



Female Voice in Novel *The Hunger Games (2008)* by Suzanne Collins

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Abstract

This study aims to determine how the topic of female agency was expressed in Suzanne Collins' novel *The Hunger Games* (2008). The protagonist character who is making an attempt to overcome injustice, the power domination, and become a great person in the future is referred to as having female agency. The Marxist-feminism theory put forward by Karl Marx serve as the foundation for this analysis. The theory's application is based on an interpretation of the novel's text and context. The novel's quotation is the source for the information. This study used content analysis and descriptive research methods. The study's findings demonstrate how women's characters shows her voice in Voicing the Injustice System, Voicing the Power Domination and the Artfulness of the Authority

Key words: *Marxist-feminism, voice, oppression, women*

A. INTRODUCTION

Within the decades, women have struggled to get the gender equality in many aspect of social life through the feminist movement. The feminist movement has also brought out new changes in literary work. In the twentieth century, children's and young adult literary work with female hero protagonists became more popular. Hopkins (2012:3) examines the post-feminism and girl power movements of the 1990s, draws attention to the contemporary demand for female role models, and asserts that the present generation of girls and young women would reject subservient, frail, and dependent role models. In the pursuit of their own objectives, their heroes are proactive and aggressive.

Researches on females in literary texts has been widely studied by many researchers. To illustrate, Marlina (2015) discusses the female heroes in retelling

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myths of psyche, Artemis and Katniss. In addition, Marlina. L (2014) examined the Vampirism as a metaphor for adolescent maturation in MT Anderson's *Thirsty*. Furthermore, Fitriani and Marlina (2019) studied the action to get enlightments in the Novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. Meanwhile, Husna & Marlina (2020) have studied women identity in three poems about African American Women. Setiawan & Marlina (2020) studied women migrant workers in Atticus Lish's Novel. However, the research about females voice has also been discussed by many writers and researchers. For example, the research by Raj and Pooja (2021) discusses the issue of marginalization of women and their lack of voice, agency and subjectivity in Dalit literature. A follow-up study by Ravari (2015) explores how marginalized characters gain voice and agency to resist gender and class oppression

The key concept of this study is women and voice. According to Oldacre (2016:3), it is argued that the voice is the ability to verbalize the longings and desires of the heart, which is very much connected to our understanding of human identity. It is the identifying feature of our Self and our identity as both individual and a human being. Moreover, Weidman (2014: 3) argues that the voice is the guarantor of truth and self-presence, hence the familiar idea that voice expresses self and identity and that choice lies in having a voice.

The concept of Self or identity implies that individuals are concerned with themselves, seek to understand who they are, and can utilize this understanding to make sense of the outside world. According to Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012), self and personality are assumed to affect people's motivations, thoughts and perceptions of themselves and others, behaviors, moods, and capacity for self-control or self-regulation. Voice can also explain how our identity and consciousness combine to form the written word (Potgieter & Smit, 2009; Robbins, 2016).

Lipton and Mackinley (2017:62) note that from a feminist perspective, drawing on Olsen (1978) and Olson (2003), that feminist literature frequently views women's ability to speak up and make decisions as evidence of their agency and power. It's important to ask further questions about how women's voices have come to be associated with empowerment. Silence, apathy, and impotence are contrasted with speech as active and empowering (Gal 1991:175). It is believed that silenced women are perceived as weak, powerless, and unable to act and bring about change (Parapart 2010, p. 15). Since language is intricately linked to power, according to Foucault (1972), women need to speak up in order to be empowered.

In addition, Davies (1991, p. 52), states being a feminist or a feminist thinker is engaging in the very act of speaking up, finding one's voice, and using that voice and that power to alter the range of possibilities for one's own and other people's possible states of being. According to Mitchell (2017: 2), from a feminist viewpoint, voice is a socially constructed idea that is inextricably linked to the

experiences, feelings, and identity of the writer and reflects how they come to know the world.

Borrowing the definition of voice above, this research proposes the definition of voice as the ability to speak up, to be heard and listen to, and also to express self as a way to be empowered. In feminist perspective, to have voice means have power and have the authority on self. This research will analyze the voice of the female's protagonist based on the concept of Self. Following the explanation above, the researchers will show that the young female protagonist in this analysis is having a voice.

The discussion of female voice can be found in the study conducted by Gusti and Marlina (2021). The study discussed by using the feminist perspective theory proposed by Abrams (1999) examines how the protagonist is using an agency to get through her miserable life. In this study, a young female's agency refers to the character that is making an effort to get a better future and get through her past. She makes herself stronger to prove something that she can. The next research by is Oldacre (2016) examined three different novels that show women struggle for self-identity when they have not met the standard expectations.

Unlike the previous studies, this research will examine the female protagonist character in *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins novel who suffered from the oppressive system performed by the government. The focus in this study is the female protagonist who struggles to not only against the oppression of the government, but also against herself. The main character in this novel shows characteristics of having voice such as being brave, independent and determined. The researcher will try to prove that the character in this novel indicates of having a voice. The female character in this novel will prove that she showed voice by her action in dealing with herself and with the government. This analysis will be analyzed with the concept of self seen through feminist perspective.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research implied the Marxist-feminist theory and supported with the concept of self. The data collection is taken from the quotation in novel *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins. This research was a descriptive and content analysis study. This study is analyzed through text and context based interpretation. The novel is also analyzed by using fictional devices on novel such as characters, plot (conflict), setting, narrator, theme, and point of view.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Voice in literature can be interpreted as the characters' ability to express their Self; their feelings, words and identity. The indicators of having voice including have the ability to speak up one's mind, expressing self, the way they think and make sense of themselves and others (having self-awareness), and the

ability to control and regulate themselves. Female Voice in this analysis is shown by the female protagonist character, Katniss. The protagonist is having a voice in three ways: voicing the injustice system, voicing the Power Domination, Voicing the Artfulness of the authority.

1. The Female's Voice in Voicing the Injustice System

The protagonist is aware of the unfair system run in the government. For example, the unfairness in the reaping and to get a *tesserae*, which is the oil and grains supplies for one year per person. She mentions this unfair system in the following quotation below:

The reaping system is unfair, with the poor getting the worst of it. You become eligible for the reaping the day you turn twelve. That year, your name is entered once. At thirteen, twice. And so on until you reach the age of thirteen, the final year of eligibility, when your name goes into the pool seven times. (P13)

The quotation above explains the unfair system of the reaping for the Hunger Games. The older the kids become, the more often their name will go into the "pool" to be reaped. The authority makes sure to keep the citizens under fear as they know the chance of their name to be pulled out from the pool is getting higher every year. It is also implying the cruelty of the authority where they force the districts citizen to obey this rule and sent the young boy and girl to participate in the Hunger Games.

As if it is not still enough, the authority establishes another policy where the poor getting the worst of it. It can be seen in the following quotation"

But here's the catch. Say you are poor and starving as we were. You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for the tesserae. Each *tesserae* is worth a meager year's supply of grain and oil for one person. You may do this for your family members as well. So, at the age of twelve, I had my name entered four times. Once, because I had to, and three times for tesserae for grain and oil for myself, Prim, and my mother. In fact, every year I have needed to do this. And the entries are cumulative. So now, at the age of sixteen, my name will be in the reaping twenty times. (P13)

The quotation above shows how the authority asserting their dominance and control the citizens by utilizing the needs for foods. The protagonist lives in districts twelve, one of the poorest districts alongside with district eleven. The people of district twelve, especially those who lives in the Seam, the poorest

region in district twelve, are always suffered from hunger. The authority uses this to oppress them and resulting in they are forced to add their name as exchange for the tesserae. The authority intentionally put the poor citizens in the biggest disadvantage. They do this to give an example of how much power they have to control them. The protagonist does realize this unfair system but has only mention it between her and her besfriend, and not yet vocalize to the broader community. By acknowledging the unfair system, she indicates that she has already had a voice by being aware of her surroundings that is not okay.

The Capitol authority also did not give a proper education for the district's citizens. In District Twelve school, they were only taught something related to the coal-related. Furthermore, school is only a tool for the authority to spread propaganda. It can be seen in the following quotation:

Somehow, it all comes back to coal at school. Besides basic reading and math most our instruction is coal-related. Except for the weekly lecture on the history of Panem. It's mostly a lot blather about what we owe the Capitol. I know there must be more that they're telling us, an actual account of what happened during the rebellion. But I don't spend much time thinking about it. Whatever the truth is, I don't see how it will help me get food on the table. (P.39)

Based on the quotation above, the Capitol indeed providing a school for them to learn. Ironically, they were only taught something related to their district production. It means that the Capitol only prepare them to work in the coal mined for their own advantages. The Capitol authority exploited them to the core that they no longer have any choices rather than follow the system. They did not have enough knowledge about the "real world" and handle things other than the coal-related activity. Furthermore, they also taught about the history of Panem. The authority force to make the citizens in believing they are owing the Capitol.

The protagonist knows that the history of Panem which was tell in the school in not entirely true. She believes there are a lot more the untold story hides by the Capitol. It is understandable because the Capitol is the winner and they are the one who wrote the history. The Capitol only teach the things that will bring them advantage and spreading the propaganda of how much the districts owe them.

The lifestyle between the Capitol citizens and the districts are so much different. The authority provides abundance of food and wealth for the Capitol citizen:

What must it be like, I wonder, to live in a world here food appears at a press of a button? How would I spend the hours I now commit to combing the woods for sustenance if it were so easy to come by? What do they do all day, these people in the Capitol,

besides decorating their bodies and waiting around for new shipment of tribute to roll and die for their entertainment? (P.65)

Based the quotation above, the protagonist mention how the life of the Capitol is so spoiled compare to them in the districts. Through the protagonist voice, she shows the inequality happened in the country. While those who lives in the districts have to struggle to get food, The Capitol citizens were given an abundance of wealth and food that do not have to worry about anything else. The Authority spoiled the Capitol people and oppressed the districts. The protagonist despises the authority because of this inequality.

2. The Female Protagonist's Voice in Voicing the Power Domination

The government of Panem holds the Absolute power in the country. They make policies and rules intended to restrict the freedom and the movements of the citizens. The protagonist points out the issue through the quotation below:

It's interesting, hearing about her life. We have so little communication with anyone outside our district. In fact, I wonder if the game makers are blocking out our conversation, because even though the information seems harmless, they don't want people in different districts to know about each other. (P.283)

From the quotation above, the protagonist reveals how the authority will not let the districts communicate with each other. The Capitol did not let the districts to communicate with each other as preventions of uprising. They want to maintain their absolute power, being on top of the chain. The protagonist, as the representative in women voice in this highlighted these issues to shows how they were silenced by the authorities. She wants to show that power domination of the Capitol was making them powerless. In addition, the protagonist voicing out her opinion about communicating with other districts as "*interesting, hearing about her life*".

Another example of the power domination done by the Capitol can be seen by how they are limiting the area of each district. It can through this following quotation:

Our house is almost at the edge of the Seam. I only have to pass a few gates to reach the scruffy field called the Meadow. Separating the Meadow from the woods, in fact enclosing all of District 12, is a high chain-link fence topped with barbed-wire loops. In theory, it's supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predator that live in the woods –packs of wild dog, lone cougars, bears –

that used to threaten or streets. But since we're lucky to get to or three hours electricity in the evenings, it's usually safe to touch. (P.4)

The quotation above explains the situation of District 12, one of the poorest districts in Panem. She lives in the Seam, the area for the lower class in district 12. She points out the "electrified high chain-link" that separating the district area from woods. It supposed to keep the wild animal from entering the wood, but in reality it is only the narration of the authority to keep the people from running away to the woods. The protagonist points out they only "*get two- or three-hours electricity in the evenings*" which makes the theory of keeping out the wild animals from the districts is doubted. Had the authority really meant to keep these animals out, it will be electrified 24 hours.

The Capitol limits the area of each district with this "electrified chain" to prohibit them crossing the wood and eventually meet with other district in the middle. It is also to prevent to hunting in the woods as it is illegal. The Capitol authority did not give the citizen the freedom to get their own food. They will give the trespassing heavy punishment. These regulations were made only for the advantage of the Capitol authority. The Capitol maintains their power by limiting the area and prohibiting the districts to communicate with each other. The quotation above shows that the protagonist points this excessive power owned by the Capitol authority.

The biggest example of power domination done by the authority is creating the Hunger Games. it can be seen through the following quotation:

Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch— this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen. (P.19)

The quotation above explains the absolute power that the authority has among the citizens of Panem. The protagonist emphasizes the power and the cruelty of the Capitol. She describes how powerless they are against the Capitol. The Capitol's authority destroys District Thirteen in the first rebellion happen years ago with a bomb. The other districts have to accept their defeat with a punishment, which is the Hunger Games. The Capitol using the Hunger Games as a terror to keep the districts stay in their place, suppress their willing to fight again. It can be seen in the sentence "*Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just*

as we did in District Thirteen.”. The Hunger Games is the way of the Capitol to convince the districts that they are totally powerless against them. Furthermore, the Capitol destroy District Thirteen as an example that they can do anything with their power. From the quotation above, the protagonist shows that the Capitol hold the absolute power over the country and they are maintaining their position by threaten, terror and oppressed the citizen.

3. The Female Protagonist in Voicing the Artfulness of the Authority

The Capitol maintained their power and domination in many various ways, including manipulate the rules. The authority always makes rules for their own advantages. They totally corrupt the power they have to keep their position high above the citizens. They tend to manipulate the rules that have been established only for their entertainment. The female protagonist points out these cunning actions in the following quotation;

“Greetings to the final contestants of the Seventy-Fourth Hunger Games. The earlier revision has been revoked. Closer examination of the rule book has disclosed that only one winner will be allowed,” he says. “Good luck and may the odds be ever in your favor. (P.342)

Earlier, the Game maker states that there is a change in the rule where the two final contestants from the same districts will be allowed as a winner. They did not really meant to do it but only to create a bigger entertainment. The authorities utilize their excessive power to play with people feeling. It is supported in the next paragraph:

There’s a small burst of static and then nothing more. I stare at Peeta in disbelief as the truth sinks in. they never intended to let both of us live. This has all been devised by the Gamemakers to guarantee the most dramatic showdown in history. And like I fool, I bought into it. (342)

The protagonist points out the cunning done by the authority. She was deceived into believing that they have the chance to win and coming back home together. This quotation emphasizes the authority’s artfulness by manipulating rules and peoples feeling. The protagonist realized that they were only used to entertain the Capitol people. The protagonist expressing her disappointment to the authority by saying “they never intended to let both of us live”. Later, her disappointment will lead her to find a way to revenge the authority.

From all of the quotation above, it can be concluded that the female protagonist character is having a voice. She vocalizes the injustice system run within the country such as; unfair system to get the *tesserae*, which is the food shortages of oil and grain for a year supply, the unfairness in economic where the Capitol citizens lives in abundance of wealth while the districts people have to

suffered economically, the unfairness education, where the authority using the school as their tool to spread out the propaganda and only taught the kids the skill related to coal-mining.

The protagonist also points out the suffering of the districts people because of the power domination of the authority. The authority limited their freedom; they are prohibited to communicate with other district, and they are forced to give their children in the Hunger Games event. In addition, the protagonist also highlighted the artfulness act done by the Capitol authority. They establish and manipulate the rules as they like for their own advantages.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Novel *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Cools reflects various issues and one of them is female voice. The issue of female voice was reflected by the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. This analysis implied the Marxist-Feminism concept and supported with the concept of self seen through the feminist perspective. The voice in this analyses is refers to how the protagonist survive in the oppressive authority. This research combines content analysis with descriptive elements. In this study, the methods used for data analysis were descriptive techniques, which allowed the researcher to analyze and comprehend the results of the text content analysis. *The Hunger Games* (2008) was literary worked that reveal the issues how had the ability to act independently and be responsible.

The setting in this novel is dystopian country, Panem, which is govern by the corrupt and oppressive authority. The female protagonist character in this novel are suffered. However, she is grown up as a great person. She is brave, strong, responsible, independent, and determined. The female protagonist shows that there is a possibility for women to do the same actions like she did. The female protagonist can stand up for herself against the oppressive government. She showed that female can be empowered. Through this, she shown her voice in voicing the injustice system happen in the country, voicing the power domination of the government over the citizen, and also voicing the artfulness act of the authority.

In conclusion, this analysis has demonstrated that women can be strong and advocate for themselves. The lead character demonstrates her capacity for good character. Other researchers that want to learn more about the female voice can benefit from this study. It can assist other researchers in discovering further problems in Suzanne Collins' 2008 book *The Hunger Games*.

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