

THE STRUGGLE OF ARABIAN WOMEN AGAINST THE GENDER INEQUITY IN SAUDI ARABIA AS SEEN IN SASSON'S PRINCESS

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Abstract

People's life consists of some factors such as culture, politic, economy and social. Each factor contributes an important role in people's life. Social condition is one of the crucial factor. Someone's social condition can result a difference among society. This difference can be seen in one of literary work entitled Princess by Jean P Sasson. It describes the struggle of women in Saudi Arabia to fight against gender inequity. However, it becomes the objective of study of this paper; to portray the struggle of Arabian' women against gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. In analyzing the issue, the writer uses sociological approach, theory of gender inequity and the women's right in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the writer also uses descriptive qualitative and library research complete this thesis. The data source is Princess novel by Jean P Sasson and the data was taken from the dialogue and the narrations of the novel. The writer can answer the problem formulation by discussing some notions of gender inequity in Saudi Arabia and the women's right against gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. The notion of gender inequity is divided into the cultural belief and women's condition in Saudi Arabia. The notion of women's right against gender inequity in Saudi Arabia is divided into the political right, educational right and the personal status and family law. In conclude, the writer can take conclusion that the condition of Arabian women against gender inequity in Saudi Arabia has been portrayed in this paper.

Key words: The Struggle, Women Against, Gender Inequity, Sasson's Princess

INTRODUCTION

Since a long time ago, the idea of human right has already existed and stood in society (Nurkholis & Sitanggang, 2019). It holds an important role in society (Wantoro et al., 2021). People can respect another people by having human right (Mulyanto et al., 2019). Society made human right as their fundamental principle to run their life (Adelina & Suprayogi, 2020). The idea of human right itself is divided into some kinds of human right. Each country in the world has its own criteria and consideration to measure the requirements of human right itself. It will be different from one country to another country. Saudi Arabia is a country which is holding a strong comprehension of human right. However, this country also has several problems related to the issue of human right, especially women right there. Saudi Arabia's government has several rules how to respect and treats women and foreigners especially non-Muslims (Abudhahir et al., 2015), (Adrian et al., n.d.).

After the eighteenth century, Wahhabism spread to various parts of the Islamic world as a highly politicized school of thought (Kaid, 2004), (KUSWOYO et al., 2013), (Garrison & Wall, 2016). A thorough examination of the ideology and its history clearly shows that it was initially devised and promoted by colonialists in order to sow discord among Muslims. The effect of the Wahabbism existence influences women in life Saudi Arabia (Purba et al., 2019). Women play very important role in society. As stated in the quotation above that the role of women in the society has been changed as the existence of Wahhabism. Wahhabism as stated in the quotation above showed the big contribution toward the male

domination. Male dominated the society and the women are segregated. Unfortunately, by time goes by, many sources tells about the discrimination toward women in the world.

From the condition above, the writer is interested in digging the problem through the analysis of literary work and think that it is urgent to bring the issue of women's right in Saudi Arabia because many people are not concerning to the idea of women's right. They think that it is okay to break the right of women. To have more discussion about that, the researcher would like to take the literary work to perform it (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, n.d.), (Kuswoyo et al., 2020). There is a literary work entitled *Princess* by Jean P. Sasson which portrays how even royal women are beaten, executed, and enslaved by their fathers, husbands, and brothers (Suprayogi & Novanti, 2021), (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020). The women's right in Saudi Arabia is against the gender inequity there.

Gender inequity generally refers to the manifestation of a culture or sub culture, especially in regard to the traditional and customary practices of a particular ethnic or other cultural group (Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020), (Qodriani & Kardiansyah, 2018). In the broadest sense, this term can apply to any person manifesting any aspect of any culture at any time (Kardiansyah, 2017), (Chavez, 2000). However, in practical usage it commonly refers to the traditional practices developed within specific ethnic cultures, especially those aspects of culture that have been practiced since ancient times.

Social inequality is universal. Successful adaptation of a few is often at the expense of many (Darwis et al., 2020). Adults are valued over children, the political elite dominates the masses, and men dominate women (Darwis et al., 2020), (Pamungkas et al., 2020). Gender inequity is also a subject of discussion in questions of cultural survive. If an ethnic group retains its formal ethnic identity but loses its core gender inequity or the knowledge, resources, or ability to continue them, questions arise as to whether the culture is able to actually survive at all.

The religion and customs of Saudi Arabia dictate conservative dress for both men and women (Darwis et al., 2021). Foreigners are given some ways in the matter of dress, but they are expected to follow local customs, particularly in public places (Wahyudin, 2015). As a general rule, foreign men should wear long trousers and shirts that cover the upper torso. Foreign women should wear loose fitting skirts with hemlines well below the knee. Sleeves should be at least elbow length and the neckline modes (Ayu, 2020) .

The enforcement of hijab, female genital mutilation, unilateral divorce and child custody laws and other repressive and harmful practices are "cultural" (Qodriani & Kardiansyah, 2018). The Holocaust, slavery, and ethnic cleansing are never referred to as cultural but the torture of women is. Ashfari is critical of Western academe, the United Nations, and even Amnesty International for ignoring or downplaying the plight of Iranian women under the Islamic Republic. The gender inequity which exist not only in the lower or middle class, even in the Royal Family. It can be seen from the novel entitled *Princess* by Jean P. Sasson. This novel tells about Royal Family in Arab. Sultana as an Arabian princess who live in a palace, always feels like prisoners who lives in jail eventhough fullfill of many jewelry. Since she was born, she was jailed and violated by her father, husband, or even her royal family and society for many times. She has no right to choose, to reach and to make her dream comes true.

By reading the novel entitled *Princess*, the researcher curious toward the story in which discrimination also exists even in the Royal Family in Arab Saudi. The researcher is interested to bring the issues of gender inequity because it is an uncommon term of social

words for society and it can describes the truth of social condition in Saudi Arabia especially the right of Arabian women in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the researcher formulated the title of this thesis into: The Arabian women's right against the gender inequity as seen in Sasson's *Princess*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To reveal the problem appear, the whole theories are related to the formulation of problem will include as the framework of theories. Theory is a set of structured construct, definition and preposition that present a systematic of phenomenon by specifying relation among variables with purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomenon.

Arabian Gender Inequity

The important issue of the analysis is a whole discussion about gender inequity. To answer the problem formulation, the writer have to engage with the idea of gender inequity (Kuswanto et al., 2019), (Kuswanto et al., 2019), (Kurniawan et al., 2019). This notion will deal with the explanation of gender inequity which exist in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, local interpretations of Islamic laws and social norms have a negative impact on the well being of women. The objective of this literature review was to discuss gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. Despite the scarcity of recent statistics and information regarding gender inequity in Saudi Arabia, this review is an attempt to explore this sensitive issue in this country. Women's roles and rights in Saudi society were examined, including education, marriage, polygamy, fertility, job opportunities, car driving and identification cards. Further research to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices towards health care of Saudi men and women is recommended.

Women's Education

The first notion of gender inequity of women in Saudi Arabia can be analyzed from the women's education (Ruyani & Matthews, 2017), (Karal et al., 2017). The explanation below will perform the discussion of women's education in Saudi Arabia. There is no sports education in girls' school and it is prohibited by social norms for females to practice physical activities in public. Lack of exercise is a known cause of obesity. It is not surprising therefore that the prevalence of obesity (body mass index $> 30\text{kg/m}^2$) for 30–70 year old Saudi females was 44.0 % compared with only 26.4% in males. In comparison the prevalence of obesity for 25–64-year-old Swedes was 11.0% for females and 14.8% for males. Saudi women cannot study engineering, law or journalism. According to the latest official figures, 49.9% of the Saudi population are female and barely 21% of them contribute to the social development, because it is socially unacceptable for women to work in fields other than teaching and medicine.

Women's Marriage

The second notion of gender inequity is women's marriage. Here, the writer will attach some explanations about marriage in Saudi Arabia. It performs unfair treatment to women in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabian personal status law an unmarried adult woman is the ward of her father, a married woman is the ward of her husband and a widowed woman is the ward of her sons. In a male-dominated and tribal community with a high social coherence, it is not unusual for a woman to be forced to marry a relative. More than 50%

of marriages in Saudi Arabia are consanguineous. The infant mortality rate is high (18.5 per 1000 in 2006) despite good health care facilities and an effective vaccination program, and genetic diseases are probably a contributory factor.

There are three main elements in an Arab marriage. First, the groom must discuss and agree the dowry with the bride's father. This might include gold, jewellery and clothing and is usually of considerable value. After the dowry settlement comes the actual marriage contract, which is conducted by a legal or religious representative. The bride is asked in the absence of the prospective groom if she agrees to the marriage and this question is then put to the groom. After agreement, the groom joins hands with his future father-in-law and, with two witnesses present, the marriage becomes official. However, there is another stage before the couple actually meet as man and wife: the wedding party. Celebrations are segregated, with the women in one section of the house and the men in another. Finally, on the last night of celebrations, the couple meet, accompanied by all their friends, and eventually leave on their honeymoon. On their return, they either set up home with the groom's parents and become members of the extended family or – as is increasingly the case – set up home by themselves.

A man can divorce his wife simply by saying „I divorce you three times.” He can rescind the divorce if this was done in the heat of the moment, but only if the wife agrees. On the other hand, even if a wife has good reason to seek a divorce (e.g. if her husband has been unfaithful, abused or deserted her, or engaged in criminal activity), she must go to a court for the case to be heard. The husband must maintain a divorced wife and any children from the marriage if the wife is unable to support herself. He can claim custody of any sons when they reach the age of ten. A female divorcee usually returns to her family, and few remarry.

Women's Health Care

The health care system in Saudi Arabia is mostly owned and handled by the Ministry of Health (MOH), and health care expenditure accounted for 5.9% of the 2006 government budget (Suryani & Ardian, 2020). The MOH goal is to provide universal free medical care for Saudi citizens and also for the millions of international pilgrims undertaking the hajj to the holy city of Mecca. The MOH is supported directly by the government and has good infrastructures and administrative structures.

Due to the rapid increase in the population, the government has planned to adopt a health insurance policy to reduce its financial burden and to improve health standards (Gumantan et al., 2021). In 2006, the ratio of doctors in Saudi Arabia was 20 and of dentists was 2.14 per 10 000 inhabitants. In comparison, the ratios of doctors and dentists in Sweden in 2003 were about 44.4 and 15.6 per 10 000 inhabitants respectively. There is an assumption that women in Saudi Arabia do not have full rights to health care and cannot themselves provide consent for their own medical treatment or medical procedures. This particular belief is based on the common assumption that a Saudi woman must obtain permission from the man who is her legal guardian (father, husband or son) before she can obtain medical care. Unfortunately, there are still women who are not aware of their right to give consent for their medical treatment and what is worse is that some doctors also are not aware of these rights or they deny women these rights out of fear of encountering problems with male guardians. This practice can be dangerous and can waste time which may lead to medical catastrophes.

The Women's Right in Saudi Arabia in 20th Century

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has made some progress in women's education and employment. However, gender discrimination is built into Saudi Arabia's governmental and social structures and is integral in the country's practice and interpretation of their particular version of religious teachings. Women's access to employment opportunities is limited, and they do not enjoy the full benefits of citizenship or legal adulthood.

Such skewed results may disenfranchise those who seek to further empower the national population in the UAE, a nascent country that is in need of stronger federal institutions, to demand a greater say in government affairs. In Saudi Arabia's September 2011 municipal elections, a similar pattern emerged in which tribal candidates formed alliances with those from other districts. This phenomenon ensures that candidates who do not come from a tribal affiliation, no matter how qualified or competent, do not stand a fair chance in running for elected office. Tribal affiliation, however, can also be a reason for discrimination with regard to jobs and opportunities in the region, as well as a tool of collective punishment. In 2005, prior to a SaudiQatari rapprochement, the latter expelled thousands of members of the Al Ghafran clan of the Al Murrah tribe to Saudi Arabia after stripping them of their citizenship, forcing them to seek refuge in the eastern al-Ahsa region of the Kingdom.

In general, women's use of their personal wealth and property is restricted by a combination of social customs, traditions, and religious values that have been incorporated into the kingdom's commercial regulations and bureaucratic rules. The requirement for unrelated men and women to be separated in all public places, including the work place, government ministries and offices, retail establishments, hotels, restaurants, recreational facilities, and banks, greatly affects women's ability to independently own and use their assets, income, and property.

METHOD

Method of research is a notion which has to be done by all the researchers in undergoing their analysis (Sulistiani & Tjahyanto, 2017). Kothari asserts that methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science that learns about method, procedures, and technique of research (Isnain et al., 2020). Thus, in analyzing the case that the writer stated in the formulation of the problem, the writer needs method to conduct the research and to answer the problem. The researcher applies several methods to gain that goal, those are the research design, data and data sources, data collecting technique, and data analyzing technique. In this part, research sample need to be clearly explained in this section. It is also necessary to write down techniques for obtaining subjects (qualitative research) and/or sampling techniques (quantitative research). Procedure should be described according to the type of research. How research is carried out and data obtained, needs to be described in this section. For experimental research, the type of design (experimental design) used should be written in this section. Types of data, how data is collected, with instruments where data is collected, and how technical the collection is, should be explained clearly in this section. Then, how to interpret the data obtained, in relation to problems and research objectives, needs to be explained clearly.

The design of this research is a descriptive qualitative because the subjects and the object, the result and conclusion of the research are described through words from the main topic of the novel Jean P Sasson's *Princess*. The data source in this research is Jean P Sasson's

Princess. The data is the information that is taken from the dialogues of the character and also narrative explanation that relates to the arabian women against the gender inequity of the main character from the novel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Inequity in Saudi Arabia

The first notion of this chapter is about the gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. As stated in chapter two that gender inequity is the failure of a population or its culture to survive because of the inadequacy or harmfulness of one or more of its beliefs or institutions. It will be considered to be maladaptive when a population maintains beliefs or practices that so seriously impair the physical or mental health of its members that they cannot adequately meet their own needs or maintain their social or cultural system. Based on the explanation, the writer take a short conclusion that the gender inequity is when a primitive social beliefs and gender inequity meet a common social system then there will be unbalance of society which create a conflict of social among society. Here, the writer will describe the gender inequity in Saudi Arabia upon its social beliefs and gender inequity as described in Jean P Sasson's Princess.

Cultural Belief

The term gender inequity condition in this analysis will focus on the old belief of the gender inequity which still exists in the modern society of Saudi Arabia nowadays. Jean P Sasson through her literary work entitled Princess, could portray some situations of gender inequity in Saudi Arabia.

Father forbade us from visiting Sara for the first three months of her marriage. She needed time to adjust to her new life and responsibilities, he said, and the sight of her family would serve only to inflame her desire to return to a useless life of dreams. Our vocal distress over her bondage drew nothing more than passionless nods. Sara, in Father's view, was doing what women are born to do: serve and pleasure the male and produce his children. (Sasson: 59)

This quotation focuses on the social condition of gender inequity in Saudi Arabia about the destiny of women are serving and pleasuring the male and producing his children. In Jean P Sasson's *Princess*, Sara's father can be categorized as the part of gender inequity because his social belief toward the understanding of womens existence. The italic sentence in the quotation above focuses on his statement about the function of women. Women are only used for gaining sex pleasure for her husband and giving birth for their children. Here, the writer concludes this part as a part of gender inequity because gender inequity is when the part of society still hold the old belief which contradict to the social system and value.

Women's Condition in Saudi Arabia

The second notion of gender inequity is the social system of gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. Beside the social condition, the writer would like to prove that the other category of gender inequity is the system. Here, the writer will show some quotations about the social system of gender inequity in Saudi Arabia.

In my own country, I have seen newspapers print articles that honour a man for executing his wife or daughter for the crime of 'indecent behavior'. The mere

suspicion of sexual misconduct, such as kissing, can bring death to a young girl. In addition, public congratulations are given from the men of religion for the father's notable act of upholding the commands of the Prophet. (Sasson: 69)

Social system leads people's mind to do based on what its rule. Gender inequity is on the comprehension of the failure of a population to survive because of the maladaptive social system happen among society. One of the examples is the quotation above. In a family case, a husband has a right to do a personal punishment to his wife or daughter when they break the cultural norm. As example, when a girl does kissing, then his father can kill her as a punishment. It is one of examples of social system which bring a harmful effect toward society. Then, the society can be called as gender inequity because they have been done a maladaptive action.

The Struggle of Arabian Women Right against Gender Inequity in Saudi Arabia

The second main notion in this chapter is about the women's right against gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. In general, women's use of their personal wealth and property is restricted by a combination of social customs, traditions, and religious values that have been incorporated into the kingdom's commercial regulations and bureaucratic rules. The requirement for unrelated men and women to be separated in all public places, including the work place, government ministries and offices, retail establishments, hotels, restaurants, recreational facilities, and banks, greatly affects women's ability to independently own and use their assets, income, and property.

Political Right

It is stated in chapter two that whether one talks of political rights, civil rights, family law, access to education and jobs, or more generally, the restrictions imposed on women by social customs. Social class creates additional differences among women in some countries. These differences are not sufficiently acknowledged outside the Arab world.

In my propitious change of emotion, I waited for Randa's return, and as I lingered I vowed to awaken Father's new wife to a path of purpose: freedom for women in our land. Not only would I provide Randa with new challenges and dreams of power ; I also knew I would wound Father in the political and spiritual awakening of his young wife. I could not forgive him for so easily forgetting the wonderful woman who was my mother. (Sasson: 100)

It is previously explained that in recent years, Saudi Arabia has made some progress in women's employment. However, gender discrimination is built into Saudi Arabia's governmental and social structures and is integral in the country's practice and interpretation of their particular version of religious teachings. Women's access to employment opportunities is limited, and they do not enjoy the full benefits of citizenship or legal adulthood. It is also shown by the quotation above that Sara's father does the marriage with Randa is only for political awakening. Most men in Saudi Arabia believe that if they marry with young girl then they will be lucky in their political business.

Educational Right

Women's education has brought about a number of social developments in the country, such as a reduction in fertility and mortality rates, an improvement in health and nutrition, and an increase in female participation in the labor force. However, lingering social norms,

local traditions, and the structure of the system of public education have been constraints on women's realization of their equal opportunities in society and their full participation in the labor market.

My five older sisters received no schooling other than to memorize the Koran from a private tutor who came to our home. For two hours, six afternoons a week, they would repeat words after Egyptian teacher, Fatima, a stem woman of about forty five years of age. She once asked my parents' permission to expand my sisters' education to include science, history and maths. Father responded with a firm no; and the recital of the Prophet's words, and his words alone, continued to ring throughout our villa. (Sasson:36)

Everyone in this world basically have a right to get the education. Not only man but also woman is having the right to get education. However, it is not happened in Saudi Arabia. The right of getting education for man is not equal as the right of woman to get education. The quotation above strengthens this idea. It is stated that the girl does not get any schooling from his father. She only gets the lesson to memorize the Koran from a private tutor who came to their home. Her father does not allow her to get the lesson about science, history and maths. This fact shows that women in Saudi Arabia do not get their right of education.

Personal Status and Family Law

In this issue, women remain at a clear disadvantage throughout the Arab world. In most countries, it is practically impossible for women but quite easy for men to file for divorce. Polygamy is legal and socially accepted, although not widely practiced. Laws, and even more clearly social values, condone so-called honor killings.

Polygamy

Polygamy means that the man may have more than one wife. This cultural belief has been done in Saudi Arabia for so many years. It is common to see man has five wives or more. However, the writer analyses this part as the proof that the right of woman has been dismissed here and it against the gender inequity in Saudi Arabia.

Father normally came to our villa once every fourth night. Men of the Muslim faith, with four wives, rotate their evenings so that each wife and family is given an equal amount of time. It is a serious situation when a man refuses to go to his wife and children, a form of punishment. (Sasson: 50)

The first quotation above shows that men as a Muslim has a faith to have four wives. They will rotate their evenings so that each wife and family is given an equal amount of time. It is shown that the tradition of polygamy has been arisen as a common tradition there. The writer takes a deep understanding that even though the women get the equal amount of time but they cannot get the fully right of belonging to their husband. It shows that the right of woman to get the personal status as the official wife is vanished. They cannot protect themselves if there is unwanted thing happen in the future. This part can be categorized as the form of gender inequity which has been destroyed women's right to get their personal status in their marriage.

Women's Marriage

The next notion is about the women's marriage in Saudi Arabia. This notion will discuss about the faith of women in Saudi Arabia based on gender inequity's belief that contradict with the basic human right that they should have. It is clearly explained in chapter two that in Saudi Arabia, the legal age for marriage was recently raised from 15 to 18, women can be married off by their parents at a very young age and without their consent. The writer will guide the portrayal of women's marriage in Saudi Arabia through some quotations below.

For hours I pondered the primitive traditions surrounding marriage in my land. Numerous factors determine the marriageability of a girl in Saudi Arabia ; her family name, her family fortune, her lack of deformities, and her beauty. Social dating is taboo, so aman must depend on his eagle – eyed mother and sisters constantly to seek out proper matches for him. (Sasson: 66)

The first quotation above shows the regret of princess about the primitive traditions of marriage in her land; Saudi Arabia. There are some factors to determine their marriage such as their family name, family fortune, lack of deformities and beauty. Society there thinks that social dating is taboo then it is better for them to directly marry than only having dating. The writer analyses this part as an example of description of woman's marriage in Saudi Arabia which break the rule of woman's right. It is only because of their family factors then they have to be forced to marry a person that they don't even know who they are. Because of that reason, the writer decides that this quotation is a proof of the right of woman in Saudi Arabia which is broken by the belief of gender inequity.

CONCLUSION

The last chapter of this analysis will focus on the conclusion of all analysis that has been done in the previous chapter. As stated in chapter one that the problem formulation that should be answered in this analysis is the Arabian women's right against the gender inequity as seen in Sasson's Princess. In answering the problem formulation, the writer needs to describe the condition of women in Saudi Arabia, their right and the situation that describe the conflict between their rights and the gender inequity.

The researcher has analyzed the condition of Saudi Arabia by giving the notion of gender inequity in Saudi Arabia. This notion is divided into two; social belief and gender inequity. To portray the gender inequity, the writer has described it through the social belief of gender inequity like some rules and prohibition toward women's activities in Saudi Arabia. They are prohibited to enter the mosque, go outside without relatives, etc. The other notion is about the gender inequity of gender inequity there where if there are man and woman are having social dating then they will be arrested, then the prohibition of women to go to the burial site.

The second main notion is about the right of women in Saudi Arabia against the gender inequity. It is divided into three; political right, educational right and personal status and family law. From those points, the writer can take conclusion from each notion. The first conclusion is about the political right that women in Saudi Arabia do not any right to do political activities. Furthermore, they are being the target of political game there. It also happened on their educational right. They do not get any sufficient education for their life. Their right in gaining education is limited by only getting the knowledge about their

religion, Islam. The last conclusion is about their personal status and family law. The writer concludes the women in Saudi Arabia do not get what they should have got as a society. They are even being tortured and getting some cruelties during their marriage. In conclusion, the writer believes that this analysis has answered the problem formulation given by portraying some condition of gender inequity and the right of women in Saudi Arabia.

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