

## Gender Injustice in the Novel *Kartini* by Abidah El Khalieqy

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to reveal the gender injustice experienced by female characters in the novel Kartini by Abidah El Khalieqy. The data collection method used in this research is the literature study method. The data analysis is descriptive qualitative method. The types of data that will be used in this study are divided into two, namely data relating to the problem of injustice reflected in the novel. The second one is supporting data from library study. The results of the research found are that there are various forms of gender inequality in the novel 'Kartini', namely marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and an extra workload.*

**Keywords:** *Injustice, Gender, Novel, Fasih.*

### I. Introduction

The history of gender injustice between men and women has gone through a long process. Therefore, the formation of gender differences is caused by many things, including being formed, socialized, strengthened, even socially and culturally constructed, through the teachings of religion and the state. Through a long process, gender socialization is finally considered as a divine provision, as if biological behavior can no longer be changed, so that gender differences are considered and understood as the nature of men and women. (Septia, et al., 2021).

In literary work, especially in novels, women are often depicted as the sex that experiences all forms of gender injustice. This cannot be separated from the assumption that women are weak and need men as their protectors (Astuti, et al., 2018). Even in this modern era, although there are many women who are able to show their existence as woman in good career.

Likewise, through the novel *Kartini* written by Abidah El Khalieqy, it has been discrimination against women. This novel also illustrates that he also voices the forms of gender injustice experienced by women. This novel tells about the rules that are not balanced between the rights of women and men. In the novel, women are required to obey men, be gentle, shy, and respect men. While men are freed in any case, such as education, choosing a life partner and also in determining their future.

The theory used in this study is the gender discrimination theory proposed by Fasih (1996:14), where the forms of gender inequality are marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and extra workload. Gender differences are not a problem as long as they do not create gender inequality (Indrasari et al., 2020). Gender inequality is a system and structure, both men and women are victims of the system (Fairuz, et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the formation of gender differences was caused by many things, namely they were formed, socialized, strengthened, even socially or culturally constructed, through religious teachings and the state. In the end, gender socialization was accepted as a provision from God so that gender differences between men and women were considered as nature (Swaminathan, 2015). Nasri, (2017) gender is a 'cultural meaning associated

with gender identity'. For example, men are known to be firm, strong, manly, rational, and mighty. Women are known to be motherly, emotional, gentle, and beautiful. These properties are interchangeable.

According to Fakhri (1996:12) gender differences are actually not a problem as long as they do not cause gender inequality. But the problem is, it turns out that gender differences have given rise to various injustices, both for men and especially for women. Kusniati, (2021) gender inequality is a system and structure that makes men and women victims of the system. (Arniati, et al., 2019) to understand how gender differences, cause gender inequality, it can be seen through various forms of injustice, namely: marginalization or the process of economic impoverishment, subordination or not being considered important in political decisions, the formation of stereotypes through negative labelling, violence (violence), and longer workloads and old.

## **II. Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this study are formulated as follows; 1) find out the gender inequality as seen in the Novel Kartini, and 2) to reveal how gender differences become inequality through various forms of injustice, such as marginalization or the process of economic impoverishment, subordination or not being considered important in political decisions, the formation of stereotypes through negative labeling, violence, and longer workloads.

## **III. Research Method**

This study is a series of logical exercises completed to solve a problem. In logical examination, strategy is expected to be reasoned in research. The goal is that the research can be completed in accordance with what is to be achieved. Research strategy is a strategy used in exploring an object of research with a certain method. In this study, the common way is to apply qualitative methods in order to understand the depiction contained in the work. (Pathak, et al., 2013; Rahman, 2019).

In this kind of discussion, qualitative methods are strategies that can be used in research that entirely uses depiction techniques. Qualitative methods are centered on scientific data information as well as information related to the existence of context. (Pathak, et al., 2013).

This methodology produces discoveries that are obtained through information collected in different ways, including records or files and tests. The research method is an approach to obtain information about an item, which is stated by a hypothesis. Descriptive method is a technique that is equipped with a description of the materials to be concentrated subjectively, then proceed with an investigation (Faruk, 2012: 3).

Source of data is an important element in research. Data is information or raw materials that are sought and collected intentionally by researchers in accordance with the problems studied (Jacelon&Imperio, 2005). The data in this study are data in the form of words, sentences, or paragraphs that have a direct relationship with the presence of female characters in the novel Kartini by Abidah El Khalieqy. This 241-page novel was published by Araska in August 2012.

The data collection technique used in this research is a literature study technique. While the data analysis technique used is descriptive qualitative.

## **IV. Discussion**

The novel Kartini by Abidah El Khalieqy tells about a culture that forbids women from getting higher education. The character of Kartini in this novel is told as a woman who is intelligent and has a beautiful style of language. Kartini's intelligence encouraged her to have a higher education that was equal to men. However, Kartini's desire received a bad response from the environment and also the government at that time.

Various forms of gender inequality are also felt by female characters, such as marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and extra workloads.

### **Marginalization**

Marginalization that results in poverty not only affects women, but also includes men. Marginalization is caused by several factors such as evictions, natural disasters and exploitation processes. However, there are also those that only involve women, none other than sources that come from unfair government policies, beliefs, religious interpretations, traditional and customary beliefs or even scientific assumptions. (Fakhri: 1996:14)

The novel Kartini by Abidah El Khalieqy describes the position of women who are marginalized by family,

customs, and also the government. Women in the novel are considered as the weak sex so they are not allowed to receive higher education. The marginalization of female characters in the novel can be seen from the matchmaking of female characters. The female characters in the novel are matched in an effort to make them stop fighting for their rights and roles as in the following novel quote:

| Extract 1   |
|---|
| <p>"Haryono, calon suamimu itu, sebentar lagi jadi Bupati Pematang. Dia orang baik"</p> <p>"Tapi dia sudah beristri, Romo. Saya..."</p> <p>"Perjodohanmu sudah diatur sejak kamu belum dipingit, Nduk. Kamu anak yang penuh bakti. Tak mungkin kamu paksa Romo jadi bangsawan yang cedera janji" (Khalieqy, 2017: 272)</p> <p>"Raden Ajeng Wuryan membuka surat itu dan membacanya. Lalu secepatnya menyerahkan kepada Kartini. Nadi Kartini berdenyar-denyar saat membukanya. Surat dengan kop resmi dari Rembang. Setelah membacanya, tangannya gemetar seolah akan menjatuhkan surat itu. Namun, dia mencoba sekuatnya untuk menguasai diri.</p> <p>"Kamu harus bersyukur calon suamimu seorang Bupati" kata Raden Ajeng Wuryan tanpa di tanya.</p> <p>"Apa yang harus disyukuri dari seorang laki-laki yang sudah memiliki tiga istri?" Jawab Kartini kritis. (Khalieqy, 2017: 333)</p> |
| <p>"Haryono, your future husband, will soon become the Regent of Pematang. He is a good man"</p> <p>"But he's married, Father. I..."</p> <p>"Your match has been arranged since you weren't secluded, Nduk. You are a filial son. You cannot force Romo to become a nobleman who breaks his promise" (Khalieqy, 2017: 272)</p> <p>"Raden AjengWuryan opened the letter and read it. Then immediately handed over to Kartini. Kartini's pulse throbbed when she opened it. Official letterhead from Rembang. After reading it, his hands trembled as if he was about to drop the letter. However, he tried his best to control himself.</p> <p>"You should be grateful that your future husband is a regent," said Raden AjengWuryan without being asked.</p> <p>"What is there to be grateful for in a man who has three wives?" Kartini answered critically. (Khalieqy, 2017: 333)</p>     |

The women character in the novel is described as a woman who fights for her rights and role as a woman. they do not hesitate to fight against the government, customs and traditions and even families to fight for these rights and roles. However, this struggle received a lot of rejection from both the family and the government to try to overthrow the ideals of the female figure. One way to subvert this struggle is by marrying female figures so that they are powerless in their struggle. As illustrated in the two novel quotes above, the characters Kardinah and Kartini are paired with married men.

The marginalization of female characters in the novel can also be seen from the government's efforts to subvert the fighting spirit of Kartini's character in fighting for the rights and roles of women. In the novel, it is told that the character Kartini and her two sisters want to build a school for girls so that women can also have the same education and skills as men. However, this effort was blocked by the government. This can be seen in the following quote from the novel:

**Extract 2**



Purboningrat dengan sinis.  
“Gadis ningrat saja harus geger dulu untuk sekolah. Berani-beraninya bilang semua perempuan” Timpal Hadiningrat tak kalah sinis.  
“Mungkin dia pikir ada zaman perempuan jadi Bupati” (Khalieqy, 2017: 174)

In between dances, Hadiningrat chatted with Purboningrat who was nearby.  
"Honestly, she said, all women have the right to be educated in Orlando independently. So it's not easy to get married here and there," said Purboningrat sarcastically.  
“Even a noble girl has to make a fuss to go to school. How dare you say all women” said Hadiningrat no less sarcastically. “Perhaps he thought there was a time when women became regents” (Khalieqy, 2017: 174)

In the novel quote above, the male character talks about an educated woman. They think that a woman does not deserve an education like a man. A woman must be educated based on Dutch upbringing so as not to easily turn away from her husband. Other subordination is also found in the following quote:

**Extract 4**  
Kalau kita menuruti permintaan perempuan untuk sekolah tinggi, nanti mereka akan ngelunjuk minta jadi Bupati. Lama orang miskin ikut-ikutan. Nanti jangan-jangan muncul suatu zaman anak tukang kayu jadi pembesar Negara! Ngawur itu!” (Khalieqy, 2017: 318)

“If we are asked for women's requests for high school, later they will step up to ask to become Regents. For a long time, the poor joined in. Later, maybe the time will come when the carpenter's son will become a State official! Disgusting!” (Khalieqy, 2017: 318)

In the novel quote above, women are likened to the sex that does not deserve higher education. Women are also equated with the poor who should not be educated like the rich. In the quote above, women are considered inferior so they cannot get an education because the only men who can be educated are men from rich families. Based on some of the quotes above, it can be seen that the subordination of women was originally born because a woman was insulted because she did not receive higher education like men. In addition, women's subordination also occurs because of the assumption that women are not worthy to be educated let alone to be women. Fakih in his book entitled Gender Analysis and Social Transformation states the assumption that women are irrational and emotional so that women cannot lead, giving rise to attitudes that place women in unimportant positions. (Fakih, 1996:15)

### Stereotype

Fakih (1996:14) defines stereotype as labelling or marking a certain group. In gender issues, there are injustices against certain genders, especially on the part of women. This labelling is like calling women the cause of crimes such as rape. Because the way they dress and preen invite the lust of men.

The stereotype or labelling of women is also seen in the novel Kartini by Abidah El Khalieqy. The stereotype that women's work is only in the domestic sphere such as washing, sweeping, raising children and educating children. Kartini's character in the novel is described as a woman who wants to get a higher education like a man. it aims so that he can elevate the status of women in the world. As the following novel quote:

**Extract 5**  
“ Ni, mau seperti dia, Romo. Jadi guru yang mengajar rakyat Jepara. Ni ingin sekolah ke Belanda seperti...  
“Jangan ngimpi, Ni” potong Sulastri. “ Sekolah HBS di Semarang saja

belum tentu boleh.” Lanjutnya mencoba menjatuhkan hati Kartini.  
“Setelah lulus E.L.S, kamu akan masuk pingitan, Ni. Kamu hanya bisa keluar rumah sampai ada surat lamaran dari putra bangsawan,” terang slamet. (Khalieqy, 2017: 62)

“Ni, want to be like him, Father. So a teacher who teaches Japanese people. Ni wants to study in the Netherlands like...  
"Don't dream, Ni," interrupted Sulastri. "HBS schools in Semarang are not necessarily allowed." He kept trying to bring down Kartini's heart.  
"After graduating from E.L.S, he will be in exile, Ni. You can only leave the house until there is an application letter from a noble child," explained Slamet. (Khalieqy, 2017: 62)

The quote from the novel above illustrates Kartini's desire to pursue higher education. However, that desire was hindered by the culture in which Kartini lived. In Kartini culture, namely Javanese culture, a woman after reaching the age of adolescence must follow seclusion until a man comes to propose to her.

Another stereotype given to female characters in novels is that in essence a woman should be able to cook to satisfy her future husband. As the following novel quote:

**Extract 6**

“Ingat selalu aturannya Ni! Kalau perempuan tidak terampil di dapur, laki-laki akan jajan di luar rumah!” Sulastri menambahi pelajaran pagi. (Khalieqy, 2017: 77)

"Always remember the rules Ni! If women are not good in the kitchen, men will eat outside!" Sulastri added morning lessons. (Khalieqy, 2017: 77)

The novel excerpt above shows the stereotype to women that a woman's job is only in the kitchen and makes her husband satisfied with his appearance in the kitchen. If then a husband is dissatisfied with the appearance of a woman in the kitchen, then it can be at risk of infidelity. Men will look for other women who have more skills in the kitchen.

Based on some of the quotes above, it can be seen that the stereotype attached to women is that women's work is only in the domestic sphere, namely doing household work and taking care of children or families. Women are not given the freedom to get an education or work in an office like men. According to Fakih, many injustices against certain genders, generally women, stem from the stereotypes attached to them. For example, a sign that begins with the assumption that women preen to attract the attention of the opposite sex. In addition, society believes that the main task of women is to serve their husbands. This stereotype has natural consequences for women's education to be secondary. Stereotypes against women are everywhere. Many government regulations, or religious regulations, culture and customs of society are developed because of certain stereotypes. (Fakih1996:17)

### Violence

Fakih in his book Gender Analysis and Social Transformation (1996:14) divides power into four kinds. One of them is the act of beatings and physical attacks. Usually occurs in the household (Domestic Violence). Including acts of violence in the form of child abuse. In addition, violence can also be in the form of torture that leads to genital mutilation (Anriadi, et al., 2021)

The novel Kartini by Abidah El Khalieqy tells about the culture of seclusion that must be carried out by Javanese women who have grown up. The purpose of khalwat is to prepare teenagers to become mature wives in the future. However, in the khalwat process there are rules that hurt women physically. This can be seen in the following quote from the novel:

**Extract 7**

Saat usia Kartini mencapai 14 tahun, masa yang dinantikan itu pun datang. Sulastri membuka pintu hitam yang gelap dan mempersilahkan Kartini memasukinya. Jika tidak suka dipersilahkan masuk secara baik-baik, pintu itu akan memaksanya masuk, menyedotnya masuk lorong waktu jelaga yang membuat jiwa tersiksa. “Ss... sakit, Mbok!” pekik suara Kartini dari dalam kamar pingitannya. Rupaya Mbok Lawiyah sedang membedat dada Kartini dengan stagen, menutup payudaranya agar terlihat ratah. “Kurang kencang itu! masih kelihatan menonjol! Nanti seperti Ledhek! Bukan Raden Ajeng!” tegur sulastri keras dan ketus. (Khalie, 2017:67)

When Kartini was 14 years old, the time she had been waiting for arrived. Sulastri opened the door which was pitch black and let Kartini in. If he didn't like being greeted warmly, the door would force him in, sucking him into a soul-torturing tunnel of soot.

“Ss... sick, Mbok!” shrieked Kartini's voice from inside her seclusion room.

So MbokLawiyah dissected Kartini's chest with a stage, covering her breasts to make it look flat.

“Not too tight! still stands out! Later like Ledhek! Not Raden Ajeng!” Sulastri rebuked loudly and curtly. (Khalie, 2017:67)

The quote from the novel above illustrates that Kartini's character, who is already a teenager, has entered a period of seclusion. In the process of khalwat, Javanese women are required to trim their breasts to make them look even. However, it hurts a woman's body by being forced into being invisible. In addition to cleaning the breasts, in the process of seclusion there is also ndodok behavior. This can be seen in the following quote:

**Extract 8**

“Kartini terjatuh beberapa kali. Terguling ke kiri ke kanan sampai kram. Dia mengaduh kesakitan. Sulastri yang sejak awal menjadi juru pengawas, menghela nafas. Mungkin Sulastri lupa saat belajar laku ndodok dulu, dia juga terguling berkali-kali, meskipun berlatih dengan ikhlas dan senang hati. Bisa dibayangkan Kartini yang sejak awal merasa aneh dan terus mempertanyakan hakikat semua dari ajaran pingitan ini. (Khalieqy, 2017:69)

“Kartini fell several times. Rolled left to right until stiff. He groaned in pain. Sulastri, who had been the supervisor from the start, sighed. Maybe Sulastri forgot when he first learned to see, he also rolled many times, even though he practiced sincerely and happily. You can imagine Kartini who felt strange and kept questioning the nature of all these teachings of seclusion from the start (Khalieqy, 2017:69)

The quote above describes the suffering of Kartini's character while undergoing a process of exile called ndodok behavior. While doing ndodok, Kartini fell left and right, causing her body to hurt.

Fakih said that many forms of crime could be categorized as gender violence. First, the form of rape against women, including rape in marriage. Rape occurs when a person is forced to obtain sexual services without that person's consent. This reluctance often cannot be expressed due to various factors, such as fear, shame, coercion both economically, socially and culturally, there is no other choice. Second, beatings or physical attacks that occur in the household. Including acts of violence in the form of torture against children. Third, the form of torture that leads to the genitals, such as female circumcision. Various reasons were put forward by the

community for this circumcision. However, one of the strongest reasons is the existence of gender assumptions and biases in society, namely to control women.

### Workload

In fact, the workload borne by women, especially housewives, is very heavy. Domestic work in the community has become an obligation for women to do it. However, the hard work is still underappreciated and noticed by people who hate the work. Delegating household chores to women is certainly not a good idea. (Fakih, 199:78) Women in the novel *Kartini* by Abidah El Khalieqy are guided from a young age to prepare themselves to become mature wives for their husbands. Women are required to be able to do everything related to domestic roles such as cooking, batik, and also being taught how to respect men. as in the following quote from the novel:

|  |
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| <b>Extract 9</b>   |
| “Sudah mau siang. Kowe lamban ke dapur,” Sulastri memulai penjurian. Masak-memasak dalam rangka memenuhi pelajaran musim pingitan. Tentor dan penguji utama adalah Sulastri. Asisten tentor bernama Mbok Lawiyah. Penguji yang lain bernama Raden Sosroningrat, Raden Ajeng Wuryan, Ngasirah, dan yang lain. (Khalieqy, 2017:76) |
| "It's noon. Lowe is slow to the kitchen," Sulastri began the judging. Cooking to fulfill seclusion season lessons. The main supervisor and examiner is Sulastri. The assistant tutor was named MbokLawiyah. Other examiners named Raden Sosroningrat, Raden AjengWuryan, Ngasirah, and others. (Khalieqy, 2017:76)               |

The novel quote above describes the workload that a woman must be able to do. A woman must be able to cook in order to be a good wife for her husband in the future. Other workloads can also be seen in the following novel excerpts;

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|---|
| <b>Extract 10</b>   |
| Keesokan harinya, Ngasirah mengajari Kartini, Rukmini, dan Kardinah, membatik di teras belakang. ( Khalieqy, 2017: 143) |
| The next day, Ngasirah taught Kartini, Rukmini, and Kardinah, batik on the back porch. (Khalieqy, 2017: 143)            |

The novel quote above shows the workload that women should know. On the first quote. A woman is required to be able to make batik. The female character in the novel, *Kartini*, is seen being taught by her mother, Yu Ngasirah, to make batik.

Based on some of the new data quotes above, it can be seen that women tend to have more workloads than men. Women are given the responsibility to keep the house clean and take care of the children and family. While men only work to provide for the family.

There is an assumption that women are nurturing and diligent, and are not suitable to be the head of the household, so that all household work is the responsibility of women. As a result, many women have to work hard and long to keep their household clean and tidy, starting from cleaning and mopping floors, cooking, washing, and others (Fakih, 1996: 18).

## V. Conclusion

Based on research that has been done on the novel *Kartini* by Abidah El Khalieqy, researchers found that female characters experience gender injustice such as marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and workload.

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