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REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S IMAGE IN THE LITTLE WOMEN NOVEL BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

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ABSTRACT
The study explores the representation of women's image in the little women's novel by Louisa May Alcott. Little Women is an American novel originally published in two volumes in 1868 and 1869 in which the true image of women is reflected through different characters. The main character of the novel is Joseph (JO) who plays the role of a tomboy in the novel. The author has pinpointed various issues women face in a patriarchal society. The study is a descriptive qualitative analysis of the selected few lines and passages containing a representation of women's social image from the novel Little Women. The main focus of the study is on woman's identity. It portrays the positive and strong image of women in 19th-century of American society and also helps the feminist readers to accept the patriarchal society to keep balance in society.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Human beings are the creations and inhabitants of this world. They are divided into two opposite sexes i.e males and females. Naturally, both of them want dominance over each other in some cases. Nature has given them some superiority over each other, but some of us aren't prepared to accept that naturally given power, which creates a disturbance in societies. Despite of these some traits are transferred to the opposites and some emerged with mixed-up in opposition. With these ambiguities the issues about rights in different forms, movements emerged in different forms and the most influential one for this justification is "Feminism". The movement struggled for the rights of "Females" particularly, in different times and the moment has three waves, and each of them educated for the rights of womanhood claiming equality in societal life. In the novel "Little Women" (Alcott, 1868) the main character "Jo March" is the symbol of masculinity, struggling for the representation of womanhood throughout the novel, because from the novel it seems that the society of that time was patriarchal and the women were in a struggle to eliminate the inequality between opposite sexes.

The American Society of the 1880s was patriarchal. A woman has not given as much importance as a man. Women were treated as inferior gender to men while in contrast, in current American society, a woman is given equal rights as men. The researcher will clear that gap in this study of "Little Women".

About the Author and the Novel

The "*Little Women*" novel is written by Louisa May Alcott in 1868. Louisa May Alcott was an American novelist who was born on November 29, 1832, in a German town, in Pennsylvania. She led a fascinating life. Besides charming millions of readers with her novel "*little women*", she also worked as a Civil War nurse, raised a voice that existed against slavery, and fought for women to vote. She has socialized herself with her father's friends throughout her life including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau. Although Alcott's family was always poor she has access to quality learning. At the age of 19, she has become a published writer when her poem is published in "W*omen's Magazine*". She is a source of income for her family and worked a variety of teaching and servant jobs. After joining nursing in D.G., she caught typhoid fever and pneumonia. At the time standard treatment was given to her but she suffered from symptoms of mercury poisoning for the rest of her life and died in 1888 at the age of 55 years.

Statement of the Problem

The study is about feminism and womanhood. This has explored how women were treated in America in the 19th century. This highlighted the traits of the main charter as struggling with the issue of feminism.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
1)   To analyze the representation of woman's image in *little women.*
2)   To discuss the stance /perspective of the novelist.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Q1. How does Louise May Alloct depict the image of women in her novel *"Little Women"*?

Q2. What is the stance/perspective of the novelist about women's image in the novel?

Rationale of the Study

There is no significant research done by the researchers about the women's identity in the novel. What defines a woman? Is it the societal norm of being well-settled and secure in a marriage? Is it being independent and exploring your strengths and limitations? Is it being dependent on men because that's what has been going on for a long time and society demands for this particular chain to continue?

Significance of Study

This study helps the readers to know about the strength and weaknesses of women's character. It realizes that feminist readers to know their values and accept the patriarchal system to keep balance in society. This study also helps readers to know about the hidden qualities of women. That is how they suppress their feeling to make a good image in society. This study presents the positive and strong image of women in the 19th century of American society. Being independent, socially and morally strong women can make a better society for the nation. As Napoleon said, "Give me a good mother, and I will give you a good nation." (Napoleon, 1769-1821)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The researcher is going to discuss the social and political status of women in American society. Women's identity, women's education, and women's role in making families and marriages in the 1880s of American society and relating it to the current status of American women.

This chapter of the study has focused on the work, which has previously been done on the novel "Little Women". Many researchers and critics have opined this novel differently. The approach of this study to the novel is from the view of feminism. Literature has reflection and touches in it. Many authors have their views about it from different parts of the world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Constructionism;

Social constructionism is a theory "of knowledge that holds that characteristics typically thought to be immutable and solely biological—such as gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality—are products of human definition and interpretation shaped by cultural and historical contexts." (Subramaniam, 2010). As such, social constructionism highlights how cultural categories—like "men," "women," "black," "white"—are concepts created, changed, and reproduced through historical processes within institutions and culture.

Social constructionism is the theory that people develop knowledge of the world in a social context and that much of what we perceive as reality depends on shared assumptions. From a social constructionist perspective, many things we take for granted and believe are objective reality are actually socially constructed, and thus, can change as society changes
(Vinney. C, 2019).

Key Takeaways: Social Constructionism

The theory of social constructionism states that meaning and knowledge are socially created.

Social constructionists believe that things that are generally viewed as natural or normal in society, such as understandings of gender, race, class, and disability, are socially constructed, and consequently aren't an accurate reflection of reality.

Social constructs are often created within specific institutions and cultures and come to prominence in certain historical periods. Social constructs' dependence on historical, political, and economic conditions can lead them to evolve and change. (Vinney. C, 2019)

Main Points/Characteristics

In the late 1960s, three separate intellectual movements came together to form the foundation of social constructionism. The first was an ideological movement that questioned social realities and put a spotlight on the political agenda behind such realities. The second was a literary/rhetorical drive to deconstruct language and the way it impacts our knowledge of reality. And the third was a critique of scientific practice, led by Thomas Kuhn, who argued that scientific findings are influenced by, and thus representative of, the specific communities where they're produced—rather than objective reality. (Vinney. C, 2019)

Knowledge Is Socially Constructed

Social constructionists believe that knowledge arises out of human relationships. Thus, what we take to be true and objective is the result of social processes that take place in historical and cultural contexts. In the realm of the

sciences, this means that although truth can be achieved within the confines of a given discipline, there is no over-arching truth that is more legitimate than any other.

Language Is Central to Social Construction

Language abides by specific rules, and these rules of language shape how we understand the world. As a result, language isn't neutral. It emphasizes certain things while ignoring others. Thus, language constrains what we can express as well as our perceptions of what we experience and what we know. (Vinney. C, 2019)

Knowledge Construction Is Politically-Driven

"The knowledge created in a community has social, cultural, and political consequences. People in a community accept and sustain the community's understanding of particular truths, values, and realities. When new members of a community accept such knowledge, it extends even further. When a community's accepted knowledge becomes policy, ideas about power and privilege in the community become codified. These socially constructed ideas then create social reality, and—if they aren't examined—begin to seem fixed and unchangeable. This can lead to antagonistic relationships between communities that don't share the same understanding of social reality." (Vinney. C, 2019)

Social Image of Women in Various Contexts

Social status of women in Pakhtun Society

Women make a small contribution to social life. Home is the central theme of all his activities. There are few women in the educated communities. Even urban educators can't apply their skills. The main reason I can't leave home is because of the purda taboo. The status of women in Patan society is not very good in society or they have religious and legal rights. But should we not blame Patani for this, because the status of women is more or less the same in other societies? Research can change in one way or another, but on the other hand, fewer societies have paid the respect that Pathan gave to their women than women in rural areas of the PNDF often do not know how to write, cultural and non-intellectual and live under a social network. cultural and conservation, which is marked by its male exercise of authority and religious authority. Since this society has its own set of rules and by-laws of respect, have women become symbols of this respect for a Patan who can go to great lengths to save his dignity for death? But according to the rules of this society, a woman has self-respect and is marked as a mother, daughter, sister, and wife. Beyond these barriers, there are many opportunities for him. As a daughter, a wife, and a sister, the served her son throughout her life, but most of all is reflected in her role as a mother. He is the one responsible for building a nation. The destiny of society can change, for a mother has the power to shape the behavior of the growing generation.

Social status of women in Turkey

Since the founding of the Republic of Turkey in the 1920s, women have been on an equal footing with men in Turkish society, more than legal.

But during the Ottoman Empire, Turkish society was ruled by shariʿa (Islamic religious law) and a 500-year-old civil society, and important cultural changes were not made overnight.

The situation of women in Turkey is different from the situation in their country of origin. The "good", and the "bad", but different. In some ways, women may seem submissive to men; but Turkey had a high court recently America, and Turkey had a female head of state, which is the United States, and all its successes in liberating women, did not exist.

The roles of men and women were clearly defined in Turkish culture and both genders had more or less authority in their rightful place. The husband-father was the head of the family, while the wife-mother took care of the house and the family. The men left the house to do business, government, and military; The women lived close to the house and cared for the plants, animals, and home. Appropriate circumstances, behaviors, and attitudes for all family members have clearly defined: the importance of the mother-in-law, the youngest obedient child, and so on. , Valid Sultan, who decided with harem girls he would sleep and when!)

Review of Related Literature on Little Women

The paper "Does 'Little Women Belittle Women?: Female Influence in Louisa May Alcott's 'Little Women".(Parsad. A, 1994), commented on the novel, "In little women. Louisa May Alcott is writing a didactic guide to common-class women's ideology, where she explores how women who don't have money shall be strengthened without violating the codes of purity of women. struggle in the text can be defined by influence or moral leverage against her husband equivalent." (Parsad. A, 1994)

The article "Resentful Little Women: Gender and Class Feeling in Louisa May Alcott" (Foote. S, 2005), explored the novel as "Up to this point, the novel has focused on Joe's ambition to make it so writer, as well as Amy countless personal flaws, so it is surprising that in the novel there is almost no narrative effort to confirm that Joe he was offended. Although the novel believes that her work is appreciated and the fact that Ami did a terrible thing to ruin it is less inter-judged by the objective justice of Joe's feelings rather than by the subjective to deal with his anger." (Foote. S, 2005)

The research paper "Representation of Gender Stereotyping in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women: Endorsement of Traditional Gender Roles" (Ramadhiya & Harinawate, 2019). They commented novel as they said, " Little Women reflects the life portraits of four sisters, who are young and facing the effort of maidhood to femalehood, strengthening the old gender position during that time to the kid audience." (Ramadhiya & Harinawat, 2019)

The research paper, "Writing and little women: Alcott's Rhetoric of Subversion." (Bernstein & Naomi. S, 1993) stated Jo's complicated character as a "feminist struggle shows the underneath surface of Alcott's texts, according to Jo pinpoint that writing is not only for pleasure and money rather it is a subversive act of escaping the strictures of the role of 'little woman' in mid-nineteenth-century American society, a way of being independent." (Bernstein & Naomi. S, 1993)

The journal "The Lie of Little Women" (RIOUX. A, 2018), explored the novel as "Little Women it is the frame of the window and we, its readers, are Laurie, spying on and enjoying its false perfection or at least its virtuous height. In the 150 years since the novel was published, fans have loved the story of Alcott's four sisters in March and his indomitable mother, Marmee, who navigates in refined poverty with courageous acceptance and who strives - always - to be better. Detractors (fewer and fewer) generally cling to a version of this saga of brave kindness, rather irritated than amazed." (RIOUX. A, 2018)

The review "What's Lost and Gained in a Modern Little Women" (Acocella. J, 2020) reviewed the novel as If we read her book carefully, she wasn't entirely sure she wanted to make it a women's rally, and there are some things in the book that you think she might have given up altogether - writing, freedom, The choice not to marry (he never said: "I can be an independent detective and demand my canoe," I wrote - if the right man had come (Acocella. J, 2020).

The article "Impersonating "little women": The Radicalism of Alcott's Behind a Mask" (Fetterly. J, 2010) investigated the novel as, "Alcott's text isn't worth in itself, but in the context, it has equal significance to provide a way about the understanding of 19th-century writer particularly women, a platform of them. Alcott's original writing style discovered in her novel 'Little Women" was a mask that increasingly encased her, showing finally all other personas and other possibilities of self(Fetterly. J, 2010).

In a paper titled Josephine March's Character Development from Immaturity to Maturity as Seen in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women" (Johar, 2012) wrote "In which she uses an objective approach. The approach applies to the character of Josephine March. The purpose of Johar's research is to understand from time to time the development of the novel's main character, Josephine March, as she went from an impure young man to a mature woman (Johar, 2012).

In the paper "Little Women, a Feminist Study". (Laire, 2008) wrote about Alcott's novel, "His work addresses two major themes, one in which there is a conflict between the real and the imagination of the ancestors and the problems of marriage. Laire examines Jo's writing career in an attempt to find out if Jo and Louisa were both ill and the author is worried, she then discusses the importance of marriage in writing, as Laire's research examines women's independence in history (Laire, 2008).

The above research has been done by researchers from different parts of the world but there is no significant research done by the researchers about the

women's identity in the novel. What defines a woman? Is it the societal norm of being well-settled and secure in a marriage? Is it being independent and exploring your strengths and limitations? Is it being dependent on men because that's what has been going on for a long time and society demands for this particular chain to continue?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

The researcher is going to discuss the data collection method and the techniques that are followed throughout the process of research for data analysis.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher collects data through skimming, scanning, and close reading of the novel.

The researcher purposively selected a few lines and passages containing the representation of women's social image from the novel *little women.*

RESEARCH METHOD FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Close-reading Technique

Close reading is a careful and deliberate style of reading that seeks to draw a deeper understanding of the text. When we perform a close reading we analyze or explicate a text. Reading closely is a process of working through the layers of meaning. A process of moving beyond the literal meaning of a text to the – sometimes various and at times conflicting – figurative meanings.

Levels of Close Reading Technique

1 The semantic: It tells about the individual meaning of a word.
2 The syntactic: how words mean things when they are put together.
3 The thematic: how themes emerge and affect meanings when we read.
4 The iterative: the ways that repetition and patterning affect textual meanings.
5 The generic: how the kind of work we are reading changes our approach to its meanings.
6 The adversarial: how historical, political, and theoretical concerns reshape meanings.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research focuses on the main character of the novel "Jo", who is struggling for the image of the woman presented by the writer. the central character is introduced to the reader as a tomboy who considers herself a male of the family while her father is in the civil war.

The writer describes the Jo character engaging with her sisters and discussing the things that a woman normally does in the home, but Jo as a female resisting

from the circumstancing and even curses the works relating to that society, to womanhood as in the novel,

It's naughty to fret, but I do think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world. It makes me cross, and my hands get so stiff, I can't practice well at all (Alcott, 1868).

The above line is a clear depiction of the woman of the 19th century compared with present woman, there are still certain cases that support and in opposition to that society as,

As Black women, we are often challenged within organizations to critique incomplete and underdeveloped cultural competence/diversity organizational goals. Our Black bodies are used to meet a diversity/inclusion quota and create programming that appears representational of the larger community for the appearance of inclusivity (Spears, 2019).

In another place as diverting from he womanhood as she describing with her sisters and their gone days and criticizes her father responsible for their poor plight and society because she was opposite from girlish and presented by the writer as a boy like,

Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and
began to whistle.
'Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!'
'That's why I do it.'
'I detest rude, unladylike girls! (Alcott, 1868).

The action done by the main character presents as she is a boy and one of her sister criticize her for not doing this, but she still doing that, which is a clear depiction of the opposite trait from her natural state. As it is the total opposite of the view of Gilmore & Elizabeth as she said,

It often seems that girlhood has congealed into a single sad story in which imperiled girls await rescue, with limited hope of success. Girls appear in perpetual crises and are permanently vulnerable not only because of desire circumstances but also because of something intransigent and intrinsic to their girlhood self (Gilmore & Elizabeth, 2010).

The writer depicts the true image of sisterhood in the novel of 19 century where the elder sister is advising younger sisters to behave like young women and leave boyish acts while her tomboy sister resists.

You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady.'' I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty,' cried Jo (Alcott, 1868).

Now some restrictions came on Jo because of their other sister, as they depict the true image of women-hood. The writer exposed the picture not only shows the resistance against manhood but some of them agree with their original nature as Arianna Huffington said,

We need to accept that we won't always make the right decisions, that we'll screw up royally sometimes - understanding that failure is not the opposite of success, it's part of success (Huffington. A, 1950).

In the novel "*little women*", the dominant status of women is represented by the writer through the character of Jo, as she holds her power as a man over her female colleagues as the writer said,

'I thought I'd get her some with my dollar,' said Beth.
'No, I shall!' cried Amy.
'I'm the oldest,' began Meg, but Jo cut in with a decided,

'I'm the man of the family now Papa is away, and I shall provide the slippers, for he told me to take special care of mother while he was gone (Alcott, 1868).

This writer came to the supreme position of power, where a female holds the high position and status of manhood, but despite that, she is a female, who overcame all the presented obstacles by society at that time.

The Perspective of the Writer about the Women's Image;

This has the answer to the second question. It highlights the perspective of the writer about the women's image as she presented in the novel. Throughout her whole novel, the women struggle between low and high status and against and in favor of her womanhood nature.

The writer Alcott came in to present the woman's image, which she want to present from her perspective and may suggest that it should be like that. They're portrayed by the writer in the novel as,

Girls said Meg seriously, looking from the tumbled head beside her to the two little night-capped ones in the room beyond, 'Mother wants us to read and love and mind these books, and we must begin at once. We used to be faithful about it (Alcott, 1868).

Now portrayed the picture of a woman, how she would be and what should she do in society in every circumstance for the depiction of her true image. The picture shown by the writer is obedient, lovable, responsible, and faithful.

The next one by the writer is the picture of women/woman, she presented in the novel in the form of an old lady, who wishes high status for their children as she said,

I am ambitious for you, but not to have you make a dash in the world —marry rich men merely because they are rich, or have splendid houses, which are not homes because love is wanting. Money is a needful and precious thing—and, when well used, a noble thing—but I never want you to think it is the first or only prize to strive for (Alcott, 1868).

The lines depict the perspective of the writer, about the care-fullness of women in choosing their' status and depending on the female hood by assigning them superior status and diverting their attention toward the filth of poorness, because she thinks, while in poor status no one can achieve the goals and quality status in life.

Now the writer has another different perspective on a woman's status and image in society. Here she presented her perspective on woman's image in the form of a conversation between mother and their children, where she suggests as,
If rank and money come with love and virtue, also, I should accept them gratefully, and enjoy your good fortune (Alcott, 1868).

Now Alcott came with the perspective of respect and love for women, her tolerance in society, her power, and good hopes and expectations in society.

There is a conversation between Jo and Amy. Where Jo praised Amy for love, compassion, tolerance, and respect, which she gave to Jo. Jo herein the novel is portrayed by the writer as a male character, so the lines represent the view as she said,

You laugh at me when I say I want to be a lady, but I mean a true gentlewoman in mind and manners, and I try to do it as far as I know how. I can't explain exactly, but I want to be above the little meannesses and follies and faults that spoil so many women (Alcott, 1868).

In these lines as writer portrayed the main character Jo as a male gender, who praises a woman gender, where she tolerated, respects, loved, and compromised the male gender. Here the writer telling to the womanhood to do certain things for gaining good status and building a good image in society. The writer explored her perspective on woman image paving the way for females to do certain things that are suitable to womanhood.

Now this situation explores, where all women sitting in a place around the fire. The situation explores the scenario of the latter saying that no matter was there except for father because it was much hard time. Finally a letter from the father with joyfulness, happiness, and hopefulness providing information about the victory of the military their marches, parades, and songs, and finally a great love from the father for their children as the writer explained,

Give them all of my dear love and a kiss. Tell them I think of them by day, pray for them by night, and find my best comfort in their affection at all times. A year seems very long to wait before I see them, but remind them that while we wait we may all work so that these hard days need not be wasted. I know they will remember all I said to them, that they will be loving children to you, will

do their duty faithfully, fight their bosom enemies bravely, and conquer themselves so beautifully that when I come back to them I may be fonder and prouder than ever of my little women (Alcott, 1868).

The writer came to the view about woman image, having the view if the woman does some certain things for manhood, then there is fruit exists for the status of women. Here she expresses the desire, love, and respect of males for the woman who presents herself as the value of the man.

CONCLUSION

Overview

This research is designed for the understanding of woman's image in the novel by Louisa Alcott "Little Women" (Alcott-1868). It is a 19th-century novel that presented the American patriarchal society during that time. The research focused on the different characters and highlights their situations regarding society to present their image. The research is qualitative and the analysis is in the content-based mode.

Women's Image in the Little Woman

Women were suppressed at that time and had no status and image because of the patriarchal society of America and the Alcott novel "Little Women" (Alcott, 1868) completely captured it. Though the research concluded that the images of women weren't good and women were suppressed at the time.

The Novelist's Stance about Women in Her Novel

Women were in a struggle for building their image in society and were also working for high status. She presented women as suppressed group and struggling for their' equality and rights for gaining their status in the patriarchal society.

Future Research Recommendations

This research may provide a way for future researchers who are conducting similar attempts at other writers' works. If on the one hand, the humble research, raises a few questions, identifies, investigates, explores, and answers them, but it leaves on the hand a few dimensions open for other researchers to explore it. To conclude, though this study is delimited itself to one idea exploration (i.e. Representation of Women's image in Little Women), further research may be conducted to elaborate the diverse dimensions of this idea. Recommendations for future research are the Struggle of Women for gaining status and revolt against patriarchy.

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