



**Women's Disempowered Behavior as an Impact of Over-ruling
Government as Reflected in Collins' The Hunger Games**

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Abstract

This study aims at explaining the over-ruling government in society results women's disempowered behavior as reflected in Collins' The Hunger Games which compared to the historical and social condition happening in the American society. This study is a qualitative analysis by applying a Carol Gilligan's approach, especially in care-focused feminism. The data were collected by reading, identifying, interpreting and analyzed using the approach and theories which used in this study by relating to binary opposition, social and historical events and society belief in seeing women in the real life where the author produced the novel. The results of this study were the explanation of how government's rules affect and result women disempowered behavior which begins with the internal conflict that women felt when the way society around them expect women to act and behave in some certain ways which was not parallel with some government's rules. The government's rules indirectly demand women to act and behave in some certain ways outside the way society expect women to act and behave when the rules were made without considering women's position in society.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005, Linda L. Lindsey explains that societies categorize the individuals inside it by creating status and rank them from the highest to the lowest position. This status will influence their role which appears as what society call it 'behavior'. Lindsey states role is something to be "performed according to social norms, shared rules that guide people's behavior in specific situations. Social norms determine the privileges and responsibilities a status possesses." People who are placed in the lower status, says Lindsey, will most likely get through a "social stigma, prejudice, and discrimination." Lindsey closes her statement by writing information saying that the members of the society who usually place in the lower status are women. She writes that "there is no known society in which the status of female is consistently ranked higher than that of male." This explains how women are treated badly in societies and how societies control women's behavior by placing them in a lower status.

The explanation Lindsey has stated above stating how bad the relation between society and women is, how society controls, and discriminates women which result in women's behavior in the society. In simply way, those are the evidences of how powerful society is in influencing and shaping women's behavior. There is a similarity between those explanations with the topic the writer analyzed; the relations between social condition within the society and the influence of them in women's behavior. From those explanations, it can be seen that issue about how society shapes women's behavior is already exist in many certain societies in this world and relevant to be analyzed. Tong (2009) explained that in many certain societies especially in the United States, women are commonly associated and labeled with values, virtues, and traits such as "interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, absence of hierarchy, nature, imminence, process, joy, peace, and life." These labels eventually shape their way of thinking and how to behave in the

society. The impact of how social condition shapes women's way of thinking and how to behave in the society is women tend to get through what so-called 'moral dilemma'. As cited on Widerker (1987), he wrote that "Gilligan (1982) reported that girls and women often construe moral dilemmas as conflicts of responsibilities rather than of rights and seek to resolve those dilemmas in ways that will repair and strengthen webs of relationship." This explains how powerful society shapes women's way of thinking since the labels society addresses to women, according to Widerker (1987) and Griffin (1991), makes them feel afraid of being separated and think that they should not hurt anyone else even though they have to sacrifice their rights and feelings. Griffin (1991) stated that even "everybody wrote stories about people being alone and people being together, men feared intimate situations, while women were afraid of isolation."

Throughout the novel, the main character seems to go through that kind of 'moral dilemma' situation created by social condition around her repeatedly. Many times she faces the situation where she has to choose the right ones or the "society's choice" ones. Society where the main character lives in described interestingly showing how the overruling government affects social condition which creates issues such as poverty, freedom, classism, children warfare, oppressive governments, and propaganda start to arise. Those issues and conditions happened in her society eventually influence the main character's way of thinking and behavior.

Scholars such as Priyanti (2017) focused on how propaganda happens in the novel as the way government control and dominate powerless society. Priyanti believes this is the way the author proves that propaganda can be a tool to dominate and control powerless society covered with revolution issues. Then, Okkiana (2017) notes about the applying of coercive power which is done by powerful group toward the powerless ones and its result which produce social conflicts as reflected in the novel. Okkiana presents the result of having over power

authority and the social conflicts that come with it. Feniwati (2017) states that psychological disorder could affect human's feelings, mind and behavior. Feniwati believes that dystopian environment also can affect women to feel depressed. She concludes that childhood experience, social and cultural condition are the factor of depressed character women. Larsson (2015) mentions the novel has main character that can represent as superkids. Larsson applies gender studies and a feminist approach to discuss the novel in feministic perspective. With all characteristics considered, Katniss Everdeen combines a variety of feminist features showing the typical of third-wave feminism; she comes from poor background and has overlapping traditionally feminine and masculine qualities, which fits the interpretation of gender in third-wave feminism. Oliver (2014) notes in *The Hunger Games* novel, Katniss's character represents what Julia Kristeva calls the "extravagant girl" who wants to have it all and to be the best at everything. Oliver states that Katniss has an ambiguous gender identity, masculine and feminine, paternal and maternal. She also has ambivalent desires. Woloshyn, Taber, and Lane (2013) write the reasons why characters in *The Hunger Games* can be portrayed relative to Connell's gendered discourses of hegemonic masculinity, marginal masculinity, and emphasized femininity. They conclude that while the trilogy could be read as taking a feminist stance with a strong female protagonist, it nonetheless also constrains Katniss in hetero-normative ways. Blokker (2014) writes about how important dystopian society role in shaping and oppressing main character's identity in the novel. Using the socio-political organization to shape and oppress main character's identity, the society forces main characters to follow their rules. Johansson (2013) says that throughout the trilogy, the themes of violence and reality television are combined with how the media is being used to control the population of Panem. In parallel to this, the American media is made visible as there are many similarities in how the media functions in both nations. By placing the media in a

dystopian setting, the implied author criticizes the way violence is being used in contemporary American media to boost viewer rates. The ethical aspect of having humans battle each other for the entertainment of others is also lifted, comparing *The Hunger Games* to the reality television shows of contemporary America. However, those studies from different scholars did not answer the question about the topic in this study. Thus, the objectives of this study are centralized into findings that answered the writer's questions about the explanation how over-ruling government results women's behavior as cited in the novel. Furthermore, the explanation how society also contributes in women's oppression.

METHODS

This study is a qualitative analysis by applying a Carol Gilligan's approach, especially in care-focused feminism. The data were collected by reading, identifying, interpreting and analyzed using the approach and theories which used in this study by relating to binary opposition, social and historical events and society belief in seeing women in the real life where the author produced the novel. The results of this study were the explanation of how government's rules affect and result women behavior which begins with the internal conflict that women felt when the way society around them expect women to act and behave in some certain ways which was not parallel with some government's rules as reflected in Collins' *The Hunger Games*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay (2010) offers binary opposition of its elements of women inferiority and subordinate. It is about first, the Capitol and Districts. The novel tells how strong Capitol is and how weak Districts. Capitol who is the powerful group always oppress people in districts and exploit anything from the districts which results poverty and fear among people in districts. That situation affect

Katniss' behavior. Katniss' behavior from this binary opposition's point of view comes from the needs to feed her family and protect the member of the family from poverty. The second binary is Katniss and Primrose Everdeen. It is told in the novel that Katniss love and protects Prim as much as she can. This situation affect the way she behave and that behavior comes from the love she feels towards her little sister. The third is Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. This binnary oposition shows how weak women arein society's eyes. Although Katniss is a strong woman, when it comes to face a man, she is nothing without him. The binary opposition offers the fact that the strong Katniss also needs a help from men like Peeta to survive and gain love from Capitol. The forth binnary oposition is Katniss Everdeen and Rue. This binnary oposition shows how weak Katniss is as a girl who tend use her feel to do anything. Although she knows she needs to win the game, she still wants to make an ally with Rue who looks like her little siste Prim. Katniss insists that she wants to protect Rue eventhough she knows only one person who can win the game. The last binnary oposition is between Capitol and Tributes. This binnary oposition offers the fact that although many tributes who join the hunger games are strong people physicaly, they are still weak against Capitol.

The Hunger Games (2008) described the effects of government's rules toward its society which causes bad things and the losses for its society. The author tries to show that not all government's rules and policies have a good impact and solve problems. Therefore, many of them create new problems instead which become social problems in its society.

(Collins. 2008) made an example from those issue by writing the relation between Capitol and districts. Capitol control all aspects in districts including the economy, social, culture, education, and human rights' aspects. Those elements create social problems in districts such as poverty, unemployment, fear, crime, illegal activities and wars which eventually make people in districts afraid and hate toward Capitol at the same time. Capitol do

those things to control districts and show that Capitol is the most powerful one and no one can beat them including districts.

One of the rule or policy Capitols create to frighten districts is by creating the television show named The Hunger Games. The Hunger Games is an annual television show where each districts must send their two representatives to join the game to kill each other until the only one left. Those two reprentatives must be children around twelve until seventeen years old. For Capitol, The Hunger Games is the ultimate and best choice the they have to control districts but for districts, it is a cruel way to rule a country and make people miserable especialy the ones whose children are selected to be a representative to join The Hunger Games and die. From The Hunger Games, it can be seen that sometimes the policy government create is creating another new social problem although in government's point of view that policy is the best choice they have to solve problems and to show districts how powerful they are. While (Collins. 2008) gave an example about how government's rules can create social problems in society by creating the relation between Capitol and districts, The similar things also happen in United States government when their policies are sometimes creating another new social problems in their society instead.

U.S. government policy in health care system contributes problems in american society; limited access, especially for people who are poor or uninsured; fragmentation, gaps, and duplication of care; inaccessibility of medical records; and misalignment of physician and patient incestives (Institute of Medicine, 2010). Cigarette smoking, second-hand cigarettes, bans on indoor smoking, advertising regulations are influenced by government policy as well (Garrett. 2011). The policies U.S. made also affect certain important unhealthy or injurious behaviours issues which are more common in the United States than other countries, including high-calories intake, drinking and driving, binge drinking, prescription and illicit drug abuse, high-risk sex, and firearms ownership. Those are affected not only by personal chocies, but also

by decisions made by manufactures, builders, lawmakers, regulatory agencies that control product safety, road design, building codes, traffic congestion, law enforcement of safety regulations (the use of seatbelts, blood alcohol testing), the decisions by the food industry and restaurants about the content and where to locate supermarket chains and fast food outlets, fire hazards, and the availability of firearms which are all based on the policies U.S created. U.S policies that affect public health, education, and economy sectors shaped American society which organize social relations, rank people into social hierarchies, assign worth, structure employment and the labor market, and address working conditions (Bambra and Beckfield. 2012).

Collins. (2008) described how society influenced women's behavior by creating Katniss' character. In the novel, she must be the head of the family which requires her to be strong, powerful and braves. Katniss' character also described as the one who hates Capitol for creating rules which make districts suffer. Although she is powerful enough to be the head of the family and brave to speak about her hatred toward Capitol, she never speaks about it in home or public. she pretends as if she is a normal young girl who knows nothing. She does all of it because she knows that it is how her society expect her to behave.

Collins creates Katniss' character in such way without no reason. She tries to shows the belief western societies have that women are more nurturing than men. Therefore, the traditional view of the feminine gender role prescribes that women should behave in ways that are nurturing. One way that a woman might engage in the traditional feminine gender role would be to nurture her family by working full-time within the home rather than taking employment outside of the home. Men, on the other hand, are presumed by traditional views of gender roles to be leaders. The traditional view of the masculine gender role, therefore, suggests that men should be the heads of their households by providing financially for the family and

making important family decisions (Blackstone. 2003:337).

Women possess lower levels of status and power than men do, particularly power based on expertise or legitimate authority (Carli. 1999). Because men and women typically fill different roles, with women more often occupying caretaking, domestic, and lower status occupational roles and men more often occupying higher status occupational roles, people expect men to behave more agentically than women and women to behave more communally than men (Eagly & Johannesen-schmidt. 2003). Moreover, the stereotypes about men and women lead to greater scrutiny of women's than men's leadership behaviors (Carlin. 2001).

Blackstone (2003:338) explained that a traditional gender role orientation emphasizes differences between men and women and assumes that each sex has a natural affinity to particular behaviors. Those who maintain a traditional gender role orientation are likely to be influenced by the rules and rituals of the generations that came before them, by their parents and grandparents. Individuals with nontraditional gender role orientations are more likely to believe that an individual's behavior is not or should not be determined solely by her sex. although Katniss' character might be influenced by society in some parts, her character still shows the typical women's behavior which believe that individual's behavior is not determined solely by her sex. Therefore, the writer believed the ambiguity Katniss's character has shown is the result of moral dilemma she has been through. Gilligan (1987:529) reported that girls and women usually get through what so called Moral Dilemmas as "conflicts of responsibilities rather than of rights and seek to resolve those dilemmas in ways that will repair and strengthen webs of relationship." Moreover she claimed that girls and women are more likely to act on their feelings of love and compassion for particular individuals.

Through Katniss' character, the author of the novel tries to show that government's

rules can affect women's behavior. From Katniss' character the author explained the way government's rules affect women's behavior by producing social problems in society. Government's rules or policies sometimes did not go well and created new social problems and influenced women's behavior. In simply way, women's behavior depends on social condition in society. When society has social problems, it will affect the way women behave as well.

(Collins. 2008) also described in the novel how Katniss hates Capitol from many aspects. She hates Capitol for letting districts starved. She hates Capitol for creating television show like *The Hunger Games* which makes parents lose their children. She hates Capitol for being rich while districts are very poor. Her hatred toward Capitol can be explained as the result of how bad Capitol's rules work. In Capitol point of view, creating *The Hunger Games* is the only way to control districts, commanding districts to provide everything people in Capitol need is the way to keep people in Capitol safe. Although those decision are made for reasons, those decision also results social problem in districts. In the book, it is told that many people in districts are very afraid of Capitol. They know how strong and powerful Capitol is. They know what Capitol is capable of. This is Capitol's intention for creating such rules like producing *The Hunger Games*, create poverty in districts, ruling districts cruelly; to create fear among people in districts. By doing so Capitol wish districts will be able to be controlled easier. Those fear people in districts feel also affect to the way Katniss behave as well. She knows her mother and people in district twelve are scared with Capitol, so she never mentions anything about Capitol when she is home and in public appearance. She pretends as if she does not care about Capitol and anything they have done towards districts. She pretends as if she is a normal teenage girl whose job is going to school and taking care for family.

The writer argues that from Katniss' character, the author tries to show that by

creating social problems in society, government's rules will affect women's behavior as well. This statement can be supported from the fact that according to Bambra and Beckfield (2012), U.S policies that affect public health, education, and economy sectors shaped american society which organize social relations, rank people into social hierarchies, assign worth, structure employment and the labor market, and address working conditions. The effect from social hierarchies, structure employment and address working conditions which are the result of U.S policies will eventually affect women's condition in workplace. In the workplace, men and women are often expected to perform different tasks and occupy different roles based on their sex (Kanter 1977). Even in the early twenty-first century, many corporations operate from a perspective that favors traditional beliefs about gender roles by, for example, offering parental leave benefits only to mothers and denying such benefits to fathers. In addition, because the traditional perspective toward gender roles remains predominant in many corporations, the positions that women and men hold within corporations are often segregated by sex. Women are more likely to be expected to work as secretaries, and men are more likely to be expected to work as managers and executives. Also, men are presumed to be more ambitious and task-oriented in their work, while women are presumed to be more interested in and concerned about their relationships with others at work (Blackstone. 2003)

(McGinn. 2017) stated that people in low-power positions, whether due to gender or class, tend to exhibit other-oriented rather than self-oriented behavior. Women's experiences at work and at home are shaped by social class. She also argued that social stratification, together with gender ideologies and work-family constraints, shape women's employment beliefs and behavior. Those explanation can be concluded that although it is not government's intention to shape and affect women's behavior, they will eventually affect women's behavior by

creating rules or policies which lead to new social problems in society.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that the way women behave can be affected by government's rules and the way society around them see women. When society around the woman expect women to behave in a certain labels which are not parallel with some government's rules that unconsciously demands women to do or act outside the labels society give to them, women will get through what so-called moral dilemma where they tend to get confused and dilemma whether to choose to as the government's rules demand them to or as what the society expect them to. Those situation will indirectly result the way they behave.

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