



Original Article

The Concept of Liberal Feminism in Mary Wollstonecraft's Novel Nglari Woting Ati by Fitri Gunawan

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to analyze Mary Wollstonecraft's Concept of Liberal Feminism in the Novel Nglari Woting Ati by Fitri Gunawan. Women are often portrayed as the main characters in literary works, one of which is in the novel Nglari Woting Ati by Fitri Gunawan. This novel tells the story of a woman named Muherdini's struggle to achieve her academic goals without abandoning her role as a wife and mother. The novel Nglari Woting Ati will be studied and analyzed from the perspective of Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminism. The purpose of this study is to describe how the character Muherdini reflects Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminism and the attitudes of other characters as a result. The research method uses an objective approach based on Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminism theory. The primary data source used is the novel Nglari Woting Ati. The research data consists of quotations, dialogues, and narratives that contain elements of Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminism. The data collection technique used was semiotic reading. The analysis technique used was hermeneutic reading. The results of the study show that the main character practices liberal feminism in the form of intellectual development, the elimination of gender double standards, and the right to better employment. Additional characters affected by liberal feminism include Irawan, who is convinced that Muherdini deserves a higher education; Ardhana, who imitates Muherdini's traits and grows into a child who enjoys trying new things; Mbak Laras, who does not restrict Muherdini's education and career and grants her freedom; Bu Siti, who admires Muherdini and regards her as her own daughter; and Anita, who feels inferior to Muherdini.

Keywords: Nglari Woting Ati, woman, liberal feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft



<https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/riwayat>

Introduction

Society often perceives women as beautiful but weak. Meanwhile, men are portrayed as strong, rational, and powerful individuals. Such representations reflect an unbalanced social view and reinforce gender role differences ([Sumarti & Hakim, 2022](#)). Women are often not trusted to handle tasks outside the domestic sphere, such as work and other public activities ([Iqbal & Harianto, 2022](#)). As a result, some women want to prove their abilities to the outside world. Women are capable and equal to men, although this requires a long process. Views on women are an interesting topic to discuss, not only in the context of real life, but also through their representation in literary works ([Maksum et al., 2021](#)).

Literary works, including novels, are based on real life and are therefore able to reflect that reality in depth ([Suprpto & Setyorini, 2023](#)). Many novels that have emerged recently address the theme of women's struggle against gender inequality ([Pratiwi & Putriani, 2024](#)). Gender refers to the biological sex of an individual, based on whether they are male or female. This concept leads to differences in social roles and responsibilities, resulting in the formation of a patriarchal system. In Indonesian culture, the patriarchal system has become a tradition and has produced a hierarchical structure in which men are in power and women are under supervision. In addition, the role of women as autonomous individuals has become more limited, especially for those who are married ([Karya & Kajian, 2024](#)).

Literary works, including novels, are based on real life and are therefore able to reflect this reality in depth ([Suprpto & Setyorini, 2023](#)). Many novels that have emerged recently address the theme of women's struggle against gender inequality. This concept has resulted in differences in social roles and responsibilities, leading to the formation of a patriarchal system. In Indonesian culture, the patriarchal system has become a tradition and has produced a hierarchical structure in which men are in power and women are placed under supervision. In addition, the role of women as autonomous individuals has become more limited, especially for those who are married ([Karya & Kajian, 2024](#)).

Discussions about gender equality became increasingly open at the end of the 18th century. Liberal feminism focused on the basic principles of liberalism, emphasizing individual freedom ([Aizid, 2024](#)). However, women were not completely free to exercise their power. Women's life choices are likely to be criticized by those around them, including parents, family members, and close friends ([Tawaqal et al., 2020](#)). Women's efforts to achieve equality with men through self-development are in line with the feminist principle of striving for equality between women and men, with a focus on intellectual development and obtaining better jobs. Women's backwardness is not inherent but is the result of unequal opportunities and experiences compared to men ([Tyas, 2021](#)).

Liberal feminism, developed by Mary Wollstonecraft, emphasizes the importance of equal education, freedom, and individual autonomy for women as the main foundation for achieving gender equality. In Wollstonecraft's view, women must have equal access to education as men in order to optimally develop their rational and moral potential and no longer be trapped by oppressive traditional gender roles ([Ilaa, 2021](#)).

The reality of modern Javanese women has its own role in fighting for feminism, as seen in the novel *Nglari Woting Ati* by Fitri Gunawan ([Gunawan, 2015](#)). The female characters in the novel show traits that reflect liberal feminism, namely

the struggle for freedom, independence, and equality in the public sphere. Although the characters in this novel appear independent, they face several challenges and conflicts in balancing their roles in the domestic and public spheres. This is worth exploring further to understand how liberal feminism is realized in the context of Javanese culture, which is still deeply rooted in patriarchal values.

The novel *Nglari Woting Ati* (NWA) represents a woman who is determined to pursue education and a career. More than just an individual portrait, this novel also presents a critique of social realities that tend to position women as weak, irrational, and passive beings. Through its main character, women are depicted as intelligent, independent individuals who dare to actualize themselves in social spaces. However, the novel still contains gender issues that reflect the imbalance in the relationship between men and women in the structure of society.

Dini, whose full name is Woro Muherdini, is depicted as the main character in balancing her roles as a career woman and a housewife in the novel NWA. Dini receives a PhD scholarship at Washington State University in the United States, which requires her to leave her husband, Irawan, and her son, Arda. This decision triggers conflicts that reflect feminist struggles, particularly in the context of gender inequality within the family and society. During her studies, Dini faced emotional challenges, including longing for her family and tension in her relationship with her husband, exacerbated by feelings of jealousy and suspicion toward Rosita, Irawan's student. This tension prompted Dini to distance herself from her family in Gili Meno without informing her husband.

The situation becomes more complicated when Irawan is involved in an accident related to an old conflict between his family and Anita's family, his former lover. Unaware of the background of the conflict, Dini remains resilient and supports her husband. Together with Irawan, she then strives to rebuild their lives, including through the development of an educational project at Suryo Bawono University. This novel depicts conflicts rooted in tensions between women's roles in the family and society, as well as their struggles in the face of gender inequality and injustice. Through internal and external conflicts, Dini strives to overcome the obstacles that arise in her efforts to achieve balance in life and equality in family relationships.

This study focuses on the position of the main character in the novel NWA. The issues identified are: 1). How does the character Muherdini reflect Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminist views? 2). How do the additional characters respond to the impact of liberal feminism? The purpose of this study is to describe how the character Muherdini reflects Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminist views, particularly from the perspective of intellectual development, the elimination of gender double standards, and the right to better employment. This study also aims to analyze the attitudes of additional characters toward the impact of liberal feminism.

This subject has been studied twice before. The first study by Widyadari (2013) discussed the characterization of female characters and the process of self-actualization in facing patriarchal socio-cultural pressures, using a literary psychology approach. The main character was described as undergoing a change from being oppressed to becoming independent as a form of resistance against traditional values (Widyadari, 2013). The second study, by Noviyanti (2019), analyzed the female characters in the novel NWA, which represent internal and social conflicts caused by the patriarchal system (Noviyanti, 2019). Both studies reinforce feminist analysis in literature. Meanwhile, research on the dual role of women in Payung Village using

Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist approach ([Hariyanto et al., 2023](#)) reveals the reasons why women remain farm workers even after getting married. Unlike previous studies, this study focuses on analyzing the position of the main character in the novel NWA. It discusses liberal feminism as reflected in the main character of the novel NWA, as well as several characters affected by liberal feminism. Thus, this study offers a new perspective in feminist literary studies, particularly in the context of the influence of liberal feminism on characterization and social dynamics in modern literary works. The results of this study are expected to enrich understanding of liberal feminism in advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment in contemporary society.

The purpose of this study is to analyze Mary Wollstonecraft's Concept of Liberal Feminism in the Novel Nglari Woting Ati by Fitri Gunawan.

Research Method

The approach used in this study is an objective approach based on Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist theory. Wollstonecraft's feminist theory is a first-wave feminist theory. Wollstonecraft's theory includes the development of intellectuality, the elimination of gender double standards, the right to better employment, legal equality, and the right to vote. Wollstonecraft's theory is used to categorize the results of identification in the novel Nglari Woting Ati based on liberal feminism. The main data source used in this study is the novel Nglari Woting Ati. Other supporting data sources come from articles and books. The research data consists of quotations, dialogues, and narratives in the novel Nglari Woting Ati that contain liberal feminism.

The data collection technique used is semiotic reading. Semiotic reading has two levels: heuristic and hermeneutic. Heuristic reading is the first level of semiotic reading based on linguistic rules. The second level, or hermeneutic reading, relates to literary, social, and cultural rules. Data analysis was conducted using hermeneutic reading, which involves reading and understanding deeper meanings by considering the literary context. Through hermeneutic reading, both the explicit and implicit meanings of the work can be revealed more completely and comprehensively. Data analysis in research involves several stages. First, identify the data by determining the parts of the novel that contain elements of liberal feminism. Second, group the data into specific themes. Finally, summarize the data.

Result and Discussion

In analyzing the novel Nglari Woting Ati, it is important to understand how liberal feminist ideas are represented through the main character and how that character's position and actions influence other characters in the story. Liberal feminism, as the main strand of the feminist movement, emphasizes the importance of intellectual development, the elimination of gender double standards, the right to better employment, legal equality, and the right to vote.

Liberal Feminism in the Novel Nglari Woting Ati

In Fitri Gunawan's novel Nglari Woting Ati, there are three elements of liberal feminism that emerge through the main character. These three elements appear strongly and consistently throughout the main character's journey, whether in the form of narration, dialogue, or actions. The following are quotes and analyses of liberal feminism as reflected in the character of Muherdini.

a. Intellectual Development

In the development of intellectuality, several relevant data points were found. However, these data points share similarities in terms of content and context. Therefore, in the discussion of intellectual development, the researcher included five related data points.

Data 1:

"Ya, kuwi, ngenani jatah beasiswa saka USAID. Ana MIT (Massachussetts Institute of Technology)-Boston, ana Iowa, Pittsburgh, WSU (Washington State University). Banjur Kowe ki digadhang sinau ing WSU, yen ora luput, jurusan apa ya mau, Psikologi Pembelajaran!" (page. 7)

Translation:

"Yes, regarding the scholarship from USAID, there is MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)-Boston, Iowa, Pittsburgh, WSU (Washington State University). Then you are expected to study at WSU, if I'm not mistaken, what was the major again, Learning Psychology!" (p. 7)

Liberal feminism in the context of women's right to intellectual development in formal education is reflected in the above quote. In liberal feminism, one of the main demands is that women should be given the same opportunities as men in all aspects of public life, including higher education. Education plays a crucial role, especially for women, as it enables them to equalize their positions and roles with men (Maksum et al., 2021). Muherdini is regarded as capable and deserving of pursuing higher education, and the quote reflects recognition of women's intellectual capabilities and their right to develop their academic potential on par with men.

Data 2:

"Kanca-kanca kang njupuk program studhi santai, isih bisa dolan mrana-mrene, ning aku nggethu saengga ora kober mingket blas, kuliah Senen nganti Jumat, sisane nggo sinau, menyang perpustakaan, utawa mbukak internet, explore kawruh kang paling anyar." (page. 41)

Translation:

"Friends who take leisurely study programs can still play around, but I don't care so much that I don't even think about it. I attend lectures from Monday to Friday, and the rest of the time I spend studying in the library or surfing the internet, exploring the latest knowledge." (p. 41)

Critical thinking skills are reflected in the quote above. A person's morals and values are not determined by their gender. Men and women are fundamentally equal, even though they perform different roles and responsibilities, but they both have equal intellectual abilities (Ilaa, 2021). In this quote, Muherdini demonstrates an independent and goal-oriented attitude. Dini chooses not to follow her friends' more relaxed lifestyle and instead prioritizes education and intellectual development. She spends her time attending classes every workday and uses her free time to study at the library or explore the latest information online.

Data 3:

"Sing elok lan nambahi semangat sinau, akeh buku wajib sing penulise uga mulang ing kene. Dadi yen ana kang kurang cetha, bisa langsung takon utawa dhiskusi. Dhosen-dhosen WSU racake egaliter lan seneng yen dijak dhiskusi ngenani bukune." (page. 41)

Translation:

“What is good and encourages learning is that many of the required books were written by authors who also studied here. So if there is anything you don't understand, you can ask questions or discuss it directly. WSU lecturers are generally happy to discuss their books.” (p. 41)

The context of the ability to discuss openly is found in the above quotation. Women have the right to express themselves and demonstrate their independence, thereby freeing themselves from patriarchal norms (Karya & Kajian, 2024). There is recognition of women's intellectual capacity and their right to actively participate in academic discourse without being limited by patriarchy, which considers men to be superior in the intellectual realm.

Data 4:

“Dhuh Irawan, sepuranen ya kaluputanku, gene biyen ponselku dak off-ke, rikala kowe nyambungi aku. Karana iku, awake dhewe ora bisa bawa rasa meh telung sasi! Wan, aku wis lulus, nggonku berjuang ora nganti siji setengah taun, ning nembelas wulan wis rampung.” (page. 102)

Translation:

“Oh Irawan, I'm sorry for my mistake when I turned off my cell phone when you called me. Because of that, we couldn't talk for almost three months! Wan, I've graduated. My struggle didn't last a year and a half, it was only sixteen months.” (p. 102)

Muherdini's ability to think independently is evident from the above quote. Liberal feminism emphasizes that women have the same capacity as men to think rationally, make decisions, and determine the direction of their own lives (Karya & Kajian, 2024). Muherdini honestly states that she deliberately turned off her phone, demonstrating an action that signifies she made a decision about her own life, even though she later realized it had an impact on her personal relationships. In the quote, Muherdini consciously acknowledges her choice and accepts its consequences, while also expressing pride in her academic achievements.

Data 5:

“Rasional ya, Ir? Hebat Din, analisismu! Very smart reasons!” (page. 137)

Translation:

“That's rational, Ir? Great analysis, Din! Very smart reasons!” (p. 137)

The above quote reflects liberal feminism in the context of the ability to develop one's own opinion. In the proposal to establish a private university in Semarang, Muherdini emerged as a representative of women who are active, intelligent, and valued in an intellectual space that was previously dominated by men. This shows progress toward gender equality, where women are not only allowed to speak, but are also considered important in the thinking and decision-making processes ([Sumarti & Hakim, 2022](#)).

b. Elimination of Gender Double Standards

There are several relevant data points, and the five selected are deemed sufficient to represent various perspectives and provide a clear picture of how gender double standards are eliminated. By limiting the number of data points, the analysis can be conducted more deeply and focused, without repeating similar information from other data.

Data 1:

"Yen aku budhal, anakku njur piye?"

"Gampang, wong ana Bapake, ana Mbahe, malah telu. ngono bae kok bingung. Akeh pilihane, Din! Pirang taun, ta?" (page. 9)

Translation:

"If I leave, what will happen to my child?"

"It's easy, he has his father, his grandmother, and even three other people. Why are you so confused? You have many options, Din! How old is he?" (p. 9)

The elimination of gender double standards in family life is evident in the above quote. The character Muherdini develops herself through education, without being constrained by double standards in family roles. This quote breaks down patriarchal norms that place women as the sole caregivers for children, and instead promotes equal responsibility sharing between men and women. This is a strong representation of how women can and have the right to choose their intellectual and professional future without losing their value as mothers and wives ([Aulia et al., 2024](#)).

Data 2:

"Sepurane, ya, Ngger, Ibumu mengko ninggalake Kowe sawetara. Yen kahanane becik, muga-muga Ibu bisa ngejak Kowe, ya, Cah Bagus?" (page. 30)

Translation:

"I'm sorry, dear, your mother will be leaving you for a while. If the situation is good, hopefully your mother can take you with her, okay, handsome boy?" (p. 30)

The above quote reflects liberal feminism in the context of eliminating gender double standards in family life. The character Muherdini does not limit herself to domestic duties such as taking care of children. Dini is willing to leave her child temporarily in order to obtain a scholarship at WSU. Dini realizes that her role as a mother does not have to hinder her aspirations as an individual who wants to learn, grow, and contribute more broadly to society. Her actions reflect the spirit of liberal feminism, which advocates for freedom of choice, independence, and equal opportunities for women in various aspects of life, including higher education ([Karya & Kajian, 2024](#)).

Data 3:

"Kok mboten dijak mawon, kakunge wau!"

"Pak, lha wong sekolah kok, kon ngajak bojo! Kendhile rak sida nggoling!" (page. 32)

Translation:

"Why didn't you invite him, her husband?"

"Sir, she's a student, how could she invite her husband! That would be inappropriate!" (p. 32)

The character Muherdini symbolizes the modern woman who breaks through the social and cultural boundaries that restrict women's roles. Education is a right for every individual, including women, and that right should not be limited by marital status or cultural expectations regarding a wife's domestic role ([Maulid, 2022](#)). Dini rejects the single role of a wife confined to the domestic sphere and demonstrates that women also have the right to pursue education and personal freedom. Dini is a symbol of an educated and independent woman who is aware of her position as an equal human being and does not hesitate to show that women are also capable of determining their own path in life without always needing to be accompanied or guided by men.

Data 4:

"Iya-iya, Din. S2-mu biyen UP (University of the Philippines), ta?"

"Iya, ana ing Manila!" (page. 44)

Translation:

"Yes, Din. You did your master's degree at UP (University of the Philippines), right?"

"Yes, in Manila!" (p. 44)

Muherdini had equal opportunities to study abroad and was recognized for her achievements. This reflects the rejection of gender discrimination and the push for equality of rights and opportunities between men and women. Muherdini had access to higher education and was recognized by her social circle. This signifies that women are no longer judged solely on their domestic roles, but are also valued for their intellectual achievements ([Sastra & Pratiwi, 2024](#)).

Data 5:

"Sokur, Ngger, anakku! Congratulations for You, Wara Muherdini, PhD!" (page. 98)

Translation:

"Thank God, my child! Congratulations, Wara Muherdini, PhD!" (p. 98)

Muherdini successfully earned the highest academic degree (PhD) and received recognition and support from her family. Women's success in higher education, recognition of their abilities, and the removal of gender role restrictions are no longer limited to domestic roles alone, but also enable them to take on important roles in academic and intellectual fields ([Suhendra et al., 2023](#)). This reflects the values of liberal feminism, which rejects gender-based role restrictions. Muherdini has become a symbol that women have the right and ability to advance intellectually and professionally, just like men.

c. The Right to Better Employment

The data used in the discussion of the right to better employment is limited to only four because most of the data found has similar content and messages. The four selected data points are considered sufficient to represent the general view on equal employment opportunities and the importance of fair access to decent work.

Data 1:

"Aku ngerti, kok, Din!. Ning, ana ninge, lho! Kowe kudu eling jejermu minangka pegawe negeri, kang kudu asung pengabdian marang negara! Dadi saumpama aku dadi kowe, ya urusan dhines kang dakdhisikake, ngono lho, Din!" (page. 11)

Translation:

"I know, Din! But there's a catch! You have to remember that you are a civil servant who must obey and serve the country! So, if I were you, I would prioritize my official duties, you know, Din!" (p. 11)

Liberal feminism is a branch of feminism that advocates for women's rights to individual freedom, equality under the law, and equal opportunities in various areas of life, particularly in education, employment, and politics ([Dzulfikar, 2023](#)). The quote reflects the values of liberal feminism because it acknowledges Muherdini's capacity and rights as a woman to be a professional in the public sphere and supports the idea that women can and should prioritize their work responsibilities. This is part of the struggle for gender equality, where women are given opportunities and support

to pursue careers and become part of the state bureaucracy without being bound by traditional gender stereotypes.

Data 2:

"Aku wis mlebu mulang kaya adate. Survai menyang Ungaran isih durung daklakoni." (page. 140)

Translation:

"I went to teach as usual. The survey in Ungaran still cannot be conducted." (p. 140)

Muherdini has a permanent and professional job as a teacher. This reflects the values of liberal feminism, which emphasizes that women have the right to positions in the workforce and to be recognized as professional workers. This reflects the ideas of liberal feminism because it shows a female character who is actively working in the education sector, has professional responsibilities, and demonstrates that women can obtain jobs that are equal to those of men.

Data 3:

"Din, proyek impen going-on. Kira-kira minggu ngarep kene genti nyang Bekasi! Rapat tindak lanjut. Ora kabotan, ta?" (page. 161)

Translation:

"Din, the dream project is underway. We'll be going to Bekasi next week! Follow-up meeting. You don't mind, do you?" (p.161)

Muherdini has access to and plays a role in valuable and professional work, is trusted to handle large projects, and has equal opportunities and responsibilities in the workplace. This is a concrete manifestation of liberal feminism's struggle to achieve better equality of opportunity for women in the workplace. Liberal feminism supports the idea that women have the right to develop their potential through their chosen and desired careers ([Isnaini et al., 2020](#)). The character Muherdini is actively involved in large and important projects. Her involvement in follow-up meetings and business trips to Bekasi indicates that Dini has a strategic position or role in the workplace, not just a complementary one.

Data 4:

"Aku kepeksa moncat-mancit Jakarta Semarang. Ora sida pindhah Semarang. Awit lagi bae arep ngajokake panyu-wun pindhah dadak diangkat dadi Pembantu Dhekan Bi-dang Akadhemik." (page. 172)

Translation:

"I was forced to commute between Jakarta and Semarang. I didn't end up moving to Semarang. Just as I was about to apply for a transfer, I was appointed as the Dean's assistant for academic affairs." (p. 172)

Muherdini was able to break through the bureaucratic structure and attain an important position in an educational institution. Liberal feminism focuses on equality of rights between men and women, particularly in access to education, employment, and leadership opportunities ([Fahmi & Arfiyanti, 2020](#)). In the quote, Muherdini was chosen to be the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, a position that shows that Dini is recognized professionally in the academic environment, which is often dominated by men. This position was not given out of pity or gender quotas, but because of her competence. This shows that a woman's abilities and performance can be recognized as equal to those of men, as advocated by liberal feminism.

The Impact of Liberal Feminism on Muherdini's Character

In the novel *Nglari Woting Ati*, there are six characters who are affected by liberal feminism as reflected in the character of Muherdini. The impact of feminism appears in the perspectives, attitudes, and roles of the characters Irawan, Ardhana, Mbak Laras, Bu Siti, and Anita.

a. Irawan

Irawan is Muherdini's husband. Muherdini's ability to convince Irawan of her own capabilities makes Irawan believe that Muherdini deserves a higher education. Muherdini's status as a wife and mother is not an obstacle. Irawan gives Muherdini the opportunity to continue to develop.

"Din, ora mung kang ninggal kang abot lan mandheg-mayong. Abot Din, rasaning atiku koktinggal, nanging aku tansah nyuwun marang Pangeran, muga-muga pasinaonmu kaparingan lancar, ora ana alangan sawiji apa, uga tansah kaparingan slamet! Take care Din, and get touch, I will miss You!" (page. 31)

Translation:

"Din, you are not the only one who feels heavy and hesitant about leaving. It's hard, Din, to feel that you are leaving my heart, but I always pray to God that your studies will go smoothly, without any obstacles, and that you will always be safe! Take care, Din, and keep in touch. I will miss you!" (p. 31)

Muherdini dared to make the decision to continue her education, a step that demonstrated her independence and courage to fight for her rights. This attitude then influenced Irawan, who sincerely gave his permission, support, and prayers so that Muherdini could achieve her dreams without obstacles. Irawan did not feel threatened or object to the decision; instead, he demonstrated an open-minded and supportive attitude toward Muherdini's growth. This signifies a shift in men's thinking influenced by liberal feminism, where men begin to value women's freedom and choices (I. N. Sari & Isman, 2022). Thus, the quote illustrates an equal and mutually supportive relationship between men and women, which is one of the main goals of liberal feminism.

b. Ardhana

Ardhana is Muherdini's child. Muherdini's diligent nature in studying has influenced Arda to emulate her and grow into a child who enjoys trying new things.

"Weruh cah cilik-cilik yen esuk budhal sekolah, Arda klayu, Din! Ben keslimur atine awit ditinggal Ibune, mula dakdhaftarake ana Play Group Marsudi Siwi ing Blok IV, cedhak omah!" (page. 39)

Translation:

"Seeing the little boy leaving for school in the morning, Arda wanted to go too, Din! So that he would forget how sad he felt when his mother left him, he was enrolled in the Marsudi Siwi Play Group in Block IV, near his house!" (p. 39)

Even as a young child, Arda began to see school as something interesting and enjoyable. The fact that Muherdini left Arda to pursue her PhD did not make Arda spoiled. Arda showed ambition and enthusiasm for school as a way to escape the feeling of loss. The values of liberal feminism, such as equal access to education, freedom of choice, and individual empowerment, are reflected in Arda's character development from an early age.

c. Mbak Laras

Mbak Laras is Muherdini's mother. Muherdini, who was smart and independent from a young age, made her mother not restrict her and give her freedom in education and work, even though Muherdini had already become a wife and mother.

"Mula nalika Kowe budhal menyang Manila, jroning batin ibu ngunandika, 'Mbokmenawa iki piweleh seka Pangeran, jatahe anakku mung Manila'. Ya sokur, bisa sekolah menyang Manila! Nanging Din, bareng mau, Irawan kandha yen Kowe bakal ditugasi menyang Washington State University, panuwunku marang Gusti tanpa upama. Ya iki bebana kang diparingake Pangeran, awit seka manembahe Ibu lan pambudidayamu, Ndhuk! Mula Din, pikiren sing wening, kanthi iki ora ateges Ibu njurungake Kowe supaya budhal, ora! Kabeh Kowe dhewe sing wenang nemtokake, budhal becik, ora budhal ya ora apa-apa. Awit kabeh mau kanggo tembe mburimu dhewe, dudu sapa-sapa. Mung siji Din, panjalukku! Aja nganti Kowe owel marang samubarang kang wis koktetepake. Kowe kudu ikhlas, konsekuen lan konsisten. Ngerti, Din?" (page. 14)

Translation:

"So, when you went to Manila, in my heart I said, 'Who knows, maybe this is a sign from God that Manila is where my son belongs. Thank God, you can go to school in Manila! But Din, when Irawan mentioned that you might be assigned to Washington State University, my prayer to God was without exception. This is the burden God has given, from my heart and your behavior, my child! Therefore, Din, think it through carefully. This is not meant to force you to go—no! You alone have the authority to decide. Going is good, not going is also fine. All of that is for your own future, not anyone else's. Just one thing, Din, my request! Don't end up regretting everything you've decided. You must be sincere, consistent, and steadfast. Understand, Din?" (p. 14)

Mbak Laras demonstrates a stance as a woman who supports equality, particularly in terms of education and the freedom to choose her child's life path, even if the child is a girl. Liberal feminism focuses on equality of rights and individual freedom, including access to education, employment, and decision-making without being constrained by gender constructs (A. M. I. Sari, 2023). In this quote, Muherdini, as the main character, has a positive influence on her mother's views. Although she comes from a traditional background, Mbak Laras does not limit her children based on gender but instead shows confidence in her daughter's abilities, saying that all decisions are in Muherdini's hands, not imposed by her parents.

d. Bu Siti

Bu Siti is Irawan's mother. Muherdini's good nature and intelligence in her education and work impress Mrs. Siti, who considers Muherdini like her own daughter.

"Kowe aja semborono, lho, Wan! Aja nglarani atine Dini! Bocah apik ngono, kurang apa?" (page. 7)

"Wuk, yen Irawan natoni atimu, aja wadul nyang Mbak Laras, ya, wadula marang aku!" (page. 7)

Translation:

"Don't be careless, Wan! Don't hurt Dini's feelings! She's such a good girl, what more could you want?" (p. 7)

“Tomorrow, if Irawan hurts your feelings, don't complain to Mbak Laras, just complain to me!” (p. 7)

Bu Siti places herself on equal footing with Dini, which shows that she has absorbed the liberal feminist value of equality in female relationships. Bu Siti's words show a more open and empathetic attitude towards Dini. She offers herself as a confidant if Dini ever experiences problems in her marriage. The character Muherdini brings the influence of liberal feminism that has a broad impact, including on Mrs. Siti. Through equal, open, and supportive interactions, Mrs. Siti shows that values such as gender equality, women's independence, and solidarity can be internalized and realized in everyday life, even by female characters who previously lived in a traditional social order.

e. Anita

Anita is Irawan's ex-girlfriend. Muherdini's independent nature and self-reliance make Anita feel inferior to Muherdini. Irawan chooses to marry Muherdini because her worldview is broader than Anita's. However, Muherdini remains humble and able to control her emotions when Anita confesses that she still loves Irawan.

“Muherdini, pranyata kowe wong ayu lair batin! Ora luput yen Irawan milih Kowe, nganti dilabuhi kontrang-kantring Ing Manila!” (page. 116)

“Din, sepuramu sing gedhe, supaya lakuku ngadhep Pangeran sesembahanku ora mandheg mayong! Berbagi, ya Din? Aku isih tresna karo Irawan! Kowe bisa ngerti, Din?” (page. 142)

Translation:

“Muherdini, it turns out you are beautiful inside and out! Irawan made the right choice in choosing you, even fighting for you all the way in Manila!” (p. 116)

“Din, I am so sorry, so that when I face my creator, I will have no doubts! Share, okay, Din? I still love Irawan! Can you understand, Din?” (p. 142)

This quote shows that the character Muherdini has a liberal feminist influence on Anita. Anita's perspective, which was previously jealous of Muherdini, changes to one of respect for other women. Anita's attitude, which was initially filled with jealousy, changes to one of courage to be honest and apologize to Muherdini. Muherdini influences Anita's character development through feminist values, particularly empathy, self-respect, and female solidarity. Liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of women not undermining each other but instead supporting and respecting each other's choices and achievements ([Panggabean et al., 2022](#)).

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it was found that Muherdini in Fitri Gunawan's novel *Nglari Woting Ati* has liberal feminist traits that are in line with the concept described by Wollstonecraft. Muherdini can be seen as a reflection of modern women who are empowered and brave enough to make decisions independently. She appears as a character who can balance domestic and public roles, demonstrating that women have equal rights in education, career, and social life. Muherdini becomes a symbol of resistance against gender double standards and traditional expectations that tend to undermine women's potential. Through the character of Muherdini, readers are invited to see how women can build self-autonomy, determine their life choices, and actively participate in the social sphere without

losing their identity as women. Thus, the presence of the character Muherdini in the novel *Nglari Woting Ati* not only strengthens the narrative of gender equality but also inspires readers, especially women, to continue to fight for their rights and full potential. The researcher hopes that this study can contribute to enriching literary studies, particularly those related to feminist issues, and serve as an additional reference for academics, researchers, and general readers interested in the representation of women in literary works.

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