similar topics, the results of this study are expected to be used as a comparison and supporting material about the studies of film related to the context of women, psychology, and gender.

The psychological studies are indeed included in literature because literature is a creative work that raises psychological elements in it[11], [12], [13], [14]. both explicitly and implicitly. If viewed specifically, the study of literary psychology can be included in the psychology of authors, works, and readers [15]. Specifically, this study used the psychology of gender perspective. Referring to the view of Helgeson [16] the psychology of gender is a study that focuses on the psychological context in society's construction that is related to gender, gender inequality, and relations in gender. The view of Burr [17] revealed that the psychology of gender is within the scope of a person and in a wider context, one of which is social psychology. This is because the psychology of gender is not microscopic in scope, but macroscopic in scope. In Burman [18] the psychology of gender studies has intersections with feminist studies, gender studies, and social studies. Therefore, the psychology of gender studies cannot be separated from the context of women, feminism, gender, and society. In a wider context, on a transnational scale, the study of psychology and gender is included in the multicultural area[19], [20] because it involves multiethnic, multiracial, multilingual, and multi social-cultural.

In connection with the explanation of the psychology of gender, this research is more directed to the psychology of gender in films. Therefore, the psychology of gender studies is more focused on female characters who appear in films, either as main characters or as supporting characters. They, the women raise their thoughts, views, and psychological characters concerning gender issues.

2. METHODS

This study used a qualitative method which leads to descriptive data exposure [21] The data were presented descriptively based on the results of the interpretation made by the researcher. In this regard, the researchers act as key instruments who simultaneously processing the data, analyzing the data, and interpreting the research data [22], [23]. The data sources used in this study were the Chinese films, *Mulan* (2020), and the *Great Wall* (2016). Both are films that show Chinese women in the context of war. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies.

The data analysis technique was carried out by the researchers by identifying the data that was related to the psychology of gender contained in women in the films *Mulan* and the *Great Wall*. After identifying the data, the researchers classified the data that was fitted and relevant to the psychology of gender and the marginalization of women. In the next stage, the researchers performed data reduction and filtered the main data that would be used as the selected data to be studied and analyzed. For the data triangulation, the researchers double-checked the theory and methodology repeatedly. In addition, the researchers

conducted discussions with colleagues to reduce the level of subjectivity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The women who are not allowed to go to war

Women are weak figures and are considered the second class in various contexts [24] Therefore, women in society are consciously or unconsciously constructed as human beings who are indeed weak. Moreover, women are also unable to occupy higher positions and/or even higher than men. In addition, the patriarchal culture that remains as a tradition since the Greek era is still embraced by some people today. Hence, women do not have wider rights of movement. Their rights for movement as human beings who have the same dignity, status, and degree as men are limited by the laws and regulations that exist in society.

Concerning the context of equality between women and men, one of them is related to the context of war. In a traditional society that still glorifies men as leaders, men are seen as leaders who can fight wars, while women are the ones who take care of the household [25]. This picture can be seen in the following quote.

00:05:34,249 --> 00:05:39,922

But, chi is for the warriors...

not for girls.

(*Mulan*, 2020)

The picture shows that when participating in a war training, Mulan, who was learning chi, was reprimanded by the commander. Mulan was not allowed to produce chi because she is not a man. Mulan is a girl so she couldn't bring up chi. This shows that women in this context are not allowed to show their abilities and strength in war. Women have to only stay at home and take care of household matters, they cannot join the war because the war is only for men. Men are seen as the people who are considered strong to join the war, while women are considered as people who are not strong in war. This view shows the marginalization of women in the context of war, including women who are considered inadequate to join the war.

3.2. The women who are not allowed to go to war

In eastern society, women are graceful figures. Therefore, the one who shows their strength is considered a woman who is not graceful. They are considered as women who do not know their places because they have violated the cultural construction contained in society. Women in this context must not be mighty. If the strength exceeds the strength of men, it will be considered taboo and will be a disgrace to the family. Referring to the view of Saadawi [26], [27], [28], [29]. women must not appear strong and mighty to beat men because men are the

leaders, while women are the ones being led. This is due to the very strong eastern culture that holds a patriarchal culture. Thus, women have to be the second figures, while men are the main figures in society because men are the leaders.

In the film *Mulan*, Mulan was described as a very agile woman who could climb the tiled roof of a house to catch chickens, which did not show the ideal female figure. In this context, the community viewed that Mulan was not an ideal woman because she did not show her true identity as a woman. Therefore, Mulan was told by her family that she should not forget herself. Women must be able to show their identity as a woman. A woman is not a man who can climb trees, climb roofs, or fight. A good woman is a woman who can take care of herself, be devoted to her husband, and bring honor to the family. This picture can be seen in the following quote.

00:04:01,490 --> 00:04:05,160

You forgot that Mulan is a girl,

not a boy.

00:04:05,619 --> 00:04:08,413

A girl must bring honor

through marriage.

(*Mulan*, 2020)

Based on the quote, it appears that Mulan's character was constructed as a figure who did not show her identity as a woman. She was considered a woman with a male character and it was considered unethical in a patriarchal society that favors men as leaders. Mulan was a strong woman, but her strength brought disaster for her because she was considered a woman who violated ethics. This is a form of marginalization of women in terms of strength. A mighty woman is considered a woman who is bad and has no ethics. Indeed, a strong woman is a woman who can take care of herself so that she is not hurt by others, especially when hurt by men. However, in this context, a patriarchal society still does not like strong women because strong women are considered to be superior to men.

Mulan's figure as a woman could not be a strong woman because her family had forbidden her to become a mighty woman from the smallest scope. In addition, the view of Chinese society, which is stronger in terms of patriarchal culture, also supports the idea. The patriarchal culture supports women to be weak figures because of unethical reasons and because it does not represent a graceful woman figure.

3.3. The women who are demeaned

Women in a patriarchal society are demeaned. Women are considered the lowest class, while men are

the highest class. In this manner, women in patriarchal culture often get bad labels and it all leads to demeaning women. In this context, women get the labels as whores, bitches, or prostitutes. This shows that women in the context of language are also demeaned by language labeling that marginalizes women and lowers women's dignity. In the film the *Great Wall* (2016), the female figure was also described as a person who was demeaned. This picture can be seen in the following quote.

00:12:28,620 --> 00:12:30,520

What is going on here?

00:12:30,640 --> 00:12:32,920

This bitch wants to kill us?

(*Great Wall*, 2016)

Based on the quote, it appears that the female character in the *Great Wall* is called a 'bitch'. The word 'bitch' referred to the woman who represented that she is a lowly figure. In this case, women were marginalized by using language that demeans them. The language of whores, bitches, and prostitutes is mostly used by men and they pronounced it in the form of swearing for women. On the one hand, women are demeaned by the context of the language. On the other hand, women are also demeaned by the meaning of the language itself. As for the *Mulan* (2020), the woman who was humiliated is the figure of Mulan. In this context, the figure of Mulan played a woman who is smart, reliable, and agile. Therefore, women like Mulan are not women who would be liked by society because they will be considered witches if they have abilities that are equal to men and exceed men. This picture can be seen in the following quote.

00:04:30,227 --> 00:04:32,020

It is Mulan that I am worried about.

00:04:33,230 --> 00:04:35,357

They will call her a witch.

(*Great Wall*, 2016)

Based on the quote, it appears that women in Chinese society are demeaned by the mention of witches. Mulan's character, who was considered a smart, reliable, and agile figure, increasingly made her a woman who was despised in society. In a patriarchal society, intelligence and agility are not positive and good things for women. This actually backfired on women because they called the woman a witch.

Regarding women that are labeled as witches, [30] stated that it dehumanizes women. The woman who is called a witch will be marginalized in society, then she

can also be arrested because she is considered a witch, and in the end, she will be killed or hanged because she is considered a dangerous witch. Women who are considered too smart than men will indeed be a problem for themselves because the title of a witch attached to a woman will bring her into danger and result in death.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion explanation, the following conclusions were obtained. First, the Chinese film, which was represented by two films, namely Mulan (2020) and the Great Wall (2016), showed the marginalization of women in the perspective of the psychology of gender. This can be seen in the following segmentations: the women who are not allowed to go to war against the enemy because women are considered weak; the women who cannot be strong and even their strength exceeds the strength of men; and the women who are demeaned by the mention of bitches, witches, or people who are incapable of making decisions. This shows that through the perspective of the psychology of gender, women in Chinese films appeared marginally in terms of mental processes and behavior. Society in a patriarchal context supports the marginalization of women more. Moreover, the supporters of the marginalization of women are the women themselves.

The recommendations of this research are as follows. First, this research is limited-scale research on two films, namely *Mulan* and the *Great Wall*. Therefore, the research results are still not optimal. For this reason, future researchers can optimize research on a larger scale. Therefore, research results can be more optimal. Second, this research article refers to the aspects of psychology and gender. As for further researchers can optimize in other segments, for example, social and gender or culture and gender. Third, this research refers to women and gender, it is hoped that further research can refer to men and gender.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Anas Ahmadi as interpreter of research data and corresponding author
Setya Yuwana Sudikan as reviewer of research data
Galih Wibisono as research data analyst
Kusumarasdyati as proofreader and analyzer of research data
Xiao Renfei as research data analyst
Azizatuz Zahro' as editing research data

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