



**THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN SUBORDINATION IN  
NAWAL EL SAADAWI'S *WOMAN AT POINT ZERO***

**THESIS PROPOSAL**

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**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, RESEARCH, AND  
TECHNOLOGY  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
JEMBER UNIVERSITY  
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**THESIS**

A thesis presented to the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember, as one of the requirements to get the award of Sarjana Sastra Degree in English Studies

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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is sincerely dedicated to:

1. My beloved parents, Erizal Tanjung and Lasnida Sikumbang. Thank you so much for the unconditional love, incessant prayers, and endless support;
2. My dearest little brother, Bayu Rozzaqy Putra. Thank you for being alive and being a good brother;



**MOTTO**

Dreams are in the midst of sweat like flowers that bloom slowly. The hard work will never betray.

*(JKT48)*



**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**The Representation of Women Subject Subordination in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero***” is an original writing. The analysis and research contained in this thesis have never been published in any publication. I also validate that all sources utilized and supports received in the process of writing this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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## SUMMARY

**THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN SUBJECT SUBORDINATION IN NAWAL EL SAADAWI'S *WOMAN AT POINT ZERO***; Aldi Mahesa Putra Pratiwi, 160110101092; 30 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.

This research tries to uncover the issue of women's subordination in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. This story represents the subordination of women to the main character.

The theory of representation by Stuart Hall (1997) and the discursive approach by Michel Foucault are used as the main theory to find the discourse of women's subordination in the novel. Women's subordination process throughout the novel is divided into three categories. Two kinds of data are used in this research. The first one is the primary data which are taken from the dialogues and narratives in *Woman at Point Zero*. Then, the secondary data are the data that are taken from books, journals, web, interviews, and other sources that are related to the topic of this research.

In the analysis process, first, I do the textual analysis. The theory of representation by Stuart Hall and the discursive approach by Michel Foucault are used to find the discourse of women's subordination in the novel. The form of subordination is divided into three categories which is proposed by Sultana in her article. In doing textual analysis, I connect those three categories of subordination with the contextual background of the story. The analysis of contextual background is also aimed to uncover the critical positions of the author whether the author supports or resists the issue of women's subordination.

This research shows that the subordination of women subjects is represented in *Woman at Point Zero*. The patriarchal society of Egypt in the 1980s as the background causes the subordination of women subjects to appear in the novel. In the 1980's era, women are put in the second class. Thus, they get subordinated,

violated, exploited, and being powerless. Through the resistance of Firdaus, Nawal El Saadawi has shown her point of view on the issue of women's subordination. In conclusion, she stands for gender equality.





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9. My Alma Mater

Jember, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

The Writer

Aldi Mahesa Putra

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter has three subchapters, each of which focuses on the background of the study, the problems to discuss, and the goals of the study. The explanation of the issue that has been chosen as the topic of the study is included in the background of the study, along with a concise explanation of the method that is utilized to conduct this study. The problems to discuss are the part where research questions are written. The research questions serve as the basis for tracing the answers to achieve the goal of the study.

### 1.1 The Background of The Study

Nowadays, the study of gender has been one of the top issues in the scientific world. Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) has become increasingly important. There is a growing awareness and recognition of the impact of discrimination and exclusion on individuals and society, and the need to address these issues to promote equality and justice. Studies have shown that promoting gender equity and social inclusion can lead to significant economic gains and contribute to sustainable development. United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have highlighted the importance of gender equity and social inclusion for achieving a more equitable and sustainable future (United Nations, 2015).

The social construction of men's dominance and women's subordination has resulted in a system in which women are systematically subordinated to men. Men's superiority leads to the subordination of women since it has been constructed by society. In the concept of patriarchal society, the masculinity of men has rubbed out the consciousness of most women about their right to be equal, as they are unconsciously being hegemonized.

Instead of being the consequence of a single event, patriarchy was the product of a process that evolved over for 2500 years (from approximately 3100 BC to 600 BC). Many influences contributed to this process, which ultimately

resulted in the current form of men's superiority (Lerner, 1987). The idea that men are superior to women is deeply embedded in our culture. In consequence, men in patriarchal societies tend to intrude on women's autonomy and rights. Typically, men hold positions of authority. This explains why men are more likely to treat women as subordinated objects.

Jim Sidanius, a social psychologist, believes that subordination is a crucial element of social systems that promote inequality and oppression. He argues that various methods, such as economic exploitation, political exclusion, and cultural domination, are used to keep subordinate groups in a lower position and justify their inferior status. These methods work together to maintain the subjugated group's subordination (Sidanius, 1993). In this case, women are subordinated subjects.

Women subordination refers to the systematic process of oppression and marginalization of women within patriarchal societies through various dimensions (Hooks, 1984). The term "women's subordination" described by Hooks explains how women have historically been treated unequally in a variety of contexts culturally, socially, politically, and academically. This is typically founded on the idea that men are naturally better than women, which in consequence encourages discrimination against women and inequalities of power in society. Gender pay gaps, lack of access to school and employment, a lack of reproductive rights, domestic and sexual violence, and a lack of political representation are all examples of how women are subordinated. Women's authority is controlled by men because it is constructed that men are more powerful than women.

Furthermore, this means that society is forced to put women under patriarchal control systematically as women's labor power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility and property, and other economic resources are dominated mostly by men (Walby, 1989). Walby sees it as evidence that men have complete authority over a woman's life. This means that men are free to resort to any measures necessary to achieve their needs from women. Women do not have the freedom to choose how they should live their lives. Hence, as a result of this inferiority, men have the power to subordinate women in every aspect of their everyday lives.

*Woman at Point Zero* is a novel written by Egyptian feminist and author, Nawal El Saadawi. The book was first published in Arabic in 1975 and later translated into English in 1983. This version of the novel was published by Zed Books in 1984 in London. It was translated by Sherif Hetata, which was also Nawal's former husband. This edition of the novel is containing about 128 pages. It is based on the true story of Firdaus, a woman who was executed for murder in Egypt and tells the story of her life leading up to her execution.

The novel sets in Egypt and is the story of Firdaus, an Egyptian woman who suffers from poverty and subordination throughout her life. As a child, Firdaus is sold into marriage and experiences abuse from her husband. Later, she becomes a prostitute to support herself and gain independence. Despite her circumstances, Firdaus becomes known for her strength and intelligence, inspiring those around her with her courage and determination. In the end, Firdaus finds herself in prison for killing her pimp, but rather than pleading for her life, she chooses to face the death penalty with dignity and strength, refusing to be oppressed any longer. The novel is a powerful reminder of the struggles that many women face around the world and the importance of fighting for their rights and equality.

Based on the explanation above, I assume that women's subordination is represented in the novel *Woman at Point Zero*. Patriarchal society as the background of the novel strengthens the potential of women subject to be subordinated. This study uses a qualitative approach to assess the novel's data to support my hypothesis. The best definition of a qualitative method is one that relies on words or descriptions rather than numbers (Creswell, 2014). Stuart Hall's theory of representation is a useful framework for analyzing this novel. The term "representation" implies the process of applying language to express an idea or image of something to other people. Language, signs, and images that stand in for actual objects are all essential parts (Hall, 1997). It means that representation is part of the process of meaning production through language. The discursive approach proposed by Michel Foucault is the approach that I use for analyzing this novel.

## **1.2 Problem to Discuss**

This research will focus on the representation of women's subordination. Two research questions will be discussed in this research as follows:

1. How does the novel represent women's subordination?
2. What is the critical position of the author?

## **1.3 The Goals of The Study**

The primary objective of this research is to make a contribution to the field of literature, particularly in comprehending the theory of representation within literary studies. This research has two specific goals, those are:

1. To illustrate how the novel portrays the subordination of women.
2. To examine the author's critical position.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents previous researches and theoretical framework. The previous researches are important for this research as a reference for doing the analysis. The theoretical framework defines how this novel is analyzed. The theory that is used in this research is the theory of representation by Stuart Hall.

### 2.1 Previous Research

A literature review serves as a crucial tool for researchers to prevent duplicating previous work or addressing the same topic already covered by other researchers. By reviewing existing studies, researchers can identify areas that have not been explored yet and avoid repeating mistakes. In this study, I use three earlier research studies that are connected to the theories and topics employed in my own research. The first previous research is gained from Khoma's thesis (2016). Elin Sandqvist's article, "Politics, Hidden Agendas and a Game of Thrones: An Intersectional Analysis of Women's Sexuality in George R.R. Martin's A Game of Thrones" (2016) is the second previous research. The third, Zahratul Fitrianie's "The Representation of Women's Oppression in Arthur Conan Doyle's Selected Stories" (2019) is the subject of the third previous study.

The first previous study used Stuart Hall's theory of representation. This thesis seeks to determine the discourse of woman's oppression and its influence via the women protagonist's life and the story's societal context. The researcher uses patriarchal ideology to determine the dominance of men's authority. This study concludes that Suzzane Collins's *Catching Fire* depicts the subjugation of women by the novel's women protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. At the conclusion of the study, Khoma identified two different forms of oppression. Oppression may come in the form of either physical force or mental. With her study, Khoma not only establishes the author's critical perspective but also provides an overview of the novel's historical and cultural context. This thesis helps me in understanding how to do an



analysis using the representation theory by Stuart Hall. Khoma's work has the same topic as mine which is women's oppression. It gives me a reference about women's oppression.

The next previous study by Sandqvist examines the status of women in the power relationship and how women utilize their sexuality to get power. Moreover, Sandqvist analyzes the family paradigm and how women preserve their families to keep biological relationships. The theory utilized involves intersectional theory by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, as well as the idea of family structure from the standpoint of Patricia Hill Collins.

According to the intersectional theory used by Sandqvist in her thesis, the power relationship in *A Game of Thrones* favors men over women, a phenomenon that also occurs inside the family. Sandqvist discovers that women are unable to be independently powerful. When backed by a strong masculine figure, women may achieve great things. If women want to advance in politics, marriage is the only way to make women have power. In order to have their voices heard by men in political decision-making, women must join the political structure. Women should return to their traditional roles as objects and spouses if men refuse to listen to what they have to say. Moreover, Sandqvist argues that women's sexuality and reproduction represent and maintain societal inequalities. This thesis provides me with a broader examination of the subjugation of women's personalities from an intersectional viewpoint. It describes how women are positioned in social and familial hierarchies.

The third previous research portrays the discussion about women's oppression in Doyle's selected stories. In her study, Fitriani employs Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Michel Foucault's discursive approach to uncover the underlying discourse surrounding the issue of women's oppression in Doyle's work. In addition to that, she makes use of Iris Young's *Five Faces of Oppression*. According to Young, the different manifestations of oppression include things like exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural dominance, and violence.

This thesis will examine and analyze related issues, theories, and context by drawing on knowledge of those earlier studies. This thesis examines the subordination of women in the novel *Woman at Point Zero*, focusing on the author's

protagonist's own experiences with such subordination. Using a constructionist and discursive approach, this thesis will use Stuart Hall's theory of representation to identify the discourse of women's subordination.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a conceptual framework that provides a structured approach to understanding and analyzing a particular research problem. The theoretical framework gives a structure for what to look for in the data, for how to think about how what I observe in the data fits together, and for how to more effectively describe the results in light of what current theories suggest. It enables us to draw connections between the abstract and concrete aspects of the research data (Kivunja, 2018).

### 2.2.1 Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation

There are two different but connected definitions of "representation" in the shortened Oxford English Dictionary. The first definition is the process of bringing something to mind visually or mentally through description or imagination. The second definition, on the other hand, is an intention to symbolize, substitute for, or represent. The term representation is being utilized to characterize the problem of women subordination in *Woman at Point Zero* in order to facilitate this analysis. A person or thing is said to be represented if it is described or portrayed as having a particular characteristic.

With his work titled "Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practice," Hall argues:

“Representation is the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enable us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events.” (Hall, 1997:17)

It implies that representation is the most important aspect of the process of producing and communicating the meaning of cognitive thoughts via language. Based on Hall's book, he claims that representation refers to utilizing words to express something important about or reflect the world to others. It does require the use of signs and visuals that symbolize or stand in for objects. (Hall, 1997:1)

There are two types of representation systems—a sequence of concepts or mental representation, and a language—that allow for representation to take place (Hall, 1997:17). A mental representation is a collection of ideas that may be linked to real-world entities and events. It is a set of images, thoughts, and connections in a person's mind that help them understand and deal with the outside world. Mental representations can be anything from simple ideas to complicated models. They are made through events, learning, and cognitive processes. People use them as mental models or maps to find their way around, solve problems, and make sense of what they've seen and done..

The language system is the second system. Concepts must be expressed in ordinary language. This system associates thoughts and ideas with specific spoken or visual words or visuals. Since everyone interprets things in his or her own perspective, the meaning of building process varies from culture to culture and from one group to another.

Hall claimed that there are three approaches for to seeing how representation occurs within language.. The first one is a reflective approach. In the reflective approach, it is stated that the source of meaning is found in the object, person, idea, or event itself, and that language only acts as a mirror to reflect this meaning back to us (Hall, 1997:25). With this approach, it is assumed that meaning is already embedded in things. Language operates through the way it displays meaning like a mirror. The second one is an intentional approach. The intentional approach is if the author intends for the words to signify exactly what they are saying (Hall, 1997:25). In order for our own meanings to be communicated and understood by others, it is necessary for them to be they must be included into the rules, standards, and conventions that control language (Hall, 1997:25). It means that even though

meaning intends to what author means, it should follow the conventions of the society. It is because language is a tool for people to share meaning. The third approach is a constructionist. Nothing in the world possesses any meaning by themselves, no matter if it's an object, an event, or a phenomenon. Meaning is constructed through the application of shared cultural concepts and symbols. To give objects meaning, we use a broad range of symbolic systems, including language, signs, and any other systems. "Things don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational system – concept and sign." (Hall, 1997:25)

It shows that people are the individuals who give things meaning. We must be cautious not to confound the material world, which is made up of objects and people, with the symbolic practices and processes that are responsible for the functioning of representation, meaning, and language (Hall, 1997:25). Meaning is created by members of society so that individuals may meaningfully contribute their own meaning to the world.

According to Hall, the semiotics approach of Ferdinand de Saussure and the discursive approach of Michel Foucault are the two main models of the constructionist approach. In this study, I use operate Michel Foucault's discursive approach since it is suited for assisting the examination of the obtained data's discourse. Foucault concerns to the production of knowledge which is often known as discourse. Foucault's discursive approach contains three fundamental concepts: the idea of discourse, the problem of power and knowledge, and the question of the subject.

"By discourse, Foucault meant a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language." (Hall: 1997:44)

The idea of discourse refers to the concept or notion of communication and conversation. Discourse encompasses the exchange of ideas, opinions, and information through spoken or written language between individuals or groups. It involves the sharing, negotiation, and interpretation of meaning within a particular context or social setting.

The problem of power and knowledge refers to the complex relationship between power dynamics and the production, distribution, and control of knowledge within society. It highlights the interplay between power structures and the ways in which knowledge is generated, validated, and used to shape social, political, and cultural systems. At its core, the problem of power and knowledge examines how power influences what is considered valid knowledge and who has the authority to define and control it. Power can be understood as the ability to influence, control, or exert authority over others, while knowledge refers to information, ideas, or beliefs that are considered to be true or valid within a particular social context.

The question of subject refers to a philosophical inquiry into the nature and existence of the self or the subject. It explores the fundamental question of what it means to be a conscious, thinking, and experiencing individual. This question delves into the nature of personal identity, self-awareness, and the relationship between the subject and the external world. The question of subject has implications not only in philosophy but also in psychology, cognitive science, and other disciplines concerned with understanding human consciousness and selfhood. It raises philosophical puzzles, such as the mind-body problem, the problem of other minds, and the nature of free will.

In a broader sense, discourse includes not only formal discussions but also informal conversations, debates, lectures, interviews, speeches, and any other form of communication that involves the expression and exchange of ideas. It often involves the exploration of different perspectives, arguments, and viewpoints in order to reach a deeper understanding of a subject or to influence others' opinions.

The relationship between knowledge and power out to be a central topic for Foucault. Foucault discusses the reality of knowledge in the absolute sense — a truth that stayed the same regardless of the time period, place, or circumstance — but he does so in the framework of a discursive construction that sustains a regime of truth (Hall, 1997:49).

### 2.2.2 Discursive Approach

There are two main variants or models of constructionist approach. These are semiotic approach, influenced by a great Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and a discursive approach involving the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (Hall, 1997:15). Language always has signs and signifiers. These models study about the signifier text and the signifier of signs. Thus, the discursive method developed by Michel Foucault is being used in this study. As stated by Hall:

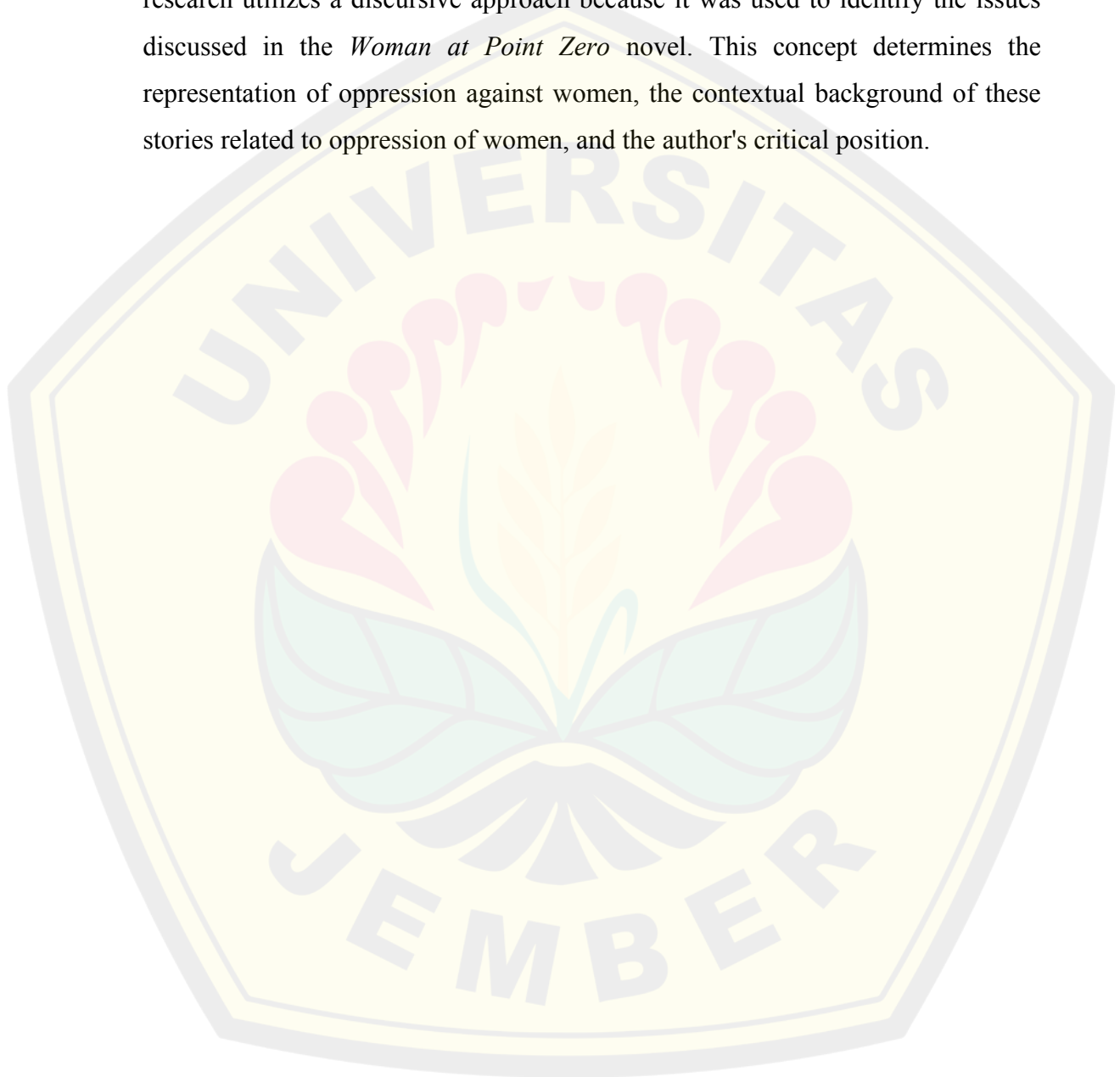
“Foucault used the word ‘representation’ in a narrower sense than we are using it here, but he is considered to have contributed to a novel and significant general approach to the problem of representation. What concerned him was the production of the knowledge (rather than just meaning) through what he called discourse (rather than just language). His project, he said was to analyse ‘how human beings understand themselves in our culture’ and how our knowledge about ‘the social, the embodied individual and shared meanings’ comes to be product in different periods.”

(Hall, 1997: 42-43)

Language is not the only tool used in representation to build meaning. Furthermore, representation requires discourse as it is essential that it is considered while understanding the object. Hall also contends that Foucault's discursive approach is based on three concepts: discourse, the problem of power and knowledge, and the question of the subject (Hall, 1997:43). Foucault focuses on the creation of knowledge, which is also called discourse. Foucault's discursive approach has three main ideas: discourse, power and knowledge, and the subject.

Language and practice are essential to the concept of discourse. It implies that individuals form a connection between their words (language) and their actions (practice). Moreover, Foucault argues that discourse constructs and develops the topic. It both defines and generates the things that make up the objects of our knowledge. It provides the proper way to have meaningful conversations and debates about a topic (Hall, 1997:44). In addition, he claims that discourse does not originate from a single source but rather arises as a wide variety of texts and activities in a wide variety of institutional environments. Hence, discursive practice is another area where similarities emerge in conversation.

To Foucault, the construction of knowledge and meaning through discourse is more important than the language itself (Hall, 1997:44). So, meaning is constructed through discourse. According to Foucault, we know things if they signify anything to us, and this is why discourse is so important. Knowledge is produced by the discourse, not the thing itself (Hall, 1997:45). Therefore, this research utilizes a discursive approach because it was used to identify the issues discussed in the *Woman at Point Zero* novel. This concept determines the representation of oppression against women, the contextual background of these stories related to oppression of women, and the author's critical position.



## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher is going to discuss the type of research, the strategy of doing the research, the ways data are collected, how the data are processed, and the way the data are analyzed. Those are arranged into type of research, research strategy, method of collecting data, data processing, and data analysis.

### 3.1 Type of Research

Since the data are presented in the form of text, this study can be classified as qualitative research. The researcher also used the representation theory which is based on the idea that it is possible to depict or describe something using words. When conducting qualitative research, the data are typically correlated with either words or images (Denscombe, 2010). Qualitative research uses the data in the forms of words, sentences or pictures that the meaning becomes the most significant part. This type of research is appropriate for this research since this research tries to analyze data obtained from the novel *Woman at Point Zero* which becomes the primary source of this research.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The data used in this research are divided into two kinds of data. The first one is primary data and the second one is secondary data. The primary data are data related to the topic of women subordination. The data are taken from the novel *Woman at Point Zero* in the form of dialogues, words, and other information that relate to the issue of women's oppression. The secondary data used are books, thesis, articles, and some information provided by the internet. After getting the material and the related sources of the data, the researcher did a close reading on the primary and secondary data to understand the text fully. After reading the data,



the researcher took some important notes of the dialogues or narration of the novel as well as references of some experts.

### 3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

To provide answers to the research questions presented in the previous chapter, the data processing and analysis conducted in this section were carried out. Close reading, collecting data, classifying data, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions are some of the steps that researcher used to define and elaborate the discourse of women subordination represented in the novel. The novel that is used to be analyzed, *Woman at Point Zero*, is firstly published in Arabic. It is written by Nawal El Saadawi and later translated into English by Zed Books and translated by Sherif Hetata.

After doing the closed reading of the primary data, to apply Hall's representation, especially constructionist and discursive approach by Foucault, all of the data related to women dominating woman are classified into two categories. The first category is the data of objectification, subordination and oppression towards woman character represented in the novel, the second category of the data is the social context of the novel, and the author's social background. First category of data were described and analyzed in order to answer the first research question. The researcher analyzed women's subordination and women's oppression constructed in the novel *Woman at Point Zero*. This aspect eventually formed a discourse of women dominates woman. The collected data in the form of quotation are specially sorted and classified to see the construction of the discourse of women dominating women actions. The analysis focuses on the depiction of women subordination and oppression done by woman that will signify the domination of a woman over another woman under patriarchal society. By elaborating it, the researcher eventually answered the first research question of how the subordination of women represented in the novel.

Furthermore, textual analysis was conducted in order to find the discursive construction of women oppression through women characters. Textual analysis was executed by examining the novel's data in the form of dialogues and sentences. The representation theory by Stuart Hall (1997) was applied to analyze the validated data found in the novel *Woman at Point Zero*. Additionally, discursive approach by Michel Foucault is also used to seek out the discourse of women subordination issues in order to correlate the context of gender issues in Egypt by employing representation process that is constructed by social context and patriarchal culture through character or events that are represented in novel and real life. Furthermore the discourse is also related to several key aspects of women subordination identified by Bell Hooks. Then, the reserach revealed the critical position of the author of the novel, Nawal El Saadawi, who tried to portray her thought of the women subordination issues. In addition, the previous analyses of discursive constructions guided to the author's critical position. In order to support the information regarding the critical position that the author has, a contextual background on society and the topic of women's oppression in 1975, the year that the novel is published, will be required. The secondary data are taken from the books, journal, article, interview and other supporting sources in the form of quotation and statements. The secondary data are limited to the information about contextual condition of the literary work and the research topic, women subordination, women objectification, women oppression and women dominating women that can support the analysis of the data.

## CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

The fourth chapter of the research is divided into two subchapters, and the purpose of both of these subchapters is to elaborate on conversations in order to provide answers to the research questions provided in the first chapter. The first subchapter focuses on elaborating the issues of women subordination experienced by the main character in the novel. The representation theory by Stuart Hall (1997) will be applied to analyze the selected data found in the novel *Woman at Point Zero*. Additionally, discursive approach by Michel Foucault is also used to seek out the discourse of women subordination issues in order to correlate the context of gender issues in Egypt by employing representation process that is constructed by social context and patriarchal culture through character or events that are represented in novel and real life. Furthermore the discourse is also related to several key aspects of women subordination identified by Abeda Sultana. Then, the next chapter reveals the critical position of the author of the novel, Nawal El Saadawi, who tried to portray her thought of the women subordination issues.

### 4.1 The Representation of Women Subordination in *Woman at Point Zero*

This subchapter will explore and elaborate on how the main character, Firdaus, suffer the gender inequality and being subordinated as a woman within society. Subordination is a condition or circumstance in which a person or group is in a subordinate position or is dependent on a person or group with more authority or dominance. According to Advanced Learners Dictionary, “subordination means having less power or authority than somebody else in a group or an organization” (Hornby, 2005). In the context of gender, subordination refers to the inferior position and dependency that women experience to the men. This condition is very close enough to the concept of patriarchy system that constructs how women are positioned lower than men. The idea of patriarchy assumes that men are naturally better than women. It supports the idea that women should rely on and be controlled by men in all areas of life. As a result, men have all the power and control in the

family, society, and government. Because of patriarchy, women were not allowed to have legal rights and opportunities. Patriarchal values limit women's ability to move around freely and take away their freedom over themselves and their belongings. To subordinate anything implies to make it subordinate to another, or less significant (Cobuild, 2010).

Women's subordination means that women have a lower status in society and are not able to participate in making important decisions or have access to power. The subordination of women means that women are considered less important than men. Women suffer unfair treatment because of certain reasons such as being dealt with society differently, not believing in themselves, and thinking they can't do anything to change their situation. Men use their power to control over women. In all types of relationships where one person has power over another, women are often treated as less important. Modern feminist theory starts with Simone de Beauvoir's idea that men see women as very different from themselves and reduced to the status of the second sex and hence subordinate (Beauvoir, 1989).

#### **4.1.1 Gendered Socialization Process**

Subordination does not imply evil intent on the side of the dominant, rather, it allows for collaboration between the dominant and the subordinate. It involves the option of voluntarily accepting subordinate position in return for protection and privilege (Lerner, 1987). Within patriarchal societies, it enforces certain customs, traditions, and roles in society through socialization process. The patriarchy created ideas of what is considered masculine and feminine, and separated activities and spaces based on gender. This was done to maintain men dominance (Sultana, 2012). Even from an early age, boys and girls are taught to do things based on their gender. To reinforce patriarchal domination, this socialization process creates the terms "masculine" and "feminine" to regulate which behavior is appropriate for a man and a woman based on their gender.

In this socialization process, there are several agents operating to strengthen patriarchal domination such as family, religion, legal system, educational system, economic system, mass media, and political system as the basis of patriarchal and social structure (Sultana, 2012:8). The term "social structure" is significant because it rejects the idea that biological determines a person's role in society and that all men are dominant while all women are subordinate.

In this novel, the main character named Firdaus was born into a family that was thick with patriarchal culture. She experiences patriarchal social conditioning where she had to become a woman who was shaped in such a way. Women were forced to comply with patriarchal ideas, traditions and social roles to carry out any activity based on gender. Firdaus had a motivation to be able to release her best potential by expressing her desire to study at El Azhar. However, that dream immediately vanished when she received an explanation that El Azhar was only for men. She wondered whether her life was limited and would only end up to certain roles in society. The depiction on how certain traditions and roles through the social processes experienced by Firdaus can be seen from the quotation below.

So I would retrace my steps with bent head, pondering the shape of my toes, as I walked along the country road, wondering about myself, as the questions went round in my mind. Who was I? Who was my father? Was I going to spend my life sweeping the dung out from under the animals, carrying manure on my head, kneading dough, and baking bread? (Saadawi, 1983:15)

Firdaus believed that women were stuck in certain customs, cultures, and social roles that society has agreed upon, even in her thoughts. In this situation, women will only concentrate on household duties throughout their life. This is supported by the notion put forward by (Pratiwi, 2022) in her research that from the data she analyzed in the novel entitled *A Game of Thrones*, it was found that Arya as one of the characters feels that life is unfair because she is forced to comply with the idea of the ideal woman of the medieval era. Sansa is depicted as an ideal woman because she is beautiful and great at doing women's things; otherwise, Arya does not put interested in doing women's things. The standard of the ideal woman in the medieval era created by the patriarchal society defines how women should be. It

shows that how women are socialized from an early age to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations, particularly in relation to domesticity. Women are often taught to prioritize their roles as wives, mothers, and caregivers, relegating them to the private sphere of the home. Doing traditionally feminine activities is one way to limit the exposure of women in public. This demonstrates that women are held in lower esteem than men. Therefore, women are oppressed due to their perceived social inferiority (Wolf, 2002). Because of this domestication process, they have fewer chances for personal growth, career progress, and making decisions on their own (Beauvoir, 1949). Contextually, Egypt as the background of the novel used in this research is factually the place of women's subordination, moreover in the ancient Egypt. (Younis, 2007) stated that in the early twentieth century, Egypt was a place where most men perceived the education of women as a threat to their long tradition of patriarchal dominance over Egyptian women.

Family acts as an agent that operates the patriarchal system. Obviously, this also happened to Firdaus. The novel shows that men irresponsibility and oppression are not limited to any particular social class. The father of the main character is an example of such behavior to subordinate women. In this situation, women are required to rely on men, even within their own families, due to a patriarchal system (Millet, 1970).

“My father, a poor peasant farmer, who could neither read, nor write, knew very few things in life...how to exchange his virgin daughter for a dowry when there was still time...how to beat his wife and make her bite the dust each night” (Saadawi, 1983:10)

From the quotation above, it can be explained that men have used their power over women so that they can do whatever they want. Firdaus' father is a man who takes full use of the power and privileges that his status as a man affords him in order to ensure that the lives of the women who are reliant on him are a source of unending suffering. Men tends to be irresponsible, rude, and have no feelings when they have the authority on things. They will make use of the advantage of patriarchal system they have made. This idea is correlated to the idea brought up by (Azizah, 2019) in her research entitled *Stay with Me* that in the dialogues, it could

be implied that socially, politically, economically and religiously, women are at disadvantaged since decisions are taken mostly by men. Thus, it is not surprising to see if women cannot do anything if man had possession because of women's condition in patriarchal society is the subordination one.

On another socialization process, it is found that patriarchal system in the novel also use religion to operate subordination to women. Once, Firdaus noticed that her father looked very similar to all the other men around him. This made it hard for Firdaus to tell which one was her father. She asked her mother a strange question about how she was born without a father. These descriptions and questions show that there is a similarity between the ability to oppress women object and the widespread religious hypocrisy.

“Every Friday morning he would put on a clean galabeya and head for the mosque to attend the weekly prayer. The prayer over, I would see him walking with the other men like himself as they commented on the Friday sermon, on how convincing and eloquent the imam had been to a degree that he had surpassed the unsurpassable. For was it not verily true that stealing was a sin, and killing was a sin, and defaming the honour of a woman was a sin, and injustice was a sin, and beating another human being was a sin?” (Saadawi, 1983: 10-11)

The quotations above show how the men in Firdaus's surroundings look so religious and devout in practicing their religion. Though, they were very enthusiastic about the lectures that the 'Imam' delivered to them. They believe that degrading women's dignity is a sin, being unfair is a sin, and hitting women is also a sin. The hypocrisy shown above is implied by Firdaus' question to his mother and sarcastically shown on how Firdaus on her young age lift a heavy burden on her head and all the men around her is just watching without helping her;

“Sometimes I could not distinguish which one of them was my father. He resembled them so closely that it was difficult to tell. So one day I asked my mother about him. How was it that she had given birth to me without a father?” (Saadawi, 1983:11)

“On my head I carried a heavy earthenware jar, full of water. Under its weight my neck would sometimes jerk backwards, or to the left or to the right. I had to exert myself to maintain it balanced on my head, and keep it from falling.” (Saadawi, 1983:11)

“I saw them as they watched what went on around them with wary, doubting, stealthy eyes, eyes ready to pounce, full of an aggressiveness that seemed strangely servile.”(Saadawi, 1983:12)

From some of the quotations above it shows that the men in this novel tend to be hypocritical in applying their religious knowledge. In practice, they tend to act oppressively and use their knowledge to control women. (Azizah, 2019) stated that “they make Yejide to do a proper ‘job’ as a subordinate object that is under the control of men.” From the notion proposed by (Azizah, 2019) above, it can be concluded that women are in the position of supporting male supremacy. It is fortunately correlated with the idea revealed in this research that men have a lot of ways to control women that this fact brings up the idea of women’s oppression.

“Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has the effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’” (Hall, 1997:49)

Men have a lot of influence on how women put in domesticity, and this can have a big effect on women's lives. Women's thoughts and actions are influenced by this knowledge without them realizing it. Many people are not aware that men often prioritize themselves over women.

Several kinds of gender socialization processes which are subordinate to women appear in the novel showing how women's subordination can start from the smallest social environment such as the family. What's more, men can even use religion as a tool to strengthen their position over women. The way boys and girls are taught to behave differently based on their gender is very important in keeping women in a lower position in society. Since they are young, kids are taught how to behave according to their gender and what is expected of them, which can make



gender inequality stronger. Children are often exposed to societal norms and expectations that reinforce gender stereotypes (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

#### 4.1.2 Exploitation

After the process of gendered socialization, subordination led to exploitation. Exploitation means using people or a group's weakness to take benefits from them, usually without giving them fair treatment. According to Stanford Encyclopedia, exploitation means to exploit someone and taking advantage of them unfairly (Zwolinski et al., 2022). Exploiting someone's weakness for personal gain. It's not fair or right and can happen in various contexts, including labor, economics, relationships, and natural resource extraction. In the context of women's subordination, exploitation can be interpreted as a process of taking advantage of women's area of lives materially by men. "In this system women's labour power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility and property and other economic resources – are under patriarchal control" (Walby, 1989:20). Walby emphasized that a patriarchal system would place women in a subordinate position with regard to all aspects of employment, including sexuality, movement and mobility, salaries, and property. The exploitation issues also appear in the novel in different forms. The first form of exploitation that can be found is where Firdaus has been sexually exploited by his own uncle.

"My galabeya often slipped up my thighs, but I paid no attention until the moment when I would glimpse my uncle's hand moving slowly from behind the book he was reading to touch my leg. The next moment I could feel it travelling up my thigh with a cautious, stealthy, trembling movement. Every time there was the sound of a footstep at the entrance to our house, his hand would withdraw quickly. But whenever everything around us lapsed into silence, broken only every now and then by the snap of dry twigs between my fingers as I fed the oven, and the sound of his regular breathing reaching me from behind the book so that I could not tell whether he was snoring quietly in his sleep or wide awake and panting, his hand would continue to press against my thigh with a grasping, almost brutal insistence." (Saadawi, 1983)

Firdaus experienced sexual exploitation by his own family, which is her own uncle. Brutally, this was even done when Firdaus was still at young age that she didn't have any clue about sexuality itself. Sexual exploitation like this can occur because there is still power relations between Firdaus as a child and woman with her uncle as an adult and men. To have power, you need to have knowledge. And to have knowledge, you need to have power. They are connected. (Foucault, 1980). As someone with a high educational background, Firdaus's uncle is certainly aware of how he is positioned as a dominant. He felt he had power over Firdaus so he dared to exploit her sexually as the subordinated.

Women subordination through exploitation in the novel also shows in the conversation belows when Firdaus realized that she had only been objectified sexually by the man she loved, Ibrahim.

“I realized that he had not really been in love with me, but come to me every night only because he did not have to pay”(Saadawi, 1983:9)

Firdaus, who has a new hope for life after falling in love with Ibrahim, finally feels disappointment after Ibrahim leaves her to marry the chief's daughter. Firdaus realizes that she is only used by Ibrahim as object of sexual satisfaction. Firdaus, who has a new hope for life after falling in love with Ibrahim, finally feels disappointment after Ibrahim leaves her to marry the chief's daughter. Firdaus realizes that she is only used by Ibrahim as object of sexual satisfaction. Firdaus is always treated by men as sexual objects to pleasure men's sexual desire. Women are usually evaluated based on their physical appearance. Men view women as an object for fulfilling their needs. As Calogero (2011) states that women's objectification means women are defined, evaluated, and treated more often as objects than men are. In particular, it is the viewing of women as sex objects, as instruments for the sexual servicing and pleasure of men. Objectification of women means that women are not viewed and treated as an individual, but as an object for fulfilling men's sexual desire. Therefore, women are treated as lower than men, which indicates the practice of women's subordination through exploitation.

Another form of exploitation that appears in this novel is how women are exploited to serve the father figure in the family. Even the role as servant of men is also passed on to the girls when the other older woman is gone.

“When I grew a little older my father put the mug in my hand and taught me how to wash his legs with water. I had now re- placed my mother and did the things she used to do. My mother was no longer there, but instead there was another woman who hit me on my hand and took the mug away from me.” (Saadawi, 1983:16-17)

The form of exploitation experienced by women subjects in the quotation above shows how Firdaus and other women characters are forced to serve men as the more dominant. The father is very selfish and he is also very cruel. It seems like he's making his daughter work too hard and his wife is doing everything he wants, even if it's not good for their children. The mother was so devoted to the father that she is forced to change and the young girl in the novel feels like she doesn't know her mother anymore. Women are tricked into giving in to old-fashioned threats. Women are often taught to be obedient wives and responsible mothers without being allowed to question the unfair and controlling actions of men. “A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty was perfect obedience” (Saadawi, 1983:44). They believe that it is okay for a husband to exploit his wife and that women shouldn't speak up about it. Firdaus has to believe that she can never be equal to a man in society and that her role is to assist him in living his life better. Beauvoir states that women's bodies are seen as objects that can be exploited, like a form of currency that can be used for profit. Being a complete mother means that a woman can take care of her husband, have children with him, look after the kids, and do household chores.

On another occasion, Firdaus met Sharifa, a woman who had saved Firdaus from the abyss of shadows in her life. Firdaus regards Sharifa as a mother figure who has been missing from her life. Sharifa is also aware of how the world works, how this world is unfair, especially towards women. She opened Firdaus's about injustice in the system that disadvantage women. However, this is only temporary. In the end, Sharifa also used her knowledge to exploit other women. She took

advantage of the unfair system. Sharifa plunges Firdaus into the world of prostitution and exploits him as a prostitute.

“Sharifa said to me one day, "Neither Bayoumi nor any of his cronies realized your worth, because you failed to value yourself highly enough. A man does not know a woman's value, Firdaus. She is the one who determines her value. The higher you price yourself, the more he will realize what you are really worth, and be prepared to pay with the means at his disposal. And if he has no means, he will steal from someone else to give you what you demand.” (Saadawi, 1983:58)

Sharifa tries to convince Firdaus that women have values that they set for themselves. However, from the quotation above, the value of women is only limited to how they offer their bodies. Sharifa showed her own hypocrisy by explaining women's values, but on the other hand, women's degrading values were only limited to how they value their bodies. According to (Beauvoir, 1989), women's bodies are seen as objects that can be exploited, like a form of currency that can be used for profit. The idea of women's exploitation is also brought up by (Pratiwi, 2022) that she found in her research about the knowledge about women in the era when the novel entitled *Game of Thrones* taken obliged women to marry. Robert as one of the characters only focuses on Cersei's vagina that can give him a son or daughter. From it, Robert can earn gold and soldiers to support him for his interest in protecting the throne he has. Thus, they can be accepted by society. By this standard, men take advantage of marrying women and taking what women have. This is the point where women can get exploited.

#### **4.1.3 Oppression**

Oppression and exploitation have connection to each other. They can create a cause and effect to each other. Continuous exploitation can lead to oppression, as well as systematic oppression can provide a basis for exploitation. Oppression refers to systemic or structural oppression of certain groups or individuals. This occurs when one group has significant power and control over another group, and uses that power to limit the rights, freedoms, and opportunities of the group being

oppressed. Oppression means treating someone unfairly and unjustly. According to (Napikoski, 2020), oppression means using authority, law, or physical force unfairly to stop others from being free or equal. To oppress someone is to limit their rights as a free human being. Oppression happens to people who have less power in society. Women in a patriarchal society where men hold most of the power are often unable to exert their own power, and as a result, they are often oppressed.

According to (Young, 1990), oppression is not caused by a powerful and cruel government, but by the actions of a society that means well but still engages in oppressive behavior on a daily basis. Oppression happens in a structured way. It is regularly copied through regulations and standards in society. Well-intentioned people's assumptions and reactions for the law, media, stereotypes about cultures, and bureaucratic hierarchies can lead to oppression for certain groups of people. This occurs as a result of the fact that the behavior and knowledge associated with the oppression of a certain group of people becomes naturalized within their day-to-day lives.

“Once back I do not know how I put up with life in my uncle's house, nor do I remember how I became Sheikh Mahmoud's wife. All I know is that anything I would have to face in the world had become less frightening than the vision of those two eyes, which sent a cold shiver running through my spine whenever I remembered them.”(Saadawi, 1983:44)

Firdaus had to accept the fact that she was forced to marry a man who was very far away from her age. Firdaus was not even given the opportunity to make her own choices. She must obey the wishes of her uncle and uncle's wife. It was thought that she would not be able to find a job with just his certificate of school and would only increase his uncle's family expenses. This powerlessness conditions happens because Firdaus has no power to refuse what her uncle asked. (Azizah, 2019) also brought up the results of her research that she found women's oppression also existed in the novel entitled *Stay with Me*. She found that the purpose of the oppression that is done by women in Yejide's society is for her to accept her

condition as a childless woman. Moreover, another purpose is for Yejide to accept the women's decision in making Yejide's husband commit polygamy.

Other forms of oppression that shows how women are powerless is shown in these quotations: "There isn't a woman on earth who can protect herself", "I don't want your protection." (Saadawi, 1983:100). These two quotations show how an Arab prince offers herself to be Firdaus's guard. Even though Firdaus had firmly refused the prince's offer, the prince continued to force her. Women are considered to be less powerful than men and that makes men dominate women. Women are considered unable to take care of themselves and are seen as weak and do not have any power. Those two examples of oppressions show how oppression works through powerlessness. As it stated by (TenHouten, 2016) that powerlessness means that someone is being controlled by others and they are unable to live their life the way they want to.

On another occasion, the oppression that appears in the novel is in the form of violence perpetrated by men as dominant against women as subordinated ones.

"So one day I asked my mother about him. How was it that she had given birth to me without a father? First she beat me. Then she brought a woman who was carrying a small knife or maybe a razor blade. They cut off a piece of flesh from between my thighs" (Saadawi, 1983:12)

The violence experienced by Firdaus is violence that has become a culture. When it is felt that a girl has begun to develop her sexual desire or sexuality, mothers will perform circumcision or better known as genital mutilation. Genital circumcision can lead to a lack of sexual pleasure and limits personal growth and satisfaction. Circumcision is sometimes associated with men oppression and religious hypocrisy. Daly (1990:7-9 cited on Addison, 2020:5) assumes about the violence that has been done to women throughout history, such as burning witches, forcing widows to die with their husbands, binding feet, and mutilating genitals. She believes that this violence is a way for men to maintain power over women.

Another form of oppression that is appeared in the novel is how oppression works through sexual violence. It shows in quotation below.

“Why? I haven't done anything.”

"You're a prostitute, and it's my duty to arrest you, and others of your kind. To clean up the country, and protect respectable families from the likes of you. But I don't want to use force. Perhaps we can agree quietly without a fuss. I'll give you a pound: a whole pound. What do you say to that?"

I tried to shake free of him, but he held on to my arm, and started to walk me away from where we were standing. He took me through one dark, narrow alley after another, then through a wooden door into a room, where he made me lie down on a bed. He took off his clothes. I closed my eyes as I felt the familiar weight bear down on me, the familiar movement of fingers with dirty black nails travelling over my body, the panting breath, the foul sticky sweat, the shaking of the bed, and the floor, and the walls, as though the world was turning round and round.” (Saadawi, 1983:67)

This shows that Firdaus must experience violence both socially and sexually. Firdaus as a prostitute is considered an object that cannot be respected and pollutes the country. The police even tried to bargain for Firdaus' services cheaply. Seeing that Firdaus refused, the police actually closed Firdaus. The police action certainly reflects how the oppression through sexual violence.

In a culture that is patriarchal, men have a mindset that they are more powerful than women. This leads to oppression of women. Most men think of women as fragile beings who are intellectually below them. Women who do not submit to the authority of men are at a high risk of being subjugated as men dominate society.

#### 4.2 The Critical Position of the Author

The goal of this section is to determine the critical position of the novel's author. The author's critical position is how they express their thoughts and feelings about a topic. This section is going to discuss about what Nawal El Saadawi thinks about and how she positioned herself about women subordination. To determine the author's critical position, I use information from their biography, the novel she wrote, any articles she wrote, and interviews she gave. The purpose of each of these pieces of information is to establish a connection between the narrative that the author has written and the contextual background of the novel. This research focuses on the issue of women subordination in "*Woman at Point Zero*" novel.

Nawal El Saadawi is a famous Egyptian feminist, sociologist, medical practitioner, and militant writer on Arab women's issues. Her work is translated into twelve languages. Kafr Tahla, a little village outside Cairo, is where Nawal El Saadawi was born in 1931. El Saadawi had eight brothers and sisters. El Saadawi's family followed traditional practices, such as circumcising her at the age of six. However, they also believed in progress and education, as her father made sure that all of his children received an education. El Saadawi refers to her mother as someone who could have been a revolutionary, but her desire to bring about change was suppressed by her marriage. When she was 25 years old, her mother passed away. Her father also passed away soon after. Unfortunately, they were not able to see all of the great things she accomplished. Even though rural women faced restrictions from religion and colonialism, El Saadawi managed to go to the University of Cairo. She finished her studies in psychiatry in 1955. El Saadawi worked as a psychiatrist after finishing her studies. Later, she became the Director of Public Health in Egypt. El Saadawi and her husband, Sherif Hetata, who was also a doctor, met while they were both working at the Ministry of Health. They shared an office together. Hetata agreed with El Saadawi's political beliefs, as he had also been put in jail for 13 years because he was part of a left-wing group that opposed the government.



El Saadawi has been writing for more than 25 years. She has written 27 books that focus on women, especially Arab women. Her books talk about their sexuality and legal rights. At first, people thought her writings were risky and could cause problems in society, so they were banned in Egypt. El Saadawi had to publish her books in Beirut, Lebanon because of something that happened. In 1972, she wrote her first non-fiction book called *Women and Sex*. The book talked about women's sexuality, which was a topic that people didn't talk about much at that time. It also discussed politics and religion, which are also sensitive topics. This article made important people in politics and religion very angry, and they forced the Ministry of Health to fire her. She lost two important jobs in Egypt because of similar pressures. One was as the Chief Editor of a health journal and the other was as the Assistant General Secretary in the Medical Association.

She studied women and neurosis at Ain Shams University's Faculty of Medicine from 1973 to 1976. In 1976, she wrote a book called "Women and Neurosis in Egypt". The book had 20 detailed stories about women who were in prisons or hospitals. Her work was published. The research inspired a book called *Woman at Point Zero*. The book is about a woman who was on sentence to death for killing her husband. The author met this woman while doing the research.

In one of her interviews, Nawal said that she was born dissident genetically, since her grandmother was a revolutionary and she took part of her grandmother genes.

“I think so, it is genetic. My grandmother was a revolutionary. She was a peasant woman in the village, illiterate, but she was a revolutionary. So, I took part of her genes in my body. It is also partly acquired by reading and training.” (Channel 4 News, Guru-Murthy, 2018)

Nawal states that she is a dissident by blood and earned. The statements implied that her current struggle against injustice against women is not simply happening without a cause. She felt that she was challenged to become a women's activist who defended women's rights and fight gender inequalities even from the blood she had from her family. Absolutely, what she had done comes from the

experiences she has had from childhood to adulthood. She had seen how Arab women are treated unfairly in various aspects of life.

In the novel *Woman at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi tries to show how the condition of women in Egypt at that time experienced various kinds of subordination. Firdaus' character must experience all forms of subordination since she was small until she will be sentenced to death because of defending herself of being subordinated. In a 2010 interview with *The Guardian*, Ms. El Saadawi stated, "For me feminism includes everything." "It is social justice, political justice, sexual justice . . . It is the link between medicine, literature, politics, economics, psychology and history. Feminism is all that. You cannot understand the oppression of women without this (*The Guardian*, Khaleeli, 2010)" It has a correlation with the idea about how women's position in Egypt as the place of the novel is taken from. (Mahmud, 2021) stated that women usually contributed domestic items to the marriage but the value of such depends on their families' wealth and status. On the other hand, it was the duty of the man to provide for the family. It means that, women's subordination is factually existing in Egypt.

From several explanations above, it concludes that textual and contextual analyses prove that Nawal El Saadawi was against women subordinations as she also supports women liberation from injustice and inequality. From the textual approach to the works she published, it can be implied that she wants to show gender inequality in the place where she comes from. From the sentences put forward by the characters in his novel, she explained in more detail about how the real life is represented. Contextually, Egypt has now become a country that is quite abreast of the times. This is evidenced by the notion put forward by Jeyawordena in (Mahmud, 2021) that numerous scholars have already emphasized that social dignity in ancient Egypt was not a consequence of gender, but was a product of social status. Furthermore, (Mahmud, 2021) also stated that there is also a general convention shared by historians that in comparison to other ancient societies, women in Ancient Egypt enjoyed a higher degree of equal opportunity and freedom of choice.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Nawal El Saadawi represents women subordinations in Egypt through her novel entitled *Woman at Point Zero*. The women subordination forms which are shown in the novel is portrayed within gendered socialization process, exploitation, and oppression. Firdaus as the main character, experiences all of the forms of subordination. Through gendered socialization process, Firdaus has experienced how she was put in a culture, traditions, and norms that limit women in various aspects of life. Firdaus is shaped by the society to be certain roles and do activities based on her gender since she was a child. In another form of women subordination, Firdaus also experiences exploitation due to women are seen as a weak. She is sexually exploited by her uncle at the young age and she is also being exploited as a sexual satisfaction object for a man she used to love. Firdaus's father even exploits women in his family including Firdaus' mother and his new wife as a servant. Oppression towards women subject in this novel happens through how Firdaus is forced to marry an old man, seen as a powerless subject, and how violence that she experienced in several forms. The knowledge of women in patriarchal societies is responsible for all of these subordinate positions experienced by women. It is correlated with the idea proposed by Hornby (2005) that subordination means having less power or authority than somebody else in a group or an organization. In patriarchal societies, women's knowledge is a key factor contributing to their subordinate positions. The dominant power structures in these societies control and shape knowledge, often suppressing or undervaluing women's perspectives. This leads to the perpetuation of gender inequalities and women's marginalization. By controlling the knowledge that is disseminated and shaping societal narratives, patriarchal systems maintain and reinforce the subordination of women in various spheres of life. Assumptions regarding the position of men and women in Egypt 1970s result in subordination of women characters. According to this view, women are naturally subordinated, whether to their own families or to someone else. When discussing the issue at hand in this novel, it is important to consider the novel's setting, as it has a significant impact on Nawal El Saadawi's writing. This is

particularly necessary when discussing the ways in which patriarchy contributes to the subordination of women in Egypt in the 1970s.

Even though the novel was written in 1975 and published in globally in English in 1983, the contextual background of the novel about women subordination still happens and continues until today in Egypt and other countries around the world.

The novel *Woman at Point Zero* portrays the critical position of the author as it represents women subordination issue. Through this novel, Nawal El Saadawi wants to reveal that the issue of women subordination is truly alive through society and it needs to be seen as a serious problem to be resolved. From the character Firdaus, Nawal wants to show that women are also a human being, have the right to be independent of her own life and also have their own decision to be what they want.

Lastly, the subordination of women—which includes in gender issues—is still one of the top issues in many countries. Gender issues present various forms of systemic inequality, discrimination, violence and gender-based oppression. Any efforts to increase women empowerment in social status are not enough. However, it must also be accompanied with how men also change by eliminating their tendency to oppress, providing equal access to any opportunities to women and men, and mainstreaming gender issues. To put it simply, it's important to consider gender issues when considering changes to society. It's important to involve women in current social and political changes and see them as equal partners in developing society.

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