

# **WOMAN'S BRAVERY AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY IN DANIELLE STEEL'S NOVEL *THE RIGHT TIME***

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## **Abstract**

This research is to analyze the bravery of a woman in facing gender inequality in Danielle Steel's Novel *The Right Time*. Alexandra Winslow is a young woman who has a dream to be a crime thriller story writer. During the journey of realizing her dream as a writer, she should be brave to face discrimination from male crime thriller writers and gender inequality from society. This research is completed by the use of descriptive qualitative method. The data are obtained by quoting related quotations from the story of the novel. Then, the data analysis is conducted by classifying the data related to the research problems of this study. The results show that there are three types of bravery done by the main character: bravery to fight against marginalization, abolish stereotype and thwart violence. Winslow's ability to write is not in doubt. Those who know Winslow closely and have read her writings find Winslow's writing to be extraordinary. Thanking to the support of the people around him, Winslow dares to continue her dream of becoming a famous writer even though she has to hide behind the identity of a man.

**Keywords:** bravery, identity, gender inequality.

## **1. Introduction**

Bravery is one of the keys to success in life. Many times success starts from bravery, such as being brave to realize dream, and to face existing risks. According to Paul (2003: 10), bravery is a character to defend and struggle something which is reputed as the right thing for facing all forms of danger and difficulty. Bravery is a trait that can be possessed by anyone. Generally, bravery is considered only possessed by men. However, women may have bravery, especially in terms of expressing opinions, fighting for equal rights, and getting the same opportunities as men. Gender inequality refers to the imbalance of access to scarce resources in society. Important resources include the power of material goods, services provided by others, prestige, medical care, personal autonomy, opportunities for education and training, and freedom from coercion or physical abuse (Chafetz, 1991: 75). Comparably, woman's bravery against gender inequality can be in the form of being brave to express opinions or protest. Needless to say, the woman's bravery is used to instill equality values such as equality of opportunity, and intellectual equality.

The subject matter of this research is limited on the bravery of the woman facing inequality in the novel and what makes the woman in the novel brave to fight, to abolish and to thwart the gender inequality. These trigger the researchers to analyze in detail the woman's bravery to face inequality and what factors make her brave.

The storyline goes as this. Alexandra Winslow is a girl who has a dream to become a mystery novel writer. However, the dream is hindered by regulations that make Winslow's dream difficult to fulfill. Still, she never gives up fighting for her dreams. Winslow wants to keep getting the opportunity to make her dreams come true and to prove that she is worthy and able to take responsibility for the dreams she has in mind. It should not be easy for Winslow to fight gender inequality to realize her dream. There is a struggle that she has to go through to develop her career as a mystery novel writer because at that time, there is gender discrimination against woman who wants to write mystery stories. People think that only male writers are allowed to write mystery stories because mystery stories are generally attached to the soul of men, not women.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Bravery**

Bravery is a quality of maintaining and fighting for what is considered right by facing all forms of danger, difficulty, pain, and so on. Bravery is a dashing character, never afraid and scares of challenges to maintain an attitude that has been believed to be an obligation and responsibility, even it is not approved or even actively opposed by the environment. In a positive perspective, bravery is aimed at defending the truth. Bravery is an act without hesitation to fight for something that is believed to be true. According to Paul (2003: 10) bravery is a character to defend and struggle something which is reputed as the right thing for facing all forms of danger and difficulty. A brave person is not someone who has no fear, nor is someone who is overcome by fear. It is someone who can control fear and act in harmony with a sense of duty or rational judgment. Furthermore, Budiyono (2007: 81) suggests six things that are called brave: (1) in matters of kindness, he looks lightly on something that is inherently heavy, (2) he is patient with frightening problems, (3) he looks lightly on something that is generally considered heavy by others, so he is willing to die in choosing the most serious main problem, (4) he is not grieving for something he cannot achieve, (5) he is not being upset when he receives various trials, (6) if he is angry and takes revenge, then his anger and retribution are carried out according to the size, object, and time required. Budiyono (2007: 94) then describes the characteristics of the value of courage, namely as follows: thinking carefully before the act, being able to motivate others, always knowing yourself, being humble, and filling the soul and mind with new knowledge in the right direction, acting in real spirit of creating progress, being ready to take risks and being consistent. With the above points, it is concluded that the value of courage is a set of beliefs aimed at something that does not know fear to maintain an attitude and defend the truth which is an obligation and responsibility that must be carried out.

The synonym of bravery is courage. Courage is an emotional strength that involves the desire to achieve personal goals even though there are obstacles, both internal and external in achieving them (Peterson and Seligman, 2004: 199). Furthermore, According to Irons (2003: 5), courage is an act of fighting for something that is considered important and being able to face everything that can get in the way even though there are obstacles because you believe the truth. Courage is meant to be based on truth and formed with consideration, not courage in the sense of being ready to

fight or challenge anyone regardless of being on the right or wrong side; nor is it brave in the sense of indulging lust.

## **2.2 Gender Inequality**

Gender inequality is usually caused by cultural influences by society in daily life such as in terms of education, work, economy, health, and literature. According to (Chafetz, 1991: 75), gender inequality refers to the imbalance of access to scarce resources in society. Important sources include the power of materials, goods, and services provided by others, prestige, medical care, personal autonomy, opportunities for education and training, and freedom from coercion or physical abuse.

Manifestations of gender injustice are well socialized to men and women, resulting in injustice, and in the end, it is believed that gender roles seem to be natural and are finally accepted (Handayani and Sugiarti, 2008: 13-14).

Gender injustice is a system and structure that support both men and women to become victims of this system. Gender differences are the cause of various gender injustices, both for men and especially against women. Gender injustice is manifested in various forms of injustice, namely marginalization or the process of economic impoverishment, subordination, or the perception of insignificance in political decisions, the formation of stereotypes or through negative labeling, violence, longer and more burden of work, and socialization of value ideologies gender roles (Fakih, 2013: 12-13).

### **2.2.1 Causing Factors of Gender Inequality**

Fakih (2013) describes the factors of gender inequality:

#### **a. Marginalization**

The marginalization of women does not only occur in the workplace, but it also occurs in the household, society, or culture, and even the country. Marginalization of women has occurred from the household in the form of discrimination against male and female family members (Fakih, 2013: 14-15).

Marginalization means a process due to sex differences that result in poverty. Many ways can be used to marginalize a person or group. One way is to use gender assumption, such as assuming that women function as additional income earners. When they work outside the home (public sector), they are often judged by this assumption. If this happens, the impoverishment process has actually taken place on the grounds of gender. This marginalization occurs in various aspects, from government policies, economics, beliefs, religious interpretations, traditional beliefs, habits, or even scientific assumptions.

In the economic sector, for example, many women only get jobs that are not very good, both in terms of salaries, job security or status, and employment. Not only that, the marginalization of women also occurs in the household for the position of male and female family members. This is then reinforced by customs and religious interpretations such as the proportion of inheritance rights between men and women where the share of boys is greater than that of girls.

#### **b. Subordination**

Subordination due to gender occurs in all kinds of different forms from place to place and from time to time. There is an assumption that women do not need to go to high school, later they would go to the kitchen too (Fakih, 2013: 15).

Subordination is an assessment or assumption that a role performed by one sex is lower than another. It is known that, the values applied in society, have separated and sorted gender roles, men and women. Women are considered to be responsible and have a role in domestic or reproductive affairs, while men are in public affairs or production. Meanwhile, public roles and domestic roles are given different rewards in society, thus perpetuating gender injustice.

The assumption that women are weak, unable to lead, crybaby, and so on, results in women being second only to men. The assumption that women have the main duty as servants of their husbands results in the subordination of women's education as something normal.

### **c. Stereotypes**

One of the stereotypes comes from a gender perspective, that is, society has the opinion that the main task of women is to serve their husbands. This stereotype has a very natural result if the education of women is given priority (Fakih, 2013: 16).

The stereotype is the giving of a standard image or label/stamp to a person or group based on a false or heretical assumption. Labeling is generally done in two or more relationships and is often used as an excuse to justify an action over one group and another. Labeling also indicates the existence of an imbalanced or unbalanced power relationship that aims to conquer or control other parties.

Labeling in the family is to glorify the existence of boys as heirs, not girls. Boys are considered more entitled than girls. In a family, girls do a lot of house chores while boys do not do the house chores.

Negative labeling can also be done based on gender assumptions. But often negative labeling is assigned to women. For example, women who come home late at night, or until early in the morning, have bad fame. Such women will quickly be labeled as bad and can even be labeled as prostitutes.

### **d. Violence**

Gender violence is caused by the inequality of power in society (Fakih, 2013: 17). Women are the most vulnerable to violence, where it is related to marginalization, subordination, and stereotypes above. Rape, sexual harassment, or robbery are examples of violence that are mostly experienced by women. Gender roles have distinguished the characters of women and men. Women are considered feminine and men are masculine. This character then manifests in psychological characteristics, such as men being considered dashing, strong, brave, and so on; on the other hand, women are considered gentle, weak, obedient, and so on.

Actually, there is nothing wrong with that distinction, however, it turns out that this distinction of character gives rise to acts of violence. Assuming that women are weak, it is interpreted as an excuse to be treated arbitrarily, in the form of acts of violence.

### **e. Double Burden**

Among poor families, a very heavy burden must be brought forth by the women themselves. Moreover, if the woman has to work, then she bears a double workload (Fakih, 2013: 21).

Double burden means the workload received by one gender is more than the that of the other gender. Meanwhile, the duties and responsibilities of women are heavy and

continuous; for example, a woman, apart from serving her husband (sex), is pregnant, giving birth, breastfeeding, and she also has to look after the house. Besides, sometimes she also makes a living (at home), which does not mean eliminating the above duties and responsibilities.

The reproductive role of women is often considered a static and permanent. Although there has been an increase in the number of women working in the public sphere, this has not been accompanied by a reduction of their burden in the domestic sphere. Their effort is to substitute the work for domestic helpers or other female family members. However, the responsibility still rests on the shoulders of women. As a result, they experience multiple burdens.

### **3. Research Method**

The design of this study is by the means of descriptive qualitative method. According to Bogdan and Taylor quoted Moleong (2001: 1), in a book "Qualitative Research Methods" it is stated that qualitative research method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the forms of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. The data of the research are quoted from the script of the novel related to the subject matter concerned. Then, they are analyzed by classifying the respective data based on the theory adopted in this research.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1 To Fight Against Marginalization**

Alexandra Winslow's first experience of marginalization is when she enters a writing competition in elementary school. She writes a short story on six pieces of paper on the genre of crime thriller. Winslow's teacher thinks that an eleven year old girl should not write crime thriller. It is not common for a girl to write creepy story because it might scare other students at school.

"Do you realize how shocking it is for a girl of eleven to write something like that?" Mr. Farber said sternly in accusing tone. "How she can even imagine violence of that nature is something for a psychologist to analyze. Were you aware that she has such morbid thoughts?" he asked Eric reproachfully, who looked stunned for a moment." (Steel, 2017: 41).

The quotation proves that Winslow finds resistance to be a crime thriller writer or mystery story writer. It is said that crime thriller is not a woman's style. In other words, Winslow is limited or bordered in achieving her dream to be a crime thriller or mystery story writer. This makes dauntless to achieve her dream in any way.

"Maybe that's a skill, and not an aberration. Apparently, her father encouraged her and shared his favorite books with her. According to my cousin's husband, who knew him, her father thought she had real talent." "She does, unquestionably." Sister Xavier agreed. "It's just disturbing to think that comes out of her head. She looks so innocent." (Steel, 2017: 90).

The above quotation shows that to be a creepy writer is a matter of skill and to be a crime or creepy story writer needs real talent that might be developed and not be hampered. Winslow becomes more confident with her abilities and she will fight against

marginalization of woman, especially concerning her dream to be a famous crime thriller writer

At the age of nineteen, Winslow ventures to find an agent to publish her first book, entitled "*Blue Steel*". At the beginning, Winslow is brave enough to take steps to fight against the marginalization that exists in society. She then hides her identity as an author of crime thriller as suggested by her father.

"I read *Blue Steel*." "Thank you," Alex said, holding her breath. "It's terrific. I'd like to represent you. It needs some editing; we can talk about that later. I think I can sell your book. I'm going to have it retyped and send it out next week. I'll mail you the agency agreement, and if it meets with your approval, sign it and send me back one copy, and keep the other for yourself. You can have an attorney look at it for you, if you have one." "I do," Alex said, stunned by everything she had just said. "And what name are you going to publish under, if we sell it? Are you still determined to publish under male pseudonym?" "Yes. Alexander Green," she said, off the top of her head." (Steel, 2017: 119).

The quotation shows that Winslow is able to publish her first book because of hard work and abilities. An initial step for Winslow to make her dream comes true, showing that women can also have the soul of crime thrillers or mystery story writers. She convinces herself that she has a great talent to be a female writer.

#### **4.2 To Abolish Stereotype**

Women often get stereotype such as being labeled as a group of people who are weak, whiny, unable to protect themselves and always needing others. Society also thinks that women do not need to have education, dreams, and bright careers because the main task of women is to serve their husbands and their families.

"If I write under my own name, men won't want to read them." She had heard it from her father and believed it. She trusted his word and judgment completely. He hadn't liked female crime writers, and would only buy a thriller written by a man. "It's still a men's club, but not entirely," Bert conceded." (Steel, 2017: 130).

The quotation shows another problem that Winslow must face to achieve her dream. She must be brave enough to abolish the stereotype that women cannot have souls as writers of crime thrillers or mystery writers because women are weak. The readers think that women's writing is boring and will not be as good as men's writing because women cannot imagine the violence that dominates the crime thriller or mystery story genre. The readers do not read crime thriller or mystery stories written by women.

"Beware of writers, my friend," Bert said to her as they finish lunch. "They're a jealous lot, particularly men. They usually don't want women stealing their thunder or their turf. You're a hell of a woman and a hell of a writer. There are going to be a lot of angry men in your life," he predicted." (Steel, 2017: 152).

It shows that men do not want to be rivaled by women. Winslow must dare to face the notion that she is the enemy of male writers. Winslow must prove that women also deserve writing opportunities.

#### **4.3 To Thwart Violence**

Violence is commonly done to women either physically or mentally. It is not uncommon for women to experience verbal abuse, such as harsh words, insults, or other expressions that can lower a woman's self-esteem.

“He had been jealous and had abuse his position to put her down and make her feel terrible about herself. She felt betrayed, justifiably, and when he called her that night to see her, she said she was busy and couldn’t make it. She didn’t care anymore about what he’d said about her writing, but she was irate about what he had tried to do to her, to crush her and shake her confidence in herself.” (Steel, 2017: 149).

It is shown that Scott seems to pretend to like Winslow, but he actually does not like Winslow's writing skills. Scott insults, speaks harshly, and hurts Winslow. Winslow then does not want to have a relationship with Scott anymore, she prefers to save herself from the verbal abuse from Scott.

“All you care about are the grades. You don’t give a damn about the quality of the writing. You won’t get anywhere that way. All you’ll ever write is junk. You’re pathetic,” he said with a look that told her how little he taught to her, or jealous he was, or both. It was shocking to realize that he hated her for the way she wrote, which was a gift.” (Steel, 2017: 150).

Winslow is badly treated by Scott, a teaching assistant at her college. Scott gives her low grade for her writing because he is jealous of Winslow's outstanding writing skills. Scott's jealousy towards Winslow proves that Scott's writing quality is far below Winslow's. It is a violence for her. Knowing that Scott gives her writing a low grade and Winslow's Professor thinks that her writing is excellent and extraordinary makes Winslow feel a sense of humiliation by Scott.

“By the way, how did that book turn out?” “Which one?” He was puzzled for an instant. “*Blue Steel*, by that new guy, Alexander Green.” “It was superb. That’s writing of a caliber you’ll never reach, not like the crape you write.” He wanted to hurt her one last time since she’d dismissed him, for reasons he would never understand or admit to. She was on him now. And he wasn’t throwing bombs at her anymore. He was throwing praise at Alexander Green, whose work he thought was “superb.” “I’ll have to buy the book,” she said with an evil grin. “Don’t bother. You won’t learn anything from it. You’re kiss-ass, Alex, that’s the only reason she gave you the grades. You make me sick.” “Maybe you should read Green’s last chapter again. It might help you finish your book. See ya”

The quotation above explains that Winslow is not a weak woman. She dares to face Scott's insult, though done indirectly. At least she is proud of herself on writing as Alexander Green in return for Scott's insults against her. This is also a form of

Winslow's bravery to thwart violence that women cannot write crime thriller or mystery stories.

## 5. Conclusion

Bravery is the main key to break any obstacles that hamper one's dream to come true. Someone without bravery may be underestimated by other people related to goal or achievement. Women do not always have to be born as servants to their husbands and families, women can also have dreams and make those dreams come true. Based on the results of the analysis, it is proved that a woman could be as good as man; a female writer is as good as a male one, even better. To obtain gender equality in all social aspects, a woman should be brave. Three forms of bravery are shown the main character of the novel: to fight against marginalization, to abolish stereotype and to thwart violence.

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