



WOMAN STEREOTYPE IN THE NOVEL *CONVENIENCE STORE WOMAN* BY SAYAKA MURATA (2016)

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Abstract

This article discusses a novel entitled *Convenience Store Woman* (2016) by Sayaka Murata. The issue raised is about the stereotype of women who are influenced by patriarchal culture and gender discrimination in society. This article aims to explain the forms of woman stereotypes and also show how woman characters can break these stereotypes. The descriptive qualitative method was used in this research, which applied Simone De Beauvoir's theory of existentialist feminism and Mansour Fakih's concept of gender discrimination about the relationship with the concept of gender that leads to discrimination. The results of the analysis show that the stereotype of women consists of three forms, namely women as mothers, women as incompetent people, women as sex objects.

Key words: *stereotypes, gender discrimination, gender, patriarchal culture, feminism.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The term stereotype in society is not new thing, but there are still many people who do not understand the form of the stereotype and unconsciously they have given the stereotype to others. Stereotypes will always be a part of life and everyone will never be separated from the stereotypes given by the people around us. According to Narwoko & Suyanto (2009:322), stereotype is the labeling of certain parties or groups which always results in harming other parties and causing injustice. Based on the understanding of stereotypes explains what stereotypes look like in people's social life. Stereotypes are a form of judging someone without considering the merits of the value. this stereotype is often attached to women. This proves that women are still shackled by the existence of prejudice and negative labeling, thus giving rise to gender inequality. Patriarchal culture also influences the formation of women's stereotypes. According Walby in "*fifty key concept in gender studies*" by Jane Pilcher & Imelda Whelehan (2004), state that patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men

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dominate, oppress and exploit women. Walby identifies six structures of patriarchy (household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, culture) that together are argued to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of women's subordination. Patriarchal culture also affects women's perceptions, according to those who adhere to patriarchal culture, women must follow what is considered appropriate by society and must not deviate from rules or norms.

This is in accordance with the opinion O'Brien in book "*Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*" (2014, p. 379) stated that women's stereotypes can be divided into three. Firstly, women are stereotyped as mothers who provide and support others, vulnerable, dependent, and weak. Secondly, women are stereotyped as childlike who are immature and incompetent people. This view causes some people to neglect women's intelligence and competence. Thirdly, women are considered sex objects.

The novel analyzed in this research is entitled "*Convenience Store Woman*" by Sayaka Murata, a novelist from Japan. Sayaka Murata has written many best-selling books, one of which is "*convenience store woman*", which the researcher will examine. According to the author of this novel, her inspiration made this novel in the background while she was working as an employee at a convenience store. The book was written in 2016 and translated into English in 2018, has won various awards such as the Akutagawa Prize, is a best-selling novel, and received positive reviews from leading critics. In this study, the researcher focuses on analyzing the story and proving only the theory used in this research. The aim of this research is that the researcher wants to explain the form of stereotypes women and their effects on women. The research intends to present what form of woman stereotypes are given to the characters in this novel. The researcher want to reveal how the woman characters in this novel are trying to break the stigma or stereotypes attached to her in the novel "*convenience store woman*".

Based on the explanation above, the researcher took an initiative to conduct research using a feminist approach. This approach is deemed appropriate because in the story plots, setting and conflict, it explains the development of feminist signs and the way main character behave in society. In the novel "*Convenience Store Woman*" by Sayaka Murata, the researcher focuses on the discussion of stereotypes given to the character and to see how to break the stereotype in the novel "*Convenience Store Woman*".

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative applying Simone De Beauvoir's theory of existentialist feminism and the concept of gender discrimination by Mansour Fakih. The research is done by collecting the data and information related to the novel, classifying the data used for the research, analyzing and giving interpretation about the data and the last is finding the result of the analysis.

This study poses at two primary research questions : 1. What are woman stereotypes reflected in Novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata

(2016) 2. How does woman character break the stereotype in Novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata (2016)

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding (tentative)

The novel describes Keiko Furukura as cheerful. Keiko is energetic, kind, and polite, but she can't understand human emotions or thoughts, so she tries to adapt to her environment. In the end, the differences between Keiko and society give her a negative label because she can't meet society's expectations. The convenience store woman novel's stereotypes of women are tied to patriarchal culture and gender inequality. Many of the preconceptions women adopt stem from society's perspectives. This study poses a primary question: What are woman stereotypes reflected in Novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata (2016) First discussion is describing woman stereotypes reflected in the novel ; second discussion is showing woman stereotype reflected in the novel.

Referring to the opinion of the expert O'Brien (2009, p. 379) in the book "*Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*" states that the stereotype of women can be divided into three. First, women are stereotyped as mothers who give and support others, are vulnerable, dependent, and weak. Second, women are stereotyped as childish people who are immature and incompetent. This view causes some people to ignore the intelligence and competence of women. Third, women are considered as sex objects, and below are some forms of woman stereotypes. This part of the discussion has a purpose to find out the woman stereotypes that happen in the novel *convenience store woman* by Sayaka Murata (2016)

1. Woman as mother

According to 'Abdul Munfim Sayyid Hasan (1985: 65) mother is a woman who has gone through the process of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and raising her child with love and tenderness. Based on this understanding, It should be seen that being a mother is not an easy thing, and sometimes all women are not destined to be a mother for some reason such medical reason or not ready to have children .But the view of people in general says that every woman who is married will definitely become a mother and have children. Women are stereotyped as mothers and are described as vulnerable, dependent, and weak. Mothers are also described as having a gentle attitude and very fond of their children. A mother is also stereotyped as only being responsible for taking care of household needs.

After Miho married, she and her husband bought a secondhand house where she now often holds little parties with her friends. There are times when I feel like it's too much bother, knowing I have to work the next day. But it's the only connection I have to the world outside the convenience store and a precious opportunity to mingle with "normal" women my age, so I usually accept her invitations. Today there was Yukari and her young child, and

Satsuki, who was married but still childless, and we had all brought cakes along to have with tea.(p.32)

In the data above, it can be seen that a normal woman who according to Keiko is her friend, Miho. she has become a good wife and mother for her children, married and then plans to buy a house for her husband and children to live in. Keiko felt a precious opportunity to be able to hang out with a "normal" woman of the same age as her because with it she can understand what normal women around her are like.

“Everyone should bring their husbands and kids too. Let’s do another barbecue!”

“Yay! That’s a fab idea. It’d be great if all our kids can make friends with each other.”

“Yeah, good thinking!”

Satsuki sounded a bit envious, so Yukari prompted her. “You are planning on having kids, aren’t you, Satsuki?” “Sure, I want them. I’ve been relying on nature to take its course, but I suppose I should start being a bit more proactive about conceiving.”

“Oh yes,” Miho said. “The timing is perfect now.” (p.35)

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the picture of women who are married then have children, like mothers in general. They will gather together with their respective families to show a normal life. This also sometimes makes some women jealous as shown by a character named Satsuki who feels jealous because all of her friends already have children while she does not have children and this is the same as in the real world, women who are married but do not have children will feel uncomfortable. Sometimes things like that arise because of pressure such as questioning when to have children from family and society or byself. This phenomenon is in accordance with Simon de Beauvoir's statement in the book *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir said "woman is just uterus." That is, the fate of women is determined by this anatomy and when facing the natural order it will be difficult to change due to patriarchal culture, all efforts that try to challenge women's unfair treatment of gender discrimination is such a difficult thing to do

I nodded. “I suppose it is unreasonable to feel that way. If you can get them to stop complaining just by getting married, then that would be the simple and sensible thing to do, wouldn’t it?”

“Don’t make it sound so easy! We men have it much harder than women, you know. If you’re not yet a fully edged member of society, then it’s get a job, and if you’ve got a job, it’s earn more money, and if you earn more money, it’s get married and have ospring. Society is continually judging us. Don’t lump me together with women. You lot have a cushy time of it,” he said

sullenly. “Well then, marriage won’t solve anything then, will it? Isn’t it pointless?” I said. But Shiraha didn’t answer and carried on talking heatedly.

“I read history books trying to find out when society went so wrong. But however far back I went, a hundred years, two hundred years, a thousand years, it was always wrong. Even if you go back as far as the Stone Age!” (p.91-92)

Based on the quote above, it can be seen that Shiranha and Keiko had a conflict of thoughts on marriage issues, they both have different views on marriage issues. Here it is seen that Keiko says marriage does not solve all the problems of one's life, it is different with Shiranha who compares herself to Keiko by gender, Shiranha says society will continue to judge someone who is considered not to be a full member of society, it can be seen from Shiranha's words that gender does discriminatory against Keiko. This can be related to the views of Simone de Beauvoir, According to Beauvoir, women should be given the same freedom as the freedom given to men to determine their own lives. So for Beauvoir the institution of marriage is an institution that takes women's freedom, where women voluntarily exchange their freedom for tranquility, stability, satisfaction in the household, and the idea that marriage is not the only way to solve problems.

2. Woman as immature and incompetence person

Women are always stereotyped as immature and incompetent in doing things, women are also thought to have a childish attitude, women are also considered to have very sensitive feelings that make women look so weak and so vulnerable. The way of thinking between women and men is also different, women rely more on feelings than logic, in contrast to men who prioritize logic over feelings. Because this difference in thinking makes women look immature in making decisions because they are more concerned with feelings than logical thinking.

When I was in my early twenties it wasn’t unusual to be a freeter, so I didn’t really need to make excuses. But subsequently everyone started hooking up with society, either through employment or marriage, and I was the only one who hadn’t done either. (p.37)

Freeter according to wikipedia is a Japanese expression for people who do not have full-time jobs or are unemployed, excluding housewives and students, freeter is also described as semi-intrusive. In the quote above Keiko is a freeter and it has been done since the age of 18, but in general people will stop doing that and will try to find a more promised job or get married, but in contrast to Keiko, she is still a freeter for 18 years and no idea of changing jobs or getting married. This makes Keiko look incompetent at work because she just does the same job for years without any real purpose.

“Nobody in the store has ever talked to me like that before.”
“That’s because you’re just too far out there. A thirty-six-year-old, single convenience store worker, probably a virgin at that, zealously working every day, shouting at the top of her lungs, full of energy. Yet showing no signs of looking for a proper job. You’re a foreign object. It’s just nobody bothered to tell you because they find you too freaky. They’ve been saying it behind (p.125-126)

In the quote above shiranha tries to explain to keiko that there will be people who will talk about a person's shortcomings, shiranha says these people will talk about him and keiko who live under the same roof to meet people's views and convince people that they are people normal as usual, shiranha thought those people would talk about how immature keiko thought of allowing a man to live with her without any clear bond, but keiko naively convinced no one to talk like that, shiranha explained all that not talked about in front of him because Keiko is so far away, and they all actually think Keiko is an immature and weird person.

3. Woman as object sex

Arivia (2003) states that most women do not realize that women's bodies belong to women, so they perceive their bodies as "something" that is very foreign to themselves. the construction of female sexuality includes (1) the body, (2) desire, and (3) sexual relations. According Beauvoir said that as a sexual object, woman are expected to fulfill the beauty standard that requires women’s bodies to be slender and not loaded with fat, muscular, supple and strong. The objectification of women’s bodies has purpose to satisfy men pleasure (Beauvoir, 1989, p 262). And based on the data found there are those who refer to women only being made as sex objects by men, sometimes referring to verbal harassment of women and also discussing sexual orientation which is sometimes considered taboo for some people,

“You know, I’ve got quite a few gay friends,” Miho intervened,
“So I kind of get it. These days you can also be asexual or whatever you like.” “Oh yes, I heard that’s on the increase. Like there are young people who just aren’t interested in it at all.” “I saw a program on TV about that. It’s apparently really hard for them to come out too.”(p38)

Based on the quote above, it also shows an overview of the assessments made by other people towards people who have different sexual orientations, Miho said that people who have sexual orientations such as gay and asexual are very difficult to open up about it, because as we know that attraction different sex is called a disease or an aberration. Asexuality is the lack of sexual attraction to other people or the absence of interest in or desire for sexual activity. In this case, Keiko's friends have a prejudice that Keiko is asexual because there is no desire to have a partner or get married.

“You need to wake up, Furukura. To put it bluntly, you’re the lowest of the low. Your womb is probably too old to be of any use, and you don’t even have the looks to serve as a means to satisfy carnal desire. But then neither are you earning money like a man. Far from it, you’re only working part-time without even a proper job. Frankly speaking, you’re just a burden on the village, the dregs of society.” “I see. But I’m not capable of working anywhere else except the convenience store. I did give it a go, but it turns out the convenience store worker mask is the only one I’m t to wear. So if people don’t accept that, I have no idea what I can do about it.” “That’s why contemporary society is dysfunctional. They might mumble nice things about diversity of lifestyles and whatnot, but in the end nothing has changed since prehistoric times. With the birthrate in decline, society is regressing rapidly to the Stone Age, and it’s going beyond life just being uncomfortable. Society has reached the stage in which not being of any use to the village means being condemned just for existing.” (p.108)

In the quote above, the social context that emerges is Shiraha As a man, he criticizes if humans have crossed the age limit which should only add to the results of the hard work they did when they were young, unlike Keiko who is still looking for a purpose in life, has not been successful. , not married, do not have a job. shiranha thinks she has failed in society and socializing and this is what she sees in Keiko. Shiraha's words are very offensive to women, she looks very demeaning to Keiko as a woman by saying that Keiko's womb and appearance will not be able to satisfy men, and based on those words it can be seen that there are still those who judge women to be sex objects and all these words- the words spoken by shiranha so discriminated against Keiko as a middle-aged woman who was unmarried and had only worked part time all her life. This is closely related to Beauvoir's statement about feminist existential theory which says that as culture develops, men assume that they can dominate women by creating myths about women. Men are always looking for the ideal woman who will make him complete, and this is what Shiranha does to Keiko by using words that tend to discriminate.

“Back at the store, I was angling for marriage, sure, but you’re far from being my ideal marriage partner, Furukura. You don’t earn much working in a convenience store, which means I won’t be able to start my own business, and I won’t even be able to satisfy my sexual needs with someone like you.” (p109)

From the quote above, it can be seen that Shiranha's words are very condescending to a keiko, he says he wants to get married but thinks that Keiko is not an ideal partner for him. he said that keiko wouldn't even be able to satisfy his own sexual needs. It can be seen that men like Shiranha only use Keiko to fulfill all his needs but look down on Keiko because he thinks Keiko is unattractive to

him and can't satisfy him in terms of sexuality. This statement is also similar to Simone de Beauvoir's view, Men are always looking for the ideal woman who will make him complete, Beauvoir shows that their works reflect the ideal woman. and what men worship are women who sacrificed themselves to save men. This is what Shiranha does, he only uses Keiko as a support for his life, and it saves himself and Keiko from the bad views of society, even though it is actually Keiko who is burdened.

“If I go out, my life will be violated again. When you’re a man, it’s all ‘go to work’ and ‘get married.’ And once you’re married, then it’s ‘earn more’ and ‘have children’! You’re a slave to the village. Society orders you to work your whole life. Even my testicles are the property of the village! Just by having no sexual experience they treat you as though you’re wasting your semen.”

“I can see how stressful that would be.”

“Your uterus belongs to the village too, you know. The only reason the villagers aren’t paying it any attention is because it’s useless. I want to spend my whole life doing nothing. For my whole life, until I die, I want to just breathe without anyone interfering in my life. That’s all I wish for,” he nished, holding his palms together as if in supplication. (p.110-111)

Based on the quote above, Shiranha's words to Keiko are as if to open up Keiko's thoughts that her life will always be viewed badly by society, he is like comparing the burden he bears as a man. Shiranha says that life is as if it is a village slave, which is all governed by the views of the society and also asserts to Keiko by saying that her uterus belongs to the village showing that all limbs of a woman's body depend on society's views. From this quote, it can also be seen that there is gender inequality between women and men due to people's views.

“Everyone has to toe the line. Why am I still doing casual work even though I’m in my midthirties? Why haven’t I ever had a girlfriend? The assholes don’t even bat an eyelid when they ask whether I’ve ever had sex or not, and then they laugh and tell me not to include prostitutes in the count. I don’t make trouble for anyone, but they all seem to think nothing of raping me just because I’m in the minority.” (p89-90)

Based on the quote above, shiranha told keiko that everyone should follow the line, following the line here means that everything must conform to the usual in society such as having a good job, having a partner, getting married and then having children. And it won't be a problem for him because he's in the minority or doesn't count.

“You’re still in a dead-end job at your age, and nobody’s going to marry an old maid like you now. You’re like secondhand goods.

Even if you are a virgin, you're grubby. You're like a Stone Age woman past childbearing age who can't get married and is left to just hang around the village, of no use to anyone, just a burden. I'm a man, so I can still make a comeback, but there's no hope for you, is there, Furukura?" (p93)

Based on the quote above, it can also be seen that Shiranha's words were so sharp to Keiko, she thought that Keiko was a dirty thing that only roamed the village and was useless to anyone. mere object of satisfaction.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

As a woman who lived in patriarchal culture, keiko as the main female character in the novel convenience store woman is experienced in gender discrimination. It is unjust treatments and assumptions against someone, particularly based on a person's sex that leads to the role that he or she should play in the society. The different role however, leads to the harm and the loss of person's right in life especially for woman who lives in patriarchal culture.

Keiko often received negative views from the people around her, ranging from family to her friends. Keiko is often considered an incompetent person because she only works as a convenience store clerk, and does not try to find competent and promising work. Keiko is also not considered immature because unlike her other friends who get married and then have children and are considered unable to be an ideal partner because of her old age. Keiko also got very inappropriate words from shiranha and seemed condescending as a woman. Finally, it can be concluded in this study that the stereotype of women still exists and becomes a problem in society. The stereotype of women is still felt by many women and is still happening today, and it should be reduced to all women, because women are also free to make their choices and the direction of their life goals. Because women are actually equal.

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