

# GENDER BIAS SCHOOL POLICIES REPRESENTATION IN MONA LISA SMILE MOVIE

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## Ringkasan

The background of the study in this research is based on the problem about gender bias policies in education that still happens until now. This problem must be discussed and completed. Both man and woman should get the equal treatment in education. So that, it can be able create injustice for one of them based on gender differences. The writer took "Mona Lisa Smile" by Mike Newell. The objectives of this study are to know school condition in "Mona Lisa Smile" movie and to know gender bias school policies represented in "Mona Lisa Smile" movie.

The method of the research used structural analysis and feminism analysis. In this research provided the data used structuralism approach. The Result of The Study are there were many characters of this movie; Katherine Watson, Betty Warren, Jocelyn Carr, Joan Brandwyn, Nancy Abbey, Giselle Levy, Elizabeth Betty Warren, Spencer Jones, Amanda Armstrong, Tommy Donegal, Bill Dunbar, and Connie Baker. They were the major characters in this movie. The setting social of this movie is the usual American school life in 1960's. There were some gender bias school policies for the students and teachers. Both the students or teachers in the school don't have the power to change it. The conclusion of this study indicated the school condition in the movie still uphold the conservative values and for the school gender bias policies, there was three policies which was implemented.

## Keywords

Feminism — Liberal Feminism — Gender Bias

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Pekalongan

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## Introduction

Education is not something that human being can finish. Education can also be called one of the important process to develop self-personality. The social life which have the functions to face and live in the realities of today. According to The Constitution of The Indonesia Republic no.20 years of 2003 about National Education System chapter 1 In (<https://kelembagaan.ristekdikti.go.id>). Education is the awareness and planned effort to realize the situation of learning and teaching learning process. So that the students can develop their potential actively to have the spiritual power, self-control, personality, intelligence, good moral, and skill that are needed for their self, society, nation.

Education should provide the humanity values. The main point is provide a freedom, and also provide a justice or balance to every human being without excepting. Because of that their potential can develop as well as possible. But in the reality that happens in school there are still a

lot of problems. So that the purpose of education have not achieved maximally yet.

Along the developments of historical began to appear the concept of formal education. School is the formal place that has been made for education activity. In addition, Topatimasang (2010:27) states that the word "School" come from latin language skhhole, scola, scolae or skhola means free time or spare time. The first school which was made was the school of philosophy established by Plato. In ancient Athens, school was also a place that society believed to educate their children. The parents hope their children can have a certain moral value and behavior to blend in the society.

From the understanding above it can be concluded that school is free time or spare time for the children. Beside their main activity which is playing and spending time enjoys the childhood activity or teenage activity. The activity in this spare time are learn how to write and learn about moral value and also behavior to blend in the society.

School should have a certain rule that is approved by the nation and made by practitioners of education. Such as; school curriculum, syllabus, the package of rules and regulations for schools that are applied in whole country. In developed countries, such as Finland. The educational system has started using new innovations as an effort in order to improve the quality of education in the country. According to PISA evaluation (Program for International Student Assessment), an institution that measures the ability of students around the world. In 2013, Finland become the first ranked while Indonesia is ranked 60th. So that's why, the education especially school needed a device that can direct the aims of education well.

To make sure the whole system in the school is working effective and efficient. School need a good management and continually control. According to Arikunto dan Yuliana (2008:4) School management is an activity or the step of activity that contains the process of maintenance mechanism from the group of people who join in organization of education. The goal is reach the education target that has been made earlier effective and efficiently.

Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that management of school are used as specific guidance or standards. All the elements in school components must be applied well. Such as how the relationship between teachers and students, the students and all the school components. School curriculum, syllabus, the package of rules and regulations for schools as a part of educational management should consider the value of freedom and justice. So that the problems faced by the environment can resolved, as well as goals that want to be reached without omit the humanity values.

The success of education is how all the devices itself to be created, implemented, and controlled. Not only that, because the devices that are in school should regard to the values of freedom, justice, and humanity. Those values are as the breath of education. Therefore it must be adopted. However, there are still problems about school's devices and one them is gender bias school policies. It should not happens in school. Where in essence men more get the privilege than women become the subordinate class. Accordingly, it can be causes the discrimination or injustice based on gender in education. This can be found in student teaching materials. The other cases happen in culture of the school including the behavior of students and other school subjects.

The student textbooks if it is observed is actually there are many gender bias values is found. Taken for example, the research conducted by Billah Nurlaili Zulmi and Refti Lisini Handini in 2017 from the University of Surabaya. Entitled "Bias Gender dalam Buku Tematik Siswa Kurikulum 2013". The result showed that Buku Tematik Siswa Kurikulum 2013 Tema Kegiatan Tingkat Kelas 1 Sekolah Dasar still contains of gender bias.

The student textbook written by two authors namely

Dra. Nurhasanah and Lubna Assagaf, S.Pd. There is still contains gaps in the description between men and women. Both of writers as women it turned out there is still miss conception about gender roles and miss understanding from stereotype by ideology which emphasizes that men are superior than women. The forms of gender bias can be seen in several categories, namely (1) Gender bias in work roles, (2) Gender bias in character values, (3) Gender bias in social status, and (4) Gender bias in hobby.

The overall gender bias were manifested through illustration and story text. Such as an illustration of the family structure. "The father and his son washed the car while the mother and her daughter are cooking in the kitchen". The picture defines that women who can occup in the kitchen work. In this case work that need more precision, whereas the figure of men here are identified with work that requires strength and power. The kitchen and garage have strong gender connotations. Kitchen space for food processing is very strongly associated with feminine activities. Meanwhile according to Irwan Abdullah in Risma (2013) space garages for storing vehicles identic with masculine. Furthermore, this perception gives rise to stereotypes of some majors with gender identity. Taken for example, there is a labeling that the Department of Mechanical Engineering for men. Because it can be said that machine show has the connotations with masculine character. While the Cullinary Art Department is identified for women, because in it teaches matters related to the kitchen. Our culture considers women as konco wingking. So that all matters relating to the kitchen has a perception that is women's rights and obligations.

This argument is supported by the study from Risma Dewi Amanah entitled "Aplikasi kesetaraan gender dalam kepemimpinan organisasi Himpunan Mahasiswa Mesin Fakultas Teknik Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Periode 2012" from UNY in 2013.

The result of this study indicate that there is still a gender bias in division of tasks in the Machine Students Association. Women are often placed in the domestic sector. Such as treasurers, work council staff, secretaries, and consumption sieves. While the important or main positions such as chairman, deputy chairman, department head are given to the men.

There was another gender bias policies in education which was happen in University of Gajah Mada. There was one of the students became the victim of rape or sexual harassment experienced by Agni (pseudonym). When she was done the study program of KKN on Seram Island, Maluku in June 2017. (bbc.com) retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/trensosial-47116889> on August, 11 - 2019. This kind of cases should not happen in our education.

These problems still happen in the school. It is so hard to creat the life order which is fairness and humane. All the problems will be cleared by the education. Because

education is the most powerful weapon which can use to change the world. Education is the breath of life.

The problem about "Gender bias school policies which is shown "Mona Lisa Smile" movie. The main character Katherine Watsons an art teacher who graduated from the University of California Los Angeles. She wants to change the mindset of her students at a well-known conservative school named Wellesley College in the New England area. Shes's struggle who some time tried to change the tradition that took place by assuming women were the subordinate class after the men. The tradition that requires women to devote themselves by serving the man who is their husband. Almost of them must bury their dream just because marital status. The effort of Katherine Watson can be seen from her bravery to change the devices or culture of the school. She changes the learning syllabus that has been determined by the school. She tries to change the tradition by providing consultation outside the lesson time, and she does not submit the lesson plan at the beginning of learning.

In this research, the writer tried to analyze how is gender bias school policies in "Mona Lisa Smile" movie. Katherine Watson shows that the gender bias tradition and policies in the school still happens up till now. Katherine struggling to change the mindset of his students then to change the situation. Katherine gives the moral values that the women have the right to pursue their own dreams, without any intervention from others. Women are also free to determine the way that will be passed in their lives. They should not be trapped in the common traditions in society.

In the era of modernity, there should not be any discrimination in education, just because the differences of gender. If this still happens do not be surprised when the social environment continuing the gender-based injustice.

## Methods

The model of the research used of qualitative research. Meanwhile, the approach used in this study was objective approach. One of the objective approach is structuralism (Abrams in Wahyuningtyas and Santosa, 2011 : 1). According to Ratna (2012 : 91) structuralism is the study about the structure that is structure itself with the mechanism that connected each other. In this study, the writer provides the data using structuralism approach. Structuralism as an autonomous work can produce its own meaning, which is built through the relationships between elements in the movie, as intrinsic elements. In this cases the writer just focused with some of the elements that appropriate with this study, which is used to describe the social condition in the movie. Those are; setting of social, setting of place, setting of time, character and also characterization aspect. So that not all of the elements in the movile was analyzed.

This study also discuss about gender bias. The writer uses of feminism theory that is liberal feminism. Libe-

ral feminism considers that want to liberate women from oppressive gender roles. The roles that are used as reasons or justifications to give a lower place, do not give a place for academics, forums, politic and markets. They emphasize that patriarchal society confuses sex and gender. They consider only jobs that are associated with a feminine personality that is appropriate for women (Tong, 2008: 49).

## Discussion

The result of the study will be described in two parts, as follows:

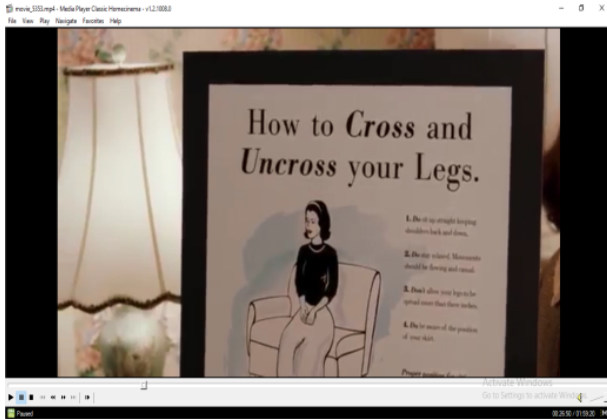
### The School Condition

There are many characters of this movie; they are Katherine Watson, Betty Warren, Jocelyn Carr (President Wellesley school), Joan Brandwyn, Nancy Abbey, Giselle Levy, Elizabeth Betty Warren (Betty's Mother), Spencer Jones (Betty's Husband) Amanda Armstrong (School Nurse), Tommy Donegal (Joan's Husband), Bill Dunbar (Italian language Teacher) , and Connie Baker. They are the major character in this movie. Mike Newell describes their character using some technique of describing characterization. He uses conversation, behavior, and monologue.

**The Setting of Time** The setting of time in this movie was fall 1953 and took place at Wellesley College, Massachusetts in the England area. At that time, showed the social system of modern society had the inequality structure, because the hegemony of patriarchal culture very thick in that period. Exactly, the marginalization and stigma of women in various aspects of life. Especially in economic and politic sector.

**The Setting of Place** The setting of place in the movie showed that there some symbols and classroom decoration which was interpreted the school condition. The Wellesley college which was known as nothing more than preparing the future housewife candidates. This condition supported by the symbols and classroom decoration. Taken for sample when the personality subject which was taught by Nancy Abbey, shown in Picture 1 From the picture above, it showed that the setting of classroom for personality subject to make the Wellesley girls have a good personality. It was supported by the decorations of the classroom and their cloth. The subject which was taught by Nancy Abbey focus, how they were able to be a good wife in future. Starting from how the way they were wearing the dress, have a good ethic as a housewife, and have a good moral for them as a future housewife candidate. It was also seen in the Picture 2.

**The Setting of Social** The social setting of this movie can be seen from the custom tradition of the society where the story was taken. The school custom tradition in the school still followed the traditional or conservative culture.



Gambar 1. Setting of Place 1



Gambar 2. Setting of Place 2

It can be seen from the assumption of most the students and all the elements in the school. Women in real life would just be a housewife, served their husband and children, and also worked in the kitchen. Even those seem like the big dream that have to be attained for women. Furthermore it was like the women obligation and the sanctuary for them. So that, they did not need to get the high education. Meanwhile man must got the high education because they would be a leader.

The students in the school were also attached to a lot of rules. Meanwhile, the subject which was taught to them gave no creativity activity, just prepare for syllabus and for the test. Especially, for the art subject art that were forbidden in the school. The students and some of teachers were able to obey and being silent all of the rules and tradition in the school. There would be a consequence, if they broke the tradition or rules. The president of the school will put out them from the school.

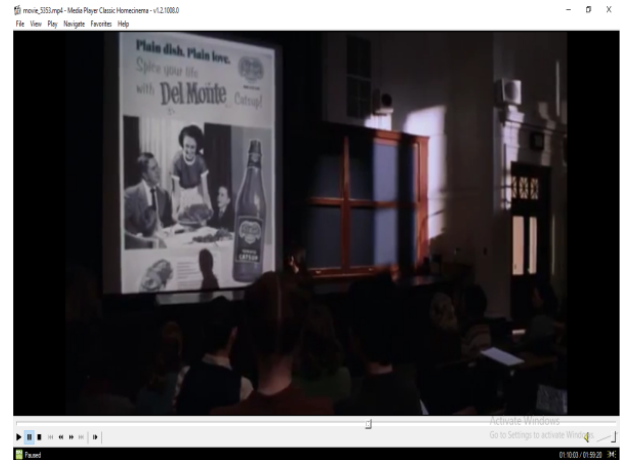
The traditional values that were still uphold by the Wellesley school were also reflected in social environment. Because schools itself is a part of the social environment. So that why both have the relation each other. The function of the Wellesley school itself is like maintaining the ideology of patriarchy. In this case women were always in position as second sex in the social environment and

men were always given privileges. Even women were often related with some of advertising household products. Such as product from Old Dutch cleanser and Del Monte (Picture 3). From the Picture 4, it can be described that



Gambar 3. Setting of Social 1

women has obligation with the house work. They, as a housewife, had the strong relation with the domestic sector. So that the advertising household products used women as a model.



Gambar 4. Setting of Social 2

### The Gender Bias School Policies Represented in "Mona Lisa Smile" Movie

There were some gender bias school policies in the "Mona Lisa Smile" movie. Especially in the vision of the school. This gender bias school policy was happen by the characters of this movie. There were some datas from some characters in this movie that showed the gender bias school policies. It can be seen from the data below:

The writer explains each data above in detail. The explanation is as follows:



**Prohibition of carrying contraceptives for women** They would be a labelling and considered have a bad personality as a part of Wellesley college. Moreover, they will be considered promote free sex and not to uphold the value of morality or politeness.

The Wellesley school which was still adheres to traditionalism. It was assumed that woman who caught carried contraceptives would be labelled as bad women. There would be stigma. Broke the rules and did not uphold the morality values. Moreover, women were considered resist the culture at that time. Such as liberal and progressive.

The assumption that contraceptive has a tendency with men, and to be the cause women who caught carrying the contraceptive it was like weird thing. "is little more than a cheerleader for promiscuity". It can be said that women always to be a victim about free sex and all the things that related with prostitution. But the different cased with the men. There was no bad labelling for men. Even though, men also as a subject in prostitution or free sex field.

The conceptive itself it should be neutral gender. It can be personal protective equipment. Moreover, it can be said that contraception is related to reproductive health. But, they were considered such as a bitch which was promotes free sex. If they were caught carried the contraceptive. So that's why, it was gender bias, because there was a different standard of morality between women and men. So that, this was the way, how giving the men privilege in standard of moral.

**The obligation for Wellesley girls to participate in all school cultures** The competition or school's culture it's been going on since the late '80s. And all of the Wellesley girls were formed to keep up the school culture at that time. They have to. It described that the highest achievement is to get married. Even, the assumption whoever wins was first to marry through symbols. That was the winner of the competition. Seems like it was inconceivable dream for women. They were formed by a patriarchal system. The competition hoop also described that they did not need to be smart and intellectual to get the highest achievement. Just through the picayune things, it was enough to get it.

The patriarchal system with traditional values that continued to be adopted by schools. It has contributed creating of graduates from Wellesley college. They only have a dream to be a housewife. Most of them, they did not realize that they have uphold the patriarchal system and cause injustice to the woman herself. This was the example of gender bias school policy operated in Wellesley college, which was not realizing by Wellesley girls.

**Married students having different right in school** It showed that the school gave the privilege as point of appreciation in highest achievement. That was getting married. This cased also described that actually the faculty or school no bother with student's attendance. So that, there was no different between the students with married status and

the students commonly who always attended in the class. School also tend made the students who were in married status easily getting A. Even, when all the elements in Wellesley school did not follow this rules. They will got consequences. Such as a threatening for them.

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