

Mulan's (2020) Reflection: Evidences of Gender-Based Critical Thinking, A Path to Gender Equality

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how gender equality and inequality are represented in the film of Mulan (2020), a film which is based on the Chinese legend of Hua Mulan. The researchers aimed to explore the potential impact of the film's messages on viewers' cognitive and emotional levels, as it portrays the female protagonist as an active participant in the story and carries a strong feminist message. Unlike some other films, Mulan is not objectified or depicted as a source of eroticism, but rather as a proactive character fighting for fairness. To achieve the objective, the study employed a descriptive qualitative method and drew on Kate Millet's feminist theory. This theoretical framework was used to analyze and uncover the film's messages regarding gender equality. The researchers followed a four-step process involving data identification, classification, analysis, and drawing conclusions. Through their analysis, the study revealed a feminist movement that emerges from the main character and those around her, providing support for her pursuit of gender equality. The film also conveys valuable moral values related to gender equality and feminism, which can be applied in real-life contexts. The researchers anticipate that the findings of this study will contribute empirical evidence of gender equality and inequality practices depicted in the film.

Keywords: *feminism, gender equality, scene, women's struggles*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji bagaimana kesetaraan dan ketidaksetaraan gender direpresentasikan dalam film Mulan (2020), sebuah film yang didasarkan pada legenda Tiongkok tentang Hua Mulan. Peneliti bermaksud mengeksplorasi dampak potensial pesan-pesan yang disampaikan film ini

di level kognitif dan emosional para penikmat film, tersebut karena film Mulan menggambarkan sosok protagonis wanita sebagai seseorang yang aktif dan menyampaikan pesan feminisme yang kuat. Berbeda dengan beberapa film lain, Mulan tidak diobjektifikasi atau digambarkan sebagai sumber erotik, melainkan sebagai karakter proaktif yang berjuang menuju keadilan. Untuk mengupas penggambaran ini, penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan mengacu pada teori feminisme Kate Millet. Kerangka teoretis ini digunakan untuk menganalisis dan mengungkap pesan-pesan film mengenai kesetaraan gender. Terdapat empat langkah yang diikuti, mulai dari identifikasi data, klasifikasi, analisis, dan penyimpulan hasil. Dari hasil analisis, penelitian ini mengungkapkan adanya gerakan feminisme yang muncul dari tokoh utama beserta beberapa karakter di sekitarnya, yang memberikan dukungan kepada perjuangan Mulan untuk mencapai kesetaraan gender. Film ini juga menyampaikan nilai-nilai moral terkait kesetaraan gender dan feminisme, yang dapat diterapkan dalam konteks kehidupan nyata. Melalui riset ini, para peneliti berharap bahwa temuan dari penelitian ini akan memberikan bukti empiris tentang praktik kesetaraan dan ketidaksetaraan gender yang digambarkan dalam film.

Kata kunci: *feminisme, kesetaraan gender, adegan film, perjuangan perempuan*

INTRODUCTION

Once discussing gender issues, masculinity cannot be separated. Male and female genders are frequently displayed unequally. This disparity arises from the unequal distribution of social roles between men and women. Stereotypes occur when women are perceived as objects and portrayed as weak. In a study of Muslimah et al. (2019), stereotypes frequently view women by demeaning women's functions. Women's roles are described as home workers and family careers, and they are viewed as dependent on men and objects of male attention (Kangas, Haider, Fraser & Browne, 2014). The same evidence is reported through Pratiwi et al. (2022) who reported that the objectification of women is evident through various means, including possessiveness and overprotection, domestication, and subordination. These forms of sexism lead to the objectification of women both physically and emotionally, reinforcing stereotypes that label women as weak.

This social inequality toward women then fosters the existence of a feminist movement (Nugroho in Purwanto, 2016; Nazneen & Okech, 2021). Feminist is defined as women's efforts to be heard and fight for their rights to play roles and regulate their lives in the domestic and public spheres. Feminism has evolved into multiple forms of feminist philosophy, expanding beyond its initial focus on addressing women's struggles, emancipating them from male dominance, and challenging systemic oppression and structural inequalities. The diversification and constellation of ideologies within feminism

have given rise to a range of perspectives (Colley & White, 2019). In this sense, research on the feminist movement has spread into the area of film, books, and the education sector.

As one of the methods for teaching the importance of gender equality, film, as a living work of art, informs the audience about the culture of the characters in it, as films comprise essential components of the cultural template for decoding socio-cultural trends (Amonyeze, Nwafor & Agbo, 2023). As a mass communication medium that uses stories to convey various messages to the public, a film's ability to reach all social aspects allows them to influence their audiences. A film does not only reflect but also creates reality in society through its cultural codes, conventions, and ideology (Turner in Sobur, 2013). This means that people may learn the values that are embedded in the culture where the movies are produced thus in this context film may educate gender identity in hetero-normalized spaces (Gil-Glazer, 2021).

Whatever the impact of movies on audiences, this medium has the potential to cause a wide range of problems or positive or negative public opinion for the community. Women are frequently stereotyped in the film industry. In his article entitled "Menjadi Sutradara Televisi ; Dengan Single Dan Multi Camera", Naratama (2006) mentioned that women are valued in film for auctioning beauty and sexiness. They transform into parties ruled by male figures, housewives, a mother, and parties that require men in their lives (Sink, 2017). Women are frequently portrayed as "crybabies" with low self-esteem by directors (Gamble, 2010:117). Meanwhile, in the entertainment industry, women are frequently portrayed as sex objects or as victims of harassment (Perdana, 2012; Misailidou, 2021). These factors, without our knowledge, contribute to gender bias in patriarchal society and culture (Sutanto, 2020). Female actors' portrayal typically depicts the role of women as weak. According to the feminist viewpoint, women's struggles and strengths should be displayed in a balanced way with the positive side as a form of effort that is important in encouraging a woman's self-esteem.

Among the numerous films with female protagonists, "Mulan (2020)" is one with a feminist theme. This Walt Disney Pictures film portrays a woman's strength, bravery, intelligence, and struggle. This film is a live-action remake of the animated film "Mulan," which was released in 1998. The film is based on the Chinese legend Hua Mulan and was released in September 2020 (Indonesia, 2020; Pratiwi & Primasita, 2022). The plot of the film

revolves around the Chinese empire being attacked by the Rouran tribe. To address this issue, the emperor issued a decree requiring each family member to send one male member of the family to military service in order to help repel Rounan tribe attacks. Hua Zhou vowed to devote himself because he had no sons. Mulan was torn because her father was unable to go to war. Mulan took her father's sword and armor and left the house in the middle of the night to disguise herself as a man and enlist in the warrior instead of her father to join the military service against the Rouran people (Mulan, 2020).

This film attempts to change many people's perceptions of women as weak, unworthy of learning martial arts, and considered taboo from fighting in the war. In the midst of a patriarchal culture that is deeply embedded in society, the filmmakers attempt to present various ideas through the main character of the film, Mulan. The female character in this film is strong and tough. This film emphasizes the strength and courage of women who are as powerful as the men in the war group. This is why conducting this film is interesting. This study attempts to determine what feminist values are depicted in each scene of the Mulan film.

The studies on feminist film analysis are quite well-documented (Azi & Nirmalasai, 2021; Gerard & Poepsel, 2019). As a more specific example, the study conducted by Lubis et al (2022) demonstrated gender equality in the movie "Bird of Prey". According to this article, the researchers discovered that, unlike in fiction, gender equality is still uncommon in real life. Gender inequality remains prevalent in social and economic fields, according to the researchers. Kalayci (2015) examined and evaluated the animated film "Pepee" from the standpoint of gender equality. In accordance with the analysis, Pepee cartoons contain signs of gender inequality. It was demonstrated by certain activities in each episode of Pepee's cartoons, such as watering flowers, setting the table, or caring for the baby, which were merely attributed to the female. Meanwhile, the male characters were given the ability to drive a car, ride a bicycle, or fly a balloon. Meanwhile, Wulandari and Toyibi (2022) attempt to compare women's representation in Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman films from a feminist standpoint. In accordance with the analysis, Pepee cartoons contain signs of gender inequality. It was demonstrated by certain activities in each episode of Pepee's cartoons, such as watering flowers, setting the table, or caring for the baby, which were merely attributed to the female. Meanwhile, the male characters were given the ability to drive a car, ride a bicycle,

or fly a balloon. Meanwhile, Wulandari and Toyibi (2022) attempt to compare the representation of women in Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman films from a feminist standpoint.

The researchers employ a descriptive qualitative research method in writing this study. Descriptive research is a type of research that does not rely on numbers or calculations (Moleong, 2001). In descriptive research, a researcher investigates and describes phenomena in order to clarify and predict them based on data collected in the field. The technique used in this study is content analysis. The information comes from Mulan, the main character in the film. Every scene, picture, word, phrase, sentence, and dialogue of the main character in the Mulan film served as the primary source of data for this study.

The feminist theory of Kate Millett is applied by the researchers to analyze this research. Prior to actually analyzing the data, the following procedures were carried out: First, the researchers watched the Mulan movie, read the script, and learned about the problem. Second, the researchers defined the problem formulation, gathered relevant theories, and searched for journals and references. In the final step, the researchers interpreted the results of the data analysis. Following those steps, the researchers analyzed the data using Millett's feminist theory. From Millet's perspective, we focused on how Mulan's character challenges traditional gender roles, aligning with second wave feminism's critique of patriarchy. Her journey explores agency, empowerment, and gender equality.

DISCUSSION

Gender Inequality Reflected in the Movie

Human beings are equal in all aspects of life. Nonetheless, studies have shown that people are frequently treated unequally based on their religious beliefs, ethnicity, race, gender, political beliefs, and philosophical beliefs (Alesina et al, 2004; Aranet al, 2010). These inequalities have been recorded through scenes in films. As we know movies have a large influence on how people form their opinions. Movies always document and display the reality that grows and develops in a society (Sobur, 2006). Movies are created for a specific purpose, such as communicating a message, but they are sometimes created without considering the impact on their viewers.

Women in the film are frequently stereotyped negatively rather than positively. Subconsciously, movies frequently create unfair and gender-biased relationships, for example, by placing women in a weak position and unable to balance the role of men. This is also evident in the movie *Mulan* (2020). Where most people live under a patriarchal system. In his study, Walby (2014) defined patriarchy as a social structure in which men are positioned as the dominating party and women are positioned as the dominant party. These imbalanced practices can be seen in several scenes in the film *Mulan* (2020), which will be discussed further below.

The first instance of gender inequality encountered in *Mulan's* initial narrative (2020) is demonstrated in the following citation:

“If you had a daughter, her chi, the boundless energy of life itself, speaking through every move, could you tell her that only a son could use the chi?” (Data 1#, Mulan script, Minute 01.01)

The preceding story is an example of gender inequality in the film. According to the narrative excerpt above, women are treated differently than men. Where women are not permitted to use Chi and only men are permitted to use Chi. Chi is regarded as a "life force" or "spiritual force" in Chinese culture. Meanwhile, Chi is also referred to as life's breath, aura, energy, and one's soul (Wongsengtian, 1998). In essence, Chi is a power or vibration that comes from everything in the world that influences each other, where Chi can be created, strengthened, weakened, and used for human benefit.

The prohibition on women using Chi demonstrates that women face discrimination. This contradicts the concept of gender equality, which is a right of all people, including women. In his paper, Sahin (2013) explains that gender equality allows men and women to have the same rights and obligations in all aspects of life. In the *Mulan* film, Chi is associated with men as warriors, not women. The presence of Chi in women is always viewed negatively by society, as seen in the following narration:

“Did you know that a daughter can bring shame, dishonor, alienation?” (Data 2#, Mulan script, Minute 01.16)

This negative judgment can also be seen in how society reacts when *Mulan* uses her Chi.



Figure 1. The Societal Reactions

The picture above is a scene where young Mulan seems unable to control the strength of her Chi, and she does actions that are not usually done by women. Mulan, who was chasing her father's chicken that had escaped from the cage, seemed to not care about the surroundings, running along the area where she lived and even running on high roof tiles. The picture above shows how society's response regarding Mulan's behavior looks different from women in general. From the data above it is clear that the public does not like what Mulan Muda is doing. They gossiped about what Mulan had done at that time.

The film critiques limitations on women's roles, portraying Mulan as proactive and capable, subverting gendered representations and societal expectations. Mulan's character in the film can be seen as resonating with some of the ideas put forth by Kate Millett in her feminist theories. Like Millett, Mulan challenges the patriarchal structures and gender norms of her society. By disguising herself as a man and joining the Chinese army in her father's place, Mulan questions the traditional gender roles that confine women to passive and submissive positions. Mulan's actions reflect the belief that sex-based oppression is both political and cultural, as she confronts the societal expectations and norms that restrict women's agency and opportunities. By defying these norms, Mulan demonstrates that women are capable of participating in traditionally male-dominated spaces and taking on active roles.

Basically, the belief at that time was considered unusual, so the women with strong Chi were considered shameful and could alienate them. Women with strong Chi also get a bad nickname from society, where they call women with strong Chi as witches and are seen as someone who must be eliminated.

“They will call her a witch” (Data 3#, Mulan script, Minute 04.33)

“There is no place for witches in this kingdom” (Data 4#, Mulan script, Min 10.40)

Discrimination related to Chi in women is not only experienced by Mulan but also experienced by the character Xian Lang, a female character who accompanies the Rouran nation.

“I was a girl like you when people exiled me” (Data 4#, Mulan script, Minute 01.14.02)”

“The more I show, the more destroyed I am” (Data 5 #, Mulan script, Minute 01.15.16)”

The dialogue above is a conversation between Mulan and Xian Lang. This scene occurs when Mulan decides to reveal her true identity as a woman before Commander Tung. Therefore, Mulan was expelled from the royal army. Xian Lang found out Mulan was at her lowest point and tried to persuade her to betray the kingdom. In the dialogue above, Xian Lang tells the sad story of herself having experienced a similar fate to Mulan, who was exiled and isolated from the world because of the power of Chi that she has.

It turned her evil and betrayed her nation by being on the side of the Rouran tribe to destroy the Chinese empire. In this scene, Xian Lang tries to persuade Mulan to follow her to betray the empire, but Mulan refuses firmly and chooses to side with the Chinese empire. The discrimination experienced by Xian Lang and Mulan is a clear form of gender inequality, where a person is discriminated against because of their gender. What Mulan conducted according to Millet's second wave is a form of women's liberation movement. Millet (1970) claimed that gender is socially constructed rather than solely determined by biology. She argued that cultural and social systems shape gender roles and expectations, rather than them being inherent or unchangeable characteristics of being male or female. Society assigns specific behaviors, roles, and traits based on perceived gender, which are not naturally linked to one's biological sex. Millett emphasized that gender is a social construct imposed through socialization and reinforced by institutions and cultural norms. Related to this, power is a right that belongs to every human being and can be possessed by anyone, whether an individual or a group of people, including women.

Outwaite (2008) defines feminism as the support of women's equality in order to improve women's status in society. According to him, women must be performing men's jobs with no restrictions. It is not relevant to what is shown in the film *Mulan* (2020).

“Every family must contribute one man to fight. One man from every house.” (Data 6#, Mulan script)

Equality means treating men and women equally in terms of obtaining opportunities, involvement or participation, and decision making (Azisah, et.al, 2016). Using the data above, it is possible to conclude that there are disparities in access to opportunities for public participation. Data indicate that only men are permitted to serve in the army. Meanwhile, women are not permitted to join the army and must remain at home.

The second type of discrimination against women relates to their social roles and the standards that society has set for them, which restricts their freedom of movement. According to Ampofo & Boateng (2008), men are frequently associated with something strong, whereas women are expected to be soft. Several scenes in the film Mulan demonstrate the standardization of feminine characters for women. Mulan is introduced to the family of the man she is engaged to in the first scene.

“Calm, graceful, elegant, unashamed, polite, these are the qualities we see in a good wife...” (Data 7 #, Mulan script, Minute 17.05)

The matchmaker tells some of the qualities of a woman in the data above, where a woman is considered having high quality when she can act calmly, elegantly, not embarrassingly, and politely. Apart from illustrating the socially imposed standards for women, this scene also depicts the role of women who are only concerned with the domestic sphere. Women are viewed as weak and inferior to men, with their only role being to care for their families. Another scene depicts Mulan and her friends discussing their ideal woman.

“I prefer my soul mate to be curvaceous, with hard and wide hips. I love kissing women with cherry red lips. I don't care about her physique, I care about her cooking.” (Data 8#, Mulan script, Minute 01.01)

From the data above, the majority of Mulan's male friends judge women by their physique. This is one form of injustice that is accepted by women. Tong (2008) in his writings states that women do not have to follow the prevailing standards of beauty in order to conform to the wishes of men because basically the image of women is constructed from the masculine.

The view of society that considers women as soft and weak makes women doubtful when carrying out tasks that are usually carried out by men. This is shown by the following data:

“Impossible. A woman leads men” (Data 9#, Mulan script, Minute 01.25.36)

The data above is a dialogue between Bori Khan and Xian Lang when the woman with strong Chi said that she had guided the troops led by Mulan to find the whereabouts of the emperor. Hearing Xian Lang's words, Bori Khan hesitated, because women were seen as weak, and it was impossible for women to lead troops.

Meanwhile, other gender inequality that can be seen in the film Mulan (2020) can also be seen from the views of society regarding how a person brings honor to himself and his family. There is a difference in how honorable men and women are as seen in the data below:

“My duty is to fight, my honor is a sacrifice for the emperor” (Data 10#, Mulan script, Minute 01.01)

“When a wife serves her husband she must be silent.” (Data 11#, Mulan script, Minute 01.01)

The data above shows that the honor of a man is to join the war. While men's honor is identified with something that is physical strength, women actually bring their honor through marriage. It is a common belief in his community that a woman's ability to find a suitable partner depends on her elegance. Mulan is a woman with a different personality from women in general, her attitude is far from feminine, she does many things that are usually done by men, such as riding horses, using swords to self-defense. It can be concluded that there is pressure given to women where they have to fulfill the provisions that are deliberated desirable by men. Women are required to be feminine, serve their husbands well, that they must possess the angel character (Banks, 2021). They have to be graceful, elegant and calm. This is triggered by the societal expectations as well as patriarchal ideology imposed on women to embody femininity and adhere to traditional gender roles, including fulfilling the needs of their husbands and displaying qualities (Pierik, 2022).

What was presented through Mulan highlights the restrictive gender roles and expectations placed on women. It underscores Mulan's defiance of these norms and her willingness to challenge gender stereotypes. Mulan's story can be seen as a critique of the societal pressures on women to conform to prescribed gender roles and as an empowerment narrative that encourages women to embrace their individuality and break free from

traditional expectations. This is supported by a study of He (2013) reporting that in relevance to contemporary Chinese films, there was a transgender phenomenon in the Chinese movies. He further stated that transgender phenomena are not just about sexuality and identity, but are also about revealing the new changes and problems in our globalizing and globalized society and culture. This is resulted from a historical move in China. Liu (2013) reported that In China, starting from the late 1970s, there has been an emergence of multiple female ideals influenced by cultural shifts brought about by the “reform and opening up” policy. These shifts include the “refeminisation” of women as a response to the ideologies of the Cultural Revolution, the individualization of society in China, the commercialization and portrayal of diverse forms of femininity in the media, and the state's redefinition of what it means to be a “modern Chinese female”.

Gender Equality Reflected in Mulan Movie

This section discusses gender equality in the Mulan film, both explicitly and implicitly. Mulan (2020) is a film about Mulan's struggle for gender equality in a male-dominated society. As previously stated, the mistreatment of women is depicted in the film Mulan. Mulan is determined to fight for her rights in light of the discrimination she has experienced. The researchers employ Kate Millet's feminism theory to identify gender equality in the Mulan film. According to Millet (1970), the unequal distribution of character, roles, and status between the feminine and the masculine reflects masculinity's hegemonic and femininity subordination. Mulan's disregard for the gender distribution system she built.

This disregard for genderization is reflected in how the filmmakers created the character Mulan, who is far from feminine values. Millet explained in her study that women (feminine) are associated with passivity, stupidity, obedience, kindness, and uselessness in the division of character. Meanwhile, the masculine (male) gender is associated with aggression, intelligence, strength, and effectiveness (Millet, 1970). Furthermore, Ampofo and Boateng (2008) stated that it is widely held that men must be tough while women must be soft.

In the film Mulan (2020), the main character is depicted as a tough, strong, assertive, and intelligent woman.



Figure 2. Mulan's Character

Mulan's character is portrayed as strong and tough in the image above. Mulan, who is riding her family horse, can attest to this. Riding a horse is frequently regarded as a masculine rather than a feminine activity. The following image depicts Mulan bringing the bucket to the top of the hill. Carrying two buckets to the top of the hill was one of the warriors' training exercises. It is difficult; warriors must carry two buckets of water with straight hands. Warriors must be strong and have good mind control to complete this mission. The bravery of Mulan was one of several warriors attempting to carry the bucket to the mountain's summit.

“Only the strongest people will reach the top” (Data 12#, Mulan script, Minute 01.01)

The preceding dialogue reinforces the researchers' assumption that Mulan's character is tough and strong. Furthermore, the strong character of Mulan can be seen in pictures 3 and 4. Mulan was represented to be a strong woman in both photos, and she was skilled at martial arts. She was able to defeat men who were frequently regarded as stronger by society. Mulan, who was given the task of leading the special forces tasked with protecting the emperor, also demonstrated gender equality. Figure 3 depicts Mulan as a person who is firm and brave in the face of oppression, in addition to depicting her strong character. Mulan fought Chen Honghui bravely when he jokingly dropped Mulan's spear while they were practicing together.

Mulan's outfit also reflects her tough and powerful personality. This can be seen in the following visual artifacts.



Figure 3: Mulan's Outfit Exudes Powerful Strength

The dominant female main character, as seen in the two images above, dresses in red. The color red is frequently associated with bravery and strength. According to Darmaprawira (2002), color can be associated with a person's personality. For example, red has associations with love, lust, strength, courage, primitiveness, attractiveness, danger, sin, sacrifice, and vitality.

Apart from being described as a tough and strong figure, Mulan is described as a smart woman. It is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 4. Mulan is a smart woman

The scene depicted above depicts a battle between imperial soldiers and Rouran. When she returned from her pursuit of the Rourans' head, she discovered that her group had been cornered. Mulan went to the top of the iceberg when she realized her troops were in danger. She enticed the Rourans to launch fireballs at the ice mountains behind them. Mulan dropped some soldiers' hats on nearby rocks and began shooting arrows at the Rouran troops. The Rourans, mistaking the hat for royal troops, redirected the fireball behind the rocks, causing the iceberg to shatter and crash on the Rourans. As a result, the imperial soldiers are saved.

The researchers investigated the role and status of Mulan's main female character. In a patriarchal society, men are assigned roles that include ambition, respect, and importance. In

the meantime, women are associated with domestic servants and childcare (Millet, 1970). This is consistent with Kangas, Haider, Fraser, and Browne (2014), who state that women are described as homemakers and family caregivers. The presence of women as main characters and men as antagonists gives the impression that the film promotes gender equality. Featuring women as main characters can be seen as a positive step towards inclusivity and representation as they challenge traditional gender roles that often relegate women to secondary or supporting positions. By portraying women in prominent roles, a film can empower and provide visibility to female characters, potentially dismantling stereotypes and promoting the idea that women can possess strength, capability, and central importance in the story. This beats Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz's (2003) statement that feminine beauty stereotypes have an impact on gender identity formation in girls as Mulan contradicts it. The film challenges the assumption of men always being heroic or dominant, it does not automatically ensure a balanced portrayal of gender dynamics.

To ensure a more comprehensive analysis, it is important to consider additional factors such as the overall representation of female characters in a film, their agency and character development, the quality of their storylines, and the underlying power dynamics depicted in it. Thus, the researchers serve the portrait of Mulan's different role that may also be found in the following transcripts. Mulan's main female character is portrayed in a different role than what was previously mentioned.

"You are a mighty warrior. Rise up like a phoenix. Fight for the kingdom and people" (Data 13#, Mulan script, Minute 01.31.59)

"A woman, a warrior, a woman leads the army, and she is not a scorned dog." (Data 14#, Mulan script, Minute 01.28.57)

"You will lead us towards the Empire City." (Data 15#, Mulan script, Minute 01.19.04)

The main female characters in the film Mulan (2020) are not portrayed as domestic servants or family careers. Throughout the film, Mulan is shown doing more male work (riding a horse, martial arts, using a sword, archery, etc.) than domestic work in general, with the exception of when Mulan pours tea for the matchmaker. Mulan's role in the war against the Rouran people exemplifies Mulan's disregard for character category genderization. Despite being condemned when she reveals her true identity as a woman, Mulan manages to persuade the emperor, commander, and fellow soldiers that she is capable of being a warrior despite her gender. Related to this, Connel (2020) stated that gender is socio-culturally

constructed and that masculinity is derived from individuated behaviours, and data 13 and 14 demonstrate this. Mulan admits to being a warrior in both data.

Mulan was also given a special assignment: she was tasked with leading a special troop tasked with saving the Emperor in the Royal City. Mulan plays a high-ranking official in this film. This is demonstrated by the conversation between the General of War and Mulan after Mulan has returned to the village from which she came.

“The emperor urges you to reconsider his invitation, to join our greatest warriors, as officers in the emperor's guard” (Data 16#, Mulan script, Minute 01.43.45).

“but with humble apologies, I cannot accept it” (Data 17#, Mulan script, Minute 01.36.14)

Mulan's status and role are revealed in the preceding dialogue when she is initiated to become an officer in the imperial guard. Millet in Tong (1998) explains that in order for women to be liberated, they must exhibit androgynous traits and behavior. Androgyny is the combination of a person's 'feminine' and masculine characteristics. Women have the courage to break free from the oppressive boundaries of the sex/gender system by daring to be androgynous. Mulan's character exhibited both 'feminine' and masculine characteristics, according to the researchers. Mulan's masculine attitude can be seen in her preference for men's jobs (martial arts, horseback riding, archery, swordsmanship), as well as several traits that are commonly associated with men but are present in Mulan. Mulan's feminine attitude is demonstrated when she chooses to return to her hometown to devote herself to her family. Meanwhile, gender equality also appears in Mulan's thoughts.

“My ideal woman is brave, has a sense of humor, is also smart” (Data 18#, Mulan script, Minute 37.43).

The data above is a dialogue between Mulan and her friends when discussing their respective ideal women. Mulan's answer, as stated in the data above, shows that Mulan's film contains the value of gender equality, where Mulan defines the ideal woman as someone who is brave, funny, and smart, often these three characteristics are associated with men. Cockburn (2013) presents a different perspective, suggesting that gender roles allocate particular qualities and responsibilities to each gender, leaving both genders lacking in certain aspects of the complete human range of attributes. Males are designated as protectors and wielders of coercive power, while females are depicted as protected and natural victims. In the context of Mulan's film, the analysis highlights the association of certain characteristics,

such as bravery, humor, and intelligence, with men. This aligns with the notion presented in the sentence that certain qualities are attributed to one gender while the other gender may lack them. Mulan challenges these gender stereotypes by exhibiting traditionally masculine traits, thereby advocating for gender equality.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of previous research into the meaning of gender equality in the film *Mulan*, the researchers discovered that women were still treated unequally at the time. It is clear from how society regards men as the dominant party, while women are described as passive and only concerned with the domestic sphere. Nonetheless, the researchers found the film's depiction of Mulan's struggle for gender equality to be feminist.

The researchers identified an action taken by Mulan, the main character in the film *Mulan*, to change the social stigma that is harmful to women and to achieve equality. This film attempts to make people aware that gender equality will not be realized as long as forms of injustice are prevalent in society. Researchers hope that by conducting this study, people will become more aware of gender equality. This awareness has the potential to create a voice movement for women who were previously unable to express their opinions and desires without interference from others.

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