

Educating Young Learners to Gender Equality through Movies: Wonder Woman vs Captain Marvel

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ABSTRACT

The issue of fair treatment given to males and females in the classroom discourse is currently discussed worldwide. The notion of gender equality that facilitates similar access for boys and girls to education is among the striving to achieve such conditions. This study tries to give an overview of two popular movies that can be used to disseminate the idea of gender equality to students in elementary schools. Wonder woman and Captain Marvel movies were chosen as the data of this research since the film genre is under the theme of heroism that represents women as the main characters. This research uses Roland Barthes' semiotics approach to analyze the data and John Fiske's ideology to see the symbols used to describe feminist values that these characters display, supported by communication theory and feminism. The results of the study show that the characters of Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman are depicted as female figures who have greater power than men and show some liberal feminist values. The difference is that Captain Marvel has indirectly different powers from Wonder Woman, who already has powers because she is a demigod. From this finding, it can be inferred that there are some values that are beneficial to introduce to young learners from these movies. However, parental guide when watching is still needed in order to restrict the negative values that are irrelevant with our local culture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of embedding values that males and females have equal rights in various aspects of life is one of the duties of educators. Through education, teachers can instil an understanding of gender equity into students from an early age. It aims to form a belief that the share of men and women in meeting educational needs must be balanced. Thus, gender discrimination can be minimized (Chisamya et al., 2012). Gender equality facilitates male and female students with similar access to education and other opportunities (Sahin, 2013). There are many ways that teachers can do to disseminate this belief. One of

the easiest ways is through movies or films. The film is the second mass communication medium to appear in the world after newspapers, having a period of growth at the end of the 19th century (Smelik, 1998). At the beginning of its development, film, unlike newspapers, experienced technical, political, economic, social and demographic elements that hindered the progress of newspapers during their growth in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Film is a place to express various kinds of messages to the audience through a media story. Film is also a medium of artistic self-actualization that becomes a tool for artists and filmmakers in channeling new ideas and story views (McQuail, 2010). Therefore, this medium is suitable to use as a means of transferring the equity value to young learners.

There has been an interesting phenomenon in American films recently, namely the emergence of superhero films as the main characters. Marvel Entertainment is one of the most popular hero-themed film production companies worldwide. The company is a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, one of the world's leading entertainment companies, with more than 8000 characters creations appearing in various media for more than 75 years (Marvel Entertainment, 2020). Various film-producing companies such as Marvel Entertainment, Warner Brothers, and Disney are competing to produce heroic-themed films that always attract the attention of the audience. From 1978-2018, the income from hero-themed films increased, reaching a total income of more than 2.8 billion dollars in 2018 alone (Watson, 2020). This shows that hero-themed films have huge fans and audiences around the world.

The representation of women in the film industry, both nationally and internationally, often gets negative stereotypes rather than positive ones. Women are often seen as only selling beauty, sexiness, and behaviour that men expect when appearing on the big screen (Naratama, 2006). Women are often oppressed in the world of cinema by portraying images as sex objects, victims or the weak to male seducers (Perdana, 2012). This also happens to female characters who are the main characters in a film, both drama and action films. Often women are shown needing help from the male figure in the film. Moreover, the female characters are portrayed as the feminine gender and the male characters as the masculine gender. And without us realizing it, gender bias develops in patriarchal society and culture (Sutanto, 2020). Meanwhile, based on standpoint theory, individuals do not need to be forced to choose only one identity, but they should be free to use various identities according to their choice.

Marvel Studios screened the films *Captain Marvel* and *Infinity War: End Game* which, will feature the figure of Captain Marvel as the strongest superhero from the Marvel Universe, where interestingly, the superhero appointed is a female figure. Women are usually appointed in the form of gentle character, a housewife, mothers of children, and people who need men in their lives (Sink, 2017). However, in this film, Captain Marvel tells the story of a female hero whose strength is enormous (Savira, 2020). The 'Captain Marvel' film has messages that are packaged in a plot or role played by the film's players. The message can create deep meaning for the audience. Women are creatures at least equal to men which are widely displayed through the messages contained in the film so that the audience is exposed to messages through the signs in the film to instil meaning in the minds of the audience.

Superheroes are human figures who are considered strong and closely related to all traits of masculinity. Therefore, the emergence of the phenomenon of female superheroes who star in the films raises the question of whether the traditional constructs of femininity and masculinity that have been attached to the film industry have shifted (Sebastian, 2019). With the existence of the Captain Marvel film, it even seems to refute the notion that female superheroes cannot be truly superheroes who can independently defeat their enemies when compared to other female superhero films such as *Wonder Woman*, *Cat Woman*, and so on. The female characters are still described as having a sense of falling in love and still having dependence on men (Susilo, 2016). This is different from the emergence of the Captain Marvel film, which may change the public's view of female superheroes. In the film, Captain Marvel is a masculine figure, very strong, independent, tough, and not dependent on others (Savira, 2020). There is not even a story about the romance between Captain Marvel and any man. This is why this film is interesting to conduct. This study tries to find out what feminism values are depicted from each scene in the Captain Marvel film, leading to the public's view of the current female superhero character. This is interesting because Captain Marvel is the first female hero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe to have her

own film and become a figure with superpowers that are said to exceed the superpowers of other male heroes.

Talking about women's films in the superhero genre, the role of women in Wonder Woman is also another interesting topic of discussion. Themyscira, the Island of women warriors, is led by a woman. All the women there were capable of fighting. Likewise, Diana, the female main character, is described as a woman who can fight, tough, able to make her own decisions to solve problems, can work together with others, strong willed and high desire to achieve a definite goal so that she can achieve her identity. In times of war, Diana would come in the front row with the men helping her behind her. On the other hand, in most films, Diana's role is usually played by men in contrast to the image of women in society (Palupi, 2019). If it is usually a male character who saves a weak woman, this time, it is the female lead who saves many people.

When discussing the depiction of women in the media, it will be closely related to the concept of femininity and feminist theories. Recent research on feminist media has shifted from an interest in criticizing gender stereotypes to looking at how the portrayal of women in the media is understood by audiences. According to Hermes in McQuail (2010), we need to understand how the media represent gender because the construction of femininity and masculinity is part of the dominant ideology. She also wrote that the media still offer guidance and examples of how women should behave. Moreover, she states that there are two important issues that arise in feminist criticism, namely the extent to which media texts intended for entertainment for women can provide a feeling of freedom, even though the text embodies the reality of patriarchal society and family institutions. Next is the extent to which these mass media texts reject gender stereotypes and try to introduce how positive role models can have an empowering effect on women (Putri, 2017). Feminism is an understanding of women's struggles to achieve gender equality. Feminism aims to make women more equal with men in the mass media because women in the media have always been a weak role, are always below men, and only become objects of sexuality (Misailidou, 2021).

Studies in relation to film analysis based on feminist theory are quite well documented (see Azi & Nirmalasai, 2021; Gerard & Poepsel, 2019). As a more specific example, the study conducted by Putri (2017) that analyzed the woman superhero representation in Wonder Woman movie. Moreover, Savira (2020) investigated the male gaze in the Captain Marvel movie. Even though these two movies have been researched previously, there is no study that compares of them yet. More specifically, the comparison was in the purpose of education. Therefore, this current study intends to compare women's representation in Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel films from a feminist perspective under the research questions, how are women represented in these movies and how can they contribute to the young learners' awareness in the gender equality? After finishing this study, the researchers wish that the findings will give positive contributions to the readers, especially teachers and parents who focus on young learners to consider movies as the media for delivering social issue, mainly gender equality.

2. METHODS

In research involving literary works, specifically videos, the research method must be purposeful and useful. Therefore, the research method used is the multimodal analysis method (O'Halloran, 2009). The choice of descriptive analysis research method is the main method seen from the depth of the research analysis of the data sources, then combined with the comparative method (comparison) which aims to obtain the results of the source data or research materials to be analysed by more than one data for comparison. The descriptive method of comparative analysis is carried out by describing the facts contained in literary works then followed by comparing two or more research objects being studied. To help the researcher answer the research question, the researcher uses representation, Roland Barthes' semiotics, discrimination and feminism applied to this study to answer the first research question, and the theory of the impact of discrimination for the second research question. According to Bogdan and Biklen, researchers are the key instrument in conducting qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Therefore, the research instrument to observe and discuss the research questions of this research is the

researcher himself. The data and sources of data in this study are as follows (1) Data in the form of words or sentences and scenes which are the arrangement of the plots of the Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel films, (2) The data source is in the form of films, namely the Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel films. To collect data, the researcher performed several procedures. First, because the main object of this research is a movie scene, the researcher collects all data from the Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel movie scenes by watching them. Researchers watch movies often and carefully to get valid and accurate data. Second, after the researcher understands the movie scene, the researcher identifies the data by marking the scene. Through these dialogues and sentences, the researcher only covers important things that contain aspects of feminism and representation of the female figure in the main character of the film. Based on the comparative analysis descriptive research method, in general, the research steps can be formulated as follows (1) Carefully identify two sources of research data, namely the Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel films to obtain a description of the plots of the two films, (2) Describing aspects of feminism and representation of women in the main character of the film from two research data sources, namely the Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel films, (3) Make data tabulations based on the results of the analysis of two research data sources, (4) Analyzing aspects of feminism and representation of the female figure in the main character of the film from the two research data sources to find similarities and differences, (5) Concluding the results of the comparative analysis of the two research data sources

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Scenes Representing Women's Power in the Movies

The scene below depicts women fighting injustice in the Superheroes movies, Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel. In that scene, Diana, the main character in Wonder Woman, was struggling to quell evil. Her actions as a superhero are always powerful and every time she fights, she always wins. In this film, Diana becomes the dominant female figure in the midst of the men, both friends and foes. Diana together with Steve decided to go to the battlefield which on the way encountered many obstacles. Surrounded by many men who incidentally were on the battlefield, Diana and Steve were able to stop the war in several areas. Diana's only goal was to kill Ares (God of War) so that war could be stopped and humans could live in peace without it. However, after it was felt that she had achieved her goal, it turned out that the war was still going on until Diana finally realized that there was a power that was no less extraordinary that was hiding that she needed to uncover. From this scene, it can be inferred that Diana represents the feminist figure as the dominant party who adorns almost every scene. However, in some scenes, Diana is also treated normally because she is a woman. The concept of representation refers to how a person, a group, or a certain idea or opinion is displayed in the news. Codes of representation are linked and organized in social coherence, such as social class or dominant beliefs that exist in society (patriarchy, materialism, capitalism, etc.).



Fig. 1. Diana (Wonder Woman) battles with Ares (God of War)

The picture above is a photo of Diana (wonder woman) against Ares. The fire of hostility that Ares breathed into the humans created war everywhere. The fighting had stopped when Steve approached Diana and said something and gave Steve's watch to Diana. At that moment Ares influenced Diana's

mind to hate humans, but Diana ignored Ares' words. In this battle, Diana can defeat Ares and bring peace to the world.

Meanwhile, Captain Marvel is the first superhero-themed film made by Marvel Studios, directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck. This film tells the story of a female superhero who loses her identity because she doesn't know who she really is, on the other hand there is an evil person who tries to take advantage of Captain Marvel because she has superpowers inside of her. When Captain Marvel begins to realize who she really is, a battle ensues with the evil one. When Captain Marvel had an opportunity to finish him off, she did not take the opportunity. On the other hand, Captain Marvel returns her enemy to his place of origin outside the earth and orders him not to disturb the earth again.



Fig. 2. Carol (Captain Marvel) battles the Kree

Figure 2 depicts Captain Marvel's power which includes human strengths above normal, super speed beyond normal light and incredible stamina. Carol goes on an exciting adventure on Earth after she escapes and the Skrull plane explodes. He met Nick Fury, who had become an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. With the help of Fury, Carol explores the US and discovers new facts about her past. He turned out to be the pilot who had an accident 6 years ago. Carol turns around and fights Yon-Rogg because it turns out that the Skrulls are not terrorists. He managed to save the Skrulls and had to fight the Kree, which turned out not to be what he imagined.

3.2 The Comparison of Denotative Analysis

Basically, denotation can be defined as the general meaning of what can be seen and heard by the human senses, both in audio and visual form. This certainly depends on the general meaning of what is the view of the surrounding community.

Table 1. Denotative Analysis

| Captain Marvel | Wonder Woman |
|---|--|
| The first denotative finding in the research is that Captain Marvel is mostly shown in the film in front of other characters with a low-angle shooting angle towards him. Taking pictures like this is a shooting position lower than the object. Besides being often shown through low-angle shooting techniques, Captain Marvel is also often shown standing in front of other characters in the film or in the middle of the screen. | Diana, who was neatly dressed in high heels and carrying a bag, walked from outside to her office. Her appearance shows today's career women. Diana has a high rank in her job because there is an adult male who is her subordinate. Diana monologued that her former way of thinking was different from her current way of thinking. That the truth we face is not easy. It's hard to deal with. Then came Diana's subordinate who gave a package bag that looked important because it was sent neatly and carefully. Diana immediately fell |

| Captain Marvel | Wonder Woman |
|---|---|
| <p>The second denotative finding is that Captain Marvel is always depicted standing back up when he falls or fails. In the film, Captain Marvel is told that he has often failed since he was a child until he became an adult. After he failed, he always got up and got back on his feet.</p> <p>In addition, in the film, Captain Marvel is told to have extraordinary martial arts abilities, he can always defeat the enemies that stand in his way, both individually and in groups. Often times Captain Marvel is shown against his enemies who attack in groups and he always manages to defeat. After his memory returned, Captain Marvel changed the color of his clothes which were originally green and the color of the Kree nation to the colors according to the US Air Force symbol, namely golden yellow, blue, and red as the colors of his new costume. This color was chosen when he and his best friend's daughter wore T-shirts with the US Air Force insignia.</p> | <p>silent when she found out that the contents were a photo plate of her and the team in the past.</p> <p>Diana wearing armor is training to fight with Amazonian warriors using a sword. And after that he trains with Antiope but Antiope bounces because of the power he has. Antiope trains Diana even harder because she sees Diana off guard after being able to beat her training partner. Antiope spoke in a loud voice as if yelling at Diana so that Diana would be encouraged to be able to beat him in training to fight.</p> <p>Steve and Diana are cornered by a criminal who wants to take Dr. Maru. Steve is nervous and tries to protect Diana from criminals, but Diana ends up protecting Steve from criminals.</p> <p>Steve takes Diana to the top military meeting of the Great War Council. Many people were silent in shock because there was a woman in the meeting. The scene of shock was seen from the people who were originally busy talking to each other became silent and looked at Diana. Diana's arrival became the center of attention. Diana is a woman alone among the many men in the military leadership. Colonel Steve's superior who knows the mistake asks Steve to take Diana out of the room.</p> |

3.3 The Comparison on Connotative Analysis

After conducting a denotation study, in the process of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, it is continued by looking at the connotation study of the object of research. In this process, the study carried out is to see the meaning that the author or filmmaker wants to express through pictures/shots or scenes. In the connotative meaning in it there are signifiers, markers and also signs.

Table 2. Connotative Analysis

| Captain Marvel | Wonder Woman |
|---|---|
| <p>The connotative analysis is related to the figure of Captain Marvel, who always gets up when he falls, showing an unyielding attitude even though she is a woman who is often considered weak by her environment. From various parts of the scenes and dialogues contained in the film, in his childhood, Captain Marvel was often</p> | <p>Diana walked into her office and monologued. From the dialogue that Diana spoke, it showed that her former way of thinking had changed with the current one. Diana used to always think that the truth must always be upheld somehow. However, the truth we face is not as easy as it seems. We can't make the world</p> |

Captain Marvel

pressured and deemed unfit to do activities that were considered only capable of being done by men. This shows that Captain Marvel is trying to get in and do male activities since he was a child until he was an adult. He does not give in to the demotivating words given by the men around him. Captain Marvel shows his high ambition to be equal to the men of his time. This is contrary to one of the elements of femininity according to (Brownmiller, 2013) which states that femininity allows women not to follow ambition, that having an ambition is not a feminine trait.

Furthermore, Captain Marvel, who is proficient in martial arts and has super powers, has a superior position compared to the male characters in the film. From various fight scenes, it shows one character that is different from Captain Marvel as a woman who is shown in the media. So far, according to (Thornham, 2010) women are often oppressed in the film industry. Women are often oppressed by being portrayed as false images as objects. In this case what is meant as an object is a sex object or an object of a male seducer. Whereas in this film Captain Marvel is not shown as a sex object at all.

In several scenes, Captain Marvel becomes the first person to invite his male partner or enemy to fight. This contradicts one of the concepts of femininity that contradicts feminism, where (Brownmiller, 2013) states that the element of femininity in a woman's voice is not only seen in how smooth she speaks, but also in how she speaks. She goes on to say that there is an opinion that it is not feminine to express a strong opinion, even on something uncontroversial.

Wonder Woman

always be as good as we want. In the past Diana also believed that the ugliness of humans was influenced by the God of War. However, even if there is no God of War today, the world is not always fine. Diana's way of thinking used to be narrow because she used to live in Themyscira, while Diana now lives side by side with humans so she can accept new thoughts openly. His way of dressing has also changed, which used to be not far from armor now he is also getting used to clothes

Diana is seen practicing war with the other Amazons. He fought several soldiers and succeeded. Then after that Diana fought Antiope who was the sister of her mother and Diana's trainer at war. Diana was directly trained very hard by Antiope, at the same time Antiope also gave sharp words with the intention of making Diana more enthusiastic and able to use all the strength she had against her. Inevitably Diana even felt cornered by Antiope's actions. Until Antiope was about to attack him again, Diana reflexively blocked it and sent Antiope flying backwards. This made everyone surprised and surprised. Diana herself was shocked by the power she had to injure other people. But his surprise overcame his regret. Diana also decided to apologize to everyone who was there.

Diana and Steve secretly want to get away from Themyscira without Hippolyta knowing. But the plan failed after Hippolyta and her henchmen came over. From the look on Diana's face, she seemed ready for her mother's arrival and forbidding her to go. So, when Hippolyta came, Diana immediately said that she wanted to go. Diana said this firmly so that her mother understood what her decision was that could not be contested. The background of the time taken is night which is the best time to escape because it is dark so it is less likely to be caught than during the day. The setting itself is deliberately taken on the beach because the beach is a connecting place between the island of Themyscira and the outside world. Diana's departure can be interpreted as wandering for the term in

| Captain Marvel | Wonder Woman |
|----------------|--|
| | Indonesia. Migrating itself has the meaning of someone going from their place of origin to a new area to live a new life with different goals. |

Discussion

Women Superheroine Movies for Young Learners

Film is a mass communication medium that can have an impact on society, because films always influence and shape society based on the message behind it (Sobur, 2004). Underpinning this idea, films can be used as a reference to teach equality to young learners in Indonesia. For instance, there have been many films that convey the message of feminism and equality such as Wonder Woman, X-Men: Dark Phoenix, Charlie's Angel, Maleficent, and others. Unfortunately, the numbers of movies covering the feminism issue in Indonesia are still limited, thus, they are not moved to advance feminism. When compared to feminist movements abroad such as the United States and Britain, feminism in Indonesia can be said to run slowly and quietly (idntimes. Com, 2017).

In every film, there will certainly be codes that appear and are processed through sensing and references that have been owned by television viewers so that a code will be perceived differently by different people (Fiske, 2007). According to John Fiske, there are 3 television codes, one of which is ideology. From the codes found, Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman is considered as liberal feminist movies. Liberal feminism is a theory that positions women who have full and individual freedom. Related to this theory, Carol is able to free herself from the entanglements carried out by Talos and Yon-Rogg with the aim of having individual freedom for women. According to Naomi Wolf, as "Power Feminism" is the solution. Now women have power in terms of education and income, and women must continue to demand equal rights now is the time for women to have free will without depending on men. In these films, it is very clear that superheroine must have unparalleled power, which is played by the view to place women.

The etymological aspect, the word wonder in the Oxford dictionary is defined as a person or thing that is considered very good or extraordinary. Furthermore, according to Oxford, the word woman is defined as a woman. Thus, the title of the film with words consisting of wonder and woman is defined as a film that tells the figure of an extraordinary woman. Describes a tough woman who is able to carry out activities beyond the limits of ordinary women's nature, maybe even beyond the limits of normal men's abilities. The use of the word Wonder Woman wants to give a brief description of the greatness of the female figure as the title of the film so that it is easy to understand. The title Wonder Woman is a deliberate attempt by DC Comics as the initial creator of the Wonder Woman character, which was continued by the Warner Bros. film company to strengthen the role or position of women to be superior to men or at least equal to the position of men. Wonder Woman is a perfect example of a superhero, because the film itself has become one of the icons of feminism. In the patriarchal world of superheroes, it's nice to know that there is a strong woman who is no less powerful in defeating her enemies. The island of Themyscira where Diana came from is an island inhabited by female heroes where they fight by not grabbing and slapping each other. Wonder Woman's script is also quite disturbing how misogynistic men at that time felt that "women just stay at home and make them sandwiches". Smart, feminist spirit is not only from the figure of Diana the Wonder Woman, but also one of the villains is Dr. Isabel Maru who is also a genius (albeit evil).

Values Transferred from Movies to Young Learners

By watching movies, young learners can learn values that are embedded in the culture where the movies produced. The findings of the research data above point out common ground in feminism. It was represented when Carol falls in front of her opponent and stands in front of a different opponent

but both contain feminism. The feminism that the researcher meant was liberal feminism. According to (Thornham, 2010), liberal feminism aims to fight for the participation of women in all social life (in America), with the same rights and obligations as men. In this scene, the displays are explained from small to adult. Carol presents women's participation in all social life, starting from small children to adults. Researchers found a shift within the U.S. Air Force itself. At American air bases, women are few and far between, mostly dominated by men. With the passage of time, it began to diminish from the existence of the Air Force system. In line with the Captain Marvel film, Carol is a brave, strong, loyal woman. Besides that Carol is intellectual/intelligent.

In the life of leadership in America, there has never been a female leader. In her book, *Women for President*, Erika Falk analyzes the gender bias in media coverage when reporting on a number of female presidential candidates, from Woodhull, Belva Lockwood, Margaret Chase Smith, to Carol Moseley Braun. "The press portrays female candidates as unmotivated, unnatural, incompetent, and often ignores or belittles women instead of reporting their ideas and goals," wrote Falk (cnnindonesia.com). In addition, in the US congress, for example there are 20 percent of them are women. However, they were never at the top. Hillary Clinton, a former US presidential candidate in 2016 said that "of course I want America to have a female leader, and I will do whatever it takes to achieve that desire, although there is no certainty whether I will be elected or not". With this, Hillary Clinton as a woman is eager to change the mindset of Americans about women. The connection of the film Captain Marvel to Hillary Clinton has to do with the failure of Hillary Clinton. For Americans, it was previously said that leadership is carried out by men because men can bear all the work and have maximum energy in terms of work and the economy. That's why Hillary Clinton ran for the presidential election in 2016 competing against the male Donald Trump. In Superhero films, Captain Marvel is described as a woman who has strength, unlike previous superheroes. She is a woman who breaks down other superheroes. He has a body that is not slim, female gender where women themselves are considered unlike men in America. She is also tough, brave, and a leader at heart and doesn't need a man to help her or to be her lover.

4. CONCLUSION

This article sheds light on the representation of feminism in the films Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman. Diana's character in the Wonder Woman film very well as a feminist figure. The character of Captain Marvel also represents liberal feminism where before she had super powers, she always tried to get the same position and opportunities in work and other aspects of life. Two important issues that can be highlighted from these movies analysis is the importance of introducing these movies to young learners as an effort to instill the equality in education since the early age. Young children should be given understanding that viewing women and men in an equal position is important to build cooperation in every situation. Secondly, we cannot neglect the transfer of values when children watch movies, therefore, parents' guidance is really important as a filter to sort them and adjust with our local wisdom. This study is simply an analysis towards the content of the movies. Future studies are recommended to see how students perceive the gendered equality after watching these movies.

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