



The Effect of Patriarchal Ideology on Daughter's Character Building in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie

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The character of daughter is built by her father's patriarchal ideology in patrilineal kinship. For example, that issue was depicted on Laura as a daughter in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie (1971). This study aims to explain the way of Laura's thinking and behaving which are influenced by her father's patriarchal ideology. Then, this study aims to explain the success of her father's patriarchal ideology on Laura's character building in that novel. This study was a kind of library research. The research method of this study was close reading by using feminism approach. The results of this study showed that first, the character of Laura had been built by her father's patriarchal ideology through the way of thinking in Little House on the Prairie (1971). Laura had a forward thinking pattern for the future. She also had the ability to think quickly and logically. She also had a similar thought with her father about the animal skill. She was also able to think critically, as an adult about her safety and the Ingalls family. Second, the way of Laura's behaving was also built by her father's patriarchal ideology. Laura had an affectionate behaviour toward fellow creatures. She was also be nice when she made a new relationship with the stranger people. She also had a polite behaviour to respect others. Third, Laura's father patriarchal ideology was successfully influenced her daughter character building in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie. Pa as Laura's father was considered became the protector for Laura and the Ingalls family. He was also positioned as the superior one by Laura, even he was considered became a hero for the Ingalls family. Pa was also considered had an important role by Laura in her life and also the Ingalls family .

Key words: gender, ideology, patriarchy, character building;

Introduction

Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie (1971) is very interesting novel to read. That novel represented the existence of a patriarchal culture that had always been a hot issue to be debated by the society. That novel depicted the story of the Ingalls family which were white American society. The Ingalls family consisted of five family members. They were Pa as a father, Ma as a mother, Mary as the first daughter, Laura as the second daughter, and Baby Carrie as the third daughter of the Ingalls

family. They practiced a patrilineal kinship system in which Pa acted as a father who had the highest authority of the Ingalls family members. In addition, the Civil War which was the background of the story in that novel supported the existence of patriarchal culture. It was because Pa who was a father played an important role to ensure the survival of the Ingalls family in The Indian Territory.

The existence of patriarchal culture became a patriarchal ideology was depicted by

the character namely Laura in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (1971). Researchers found a more intensive closeness relationship between father and his daughter than mother with her daughter in that novel. The patriarchal ideology was transmitted by a father to his daughter through communication. In addition, researcher also found many evidences that daughter was more dominant in imitating her father's characterization than her mother in that novel.

There are several important reasons for examining the problem of patriarchal ideological which influenced on the daughter's character building in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. First, that novel is a classic work of American children's literature (Sickles, 2008). So, it becomes a promotion media from the existence of patriarchal cultural that transmit the patriarchal ideology through favorite reading material for American children as well as other children. Second, this study is important because it shows that the daughter's character building in society who practices patrilineal kinship system is still exist.

The research problems in this study include: (1) How do Laura's character building is built by her father's patriarchal ideology through the way of thinking and the way of behaving in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*?; (2) what extent the success of Pa's patriarchal ideology influenced Laura's character building in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*?

The aims of this study are: (1) to explain the way of Laura's thinking and the way of Laura's behaving which are built by her father's patriarchal ideology; (2) to explain the success of Pa's patriarchal ideology on Laura's character building in that novel.

There are two previous studies that had studied Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (1971). Reese's (2008: 67) used new historicist theory to show that the elementary school students got a wrong information about Indian tribe after reading that novel. Then, Amos (2014) showed that the attitude of American White Settlers were sentiment towards Indians based on racial ideology in the *Little House on the Prairie*. In contrast to Reese (2008) and

Amos (2014) researches, this study aims to reveal the influence of father's patriarchal ideology on the daughter's character building in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* novel. The research problems will be solved by Sylvia Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990) and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (2000) in this study.

Patriarchal society gives an absolute power to men (Sultana, 2011). That was evidenced by the restriction of rights which owned by women in the public space. The absolute power of men against women becomes dominant because patriarchal societies endorse such powers (Walby, 1990). The relationship between men and women were hierarchical in societies that practice the patrilineal social system. Men are positioned as the superior individuals, while women are positioned as inferior individuals (Sultana, 2011).

Furthermore, patriarchal ideology is transmitted to women through several institutions (Millett, 2000). In a family institution, patriarchal ideology plays a role in perpetuating male power as a father who becomes a leader in family order. That is in line with Walby's (1990:63) opinion that "Men in the family performed instrumental role and women the expressive one. The family itself existed because it performed essential function for society those of the socialization of children and of the stabilization of adult personalities." That suggestion showed that the relationship between men and women affected their socialization process within family institutions. People who adopted the patriarchal system will place men in the most important role at home, while women were obedient to the men. Patriarchal ideology is also transmitted through the socialization of children in the family environment (Walby 1990:91).

From a feminist perspective, patriarchy can be defined as a system. Krunger, Fisher, and Wright (2013:4) argue that "a system characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition, ...". Characteristics ideology of patriarchy are power, domination, and hierarchical (Sultana, 2011). The socialization of patriarchal ideology is illustrated by the process and the maintenance of male dominance in patriarchal ideology (Haralambos and Holborn, 2010). Men became the dominant gender because of their physical strengths. In addition, they were also food providers for their families.

Kate Millett (2000) stated that patriarchal ideology was socialized into three categories: temperament, role, and status. First, patriarchal ideology was socialized into the temperament category. This category deals with the formation of human personality based on the needs and values of the dominant group in society between male and female sex. Second, patriarchal ideology was socialized into role categories. This category deals with the differences in roles played by the sexes of men and women. Third, the ideology of patriarchy was socialized into the status category. Status attached to someone came from a collaboration between an individual's role and temperament. An individual status was derived from the role which they played in society, and also the psychological conditions that formed the basis of an individual's temperament.

The family is an institution used as a means to channel patriarchal ideology to other family members (Walby, 1990:93). The ideology of patriarchy made the father was positioned superior in his family. The ideology of patriarchy still existed because it was based on someone's way of thinking from generation to generation. That was similar to Walby's opinion (1990:95) that "Patriarchal practices are continued because of the way our minds are ordered from generation to generation."

Material and Methods

This research was a library research. The source of this research data was a novel entitled *Little House on the Prairie* (1971) by Laura Ingalls Wilder. The data collection technique was done by close reading. This research data came from the novelist's narrations and the characters' utterances in that novel. The data analysis technique of this research was done through three steps, namely data reduction, data display and conclusion (Berg, 2001). Data reduction was derived from the novelist's narrations and the characters' utterances in *Little House on the Prairie* that were in relation to Laura's character building which caused by the patriarchal ideology. Then, the data were coded to help the researcher presented the data display. The data display which are coded by the researcher would be analyzed by using patriarchy

theory in Sylvia Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), feminism theory in Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (2000), and other literatures which were related to solve the research problems. The third step was conclusion which contained the summary from the analysis.

Results and Discussion

The Ways of Laura's Thinking which was Built by Pa's Patriarchal Ideology

Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* depicted that Pa who became Laura's father had a forward thinking pattern for the future. His way of thinking was evidenced by his desire to start a better life in The Indian Territory, although he had never visited that place before. His decision was revealed to Laura's mother who was called as Ma. He said to Ma that "I've decided to go see the West. I've had an offer for this place, and we can sell it now as much as we're ever likely to get, enough to give us a start in a new country" (Wilder, 1971:2-3). Pa's patriarchal ideology had arose when he tried to force Ma and also the Ingalls family through his decision about went to the West. Pa was convinced that The Indian Territory was a perfect place for the Ingalls family to start a new life.

Laura had a forward thinking pattern for the future which was depicted in *Little House on the Prairie*. That was evidenced by the following conversation between Pa and Laura: "We're across the Mississippi!" he said, hugging her joyously. "How do you like that, little half-pint of sweet cider half drunk up? Do you like going out west where Indians live?"

Laura said she liked it, and she asked if they were in the Indian country now. But they were not; they were in Minnesota. (Wilder, 1971:9)

Laura gave a good response to Pa's question about the Ingalls family's departure to The Indian Territory. She responded that she liked about that. It was evidenced that Laura's character was influenced by Pa's patriarchal ideology. Pa forced the Ingalls family to move to The Indian Territory. Thus, Pa's patriarchal ideology transmitted to Laura through a family institution in accordance with Walby's opinion (1990:63). Laura's the way of thinking was oriented toward the future as Pa had thought before. Laura dared

to adapt with the new environmental condition in The Indian Territory she had never visited before.

Laura also had the ability to think quickly and logically which was depicted in the *Little House on the Prairie* (1971). Her ability was influenced by Pa's patriarchal ideology in that novel. This was evidenced by the following conversations between Pa and Laura:

They were beautiful little horses, and Pa said they were not really ponies; they were western mustangs. "They're strong as mules and gentle as kittens," Pa said. They had large, soft, gentle eyes, and long manes and tails, and slender legs and feet much smaller and quicker than the feet of horses in the Big Woods.

When Laura asked what their names were, Pa said that she and Mary could name them. So Mary named one, Pet, and Laura named the other, Patty.

(Wilder, 1971:12)

That evidence above showed that Pa had the ability to think quickly and logically. Pa's ability was proven when he was able to identify the physical characteristics of two small horses that he had just met. Pa clearly described their physical appearance to her daughter namely Laura. Pa's patriarchal ideology had arose when Laura asked the suitable name for them. Pa authorized Laura to give names for the two horses. Laura's way of thinking was a similiar with Pa's way of thinking. One of the horse was named Patty by Laura without thinking. Patty's name was given to that horse because Laura felt its name fitted perfectly with the little house's physical appearance. Thus, the way of Pa's ability to think quickly and logically was imitated by Laura because of Pa's patriarchal ideology.

Laura also had a similar thought with her father about the animal skill. Her ability to think was influenced by Pa's patriarchal ideology. That was evidenced by the following conversation between Pa and Laura:

Pa climbed to the seat, saying, "They may have to swim, out there in the middle. But we'll make it all right, Caroline. "Laura thought of Jack and said, "I wish Jack could ride in the wagon, Pa."

(Wilder, 1971:20)

The conversation between Pa and Laura

above happened when their journey was interrupted by floods and storms. Pa could not control his wagon suddenly because of floods and storms. Pa was thinking about the safety of a lost Ingalls family's bulldog named Jack. Laura also thought of Jack's safety who became her favorite bulldog. Pa thought that animals were able to swim when floods and storms suddenly happened. Laura also agreed that Jack could swim and reach on the Ingalls family's wagon as soon as possible. Pa's patriarchal ideology justified the statement which Pa had made to Laura. Pa's statement about the safety of the Ingalls family's favorite animal made Laura to confirm that her beloved animal could be saved from floods and storms like the way of Pa's thinking.

Laura was also able to think critically, like an adult about her safety and the Ingalls family. Laura's way of thinking was influenced by Pa's patriarchal ideology. Pa thought about the safety of the Ingalls family when the wild animal would attack them. It can be proven as follows:

Ma shook the dish-cloth, and then she walked into the dark and spread the cloth on the tall grass to dry. When she came back Pa said: "Wolves. Half a mile away, I'd judge. Well, where there's deer there will be wolves. I wish—"

He didn't say what he wished, but Laura knew. He wished Jack were there. When wolves howled in the Big Woods, Laura had always known that Jack would not let them hurt her.

(Wilder, 1971:33)

That evidence indicated that the Ingalls family was worried about the wild animal, such as a wolf. Their fear was happened because the Ingalls beloved family bulldog named Jack had not returned yet. Pa thought that Jack would help the Ingalls, if Jack was founded. It was because Jack was a strong and good bulldog. Laura also had the similar thought with Pa that Jack would not let Laura got hurt by the wild animal. Thus, the similarity of Pa's thought and Laura was occurred because of Pa's patriarchal ideology.

The Ways of Laura's Behaving which are Built by Pa's Patriarchal Ideology

Laura had an affectionate behaviour toward fellow creatures. Laura's behaviour was influenced by Pa's patriarchal ideology. It can be proven in a conversation between Laura and Pa:

"Oh, Ma," Laura begged, "Jack has gone to heaven, hasn't he? He was such a good dog, can't he go to heaven?"

Ma did not know what to answer, but Pa said: "Yes, Laura, he can. God that doesn't forget the sparrows won't leave a good dog like Jack out in the cold."

Laura felt only a little better. She was not happy. Pa did not whistle about his work as usual, and after a while he said, "And what we'll do in a wild country without a good watchdog I don't know."

(Wilder, 1971:27)

That evidence showed that Laura's affection toward her beloved bulldog namely Jack. It also became the Ingalls family's favorite bulldog. Laura's behaviour was built by Pa's patriarchal ideology which transmitted to Laura. Pa implanted the affectionate behaviour toward animal to Laura.

The other evidence which was indicated that Laura loved animal could be seen in the dialogue between Laura and Pa:

"Look, Pa, look!" Laura said. "A wolf!"

Pa did not seem to move quickly, but he did.

....

"Don't, Charles," Ma said. But Pa slowly walked toward those eyes. And slowly along the ground the eyes crawled toward him.

Laura could see the animal in the edge of the dark. It was a tawny animal and brindled. Then Pa shouted and Laura screamed. The next thing she knew she was trying to hug a jumping, panting, wriggling Jack, who lapped her face and hands with his warm wet tongue.

(Wilder, 1971:34)

That evidence showed that Laura treated the animal well. She treated her favorite bulldog just likes as she loved her Ingalls family. That bulldog also replied Laura's affection by coming near to Laura. Pa's patriarchal ideology infected Laura because Pa was so much love Ingalls' bulldog like his family.

Laura was also be nice when she made a new relationship with the stranger people. The way of Laura's behaving was also imitated by Pa who liked to socialize with the new people

who did not have meet before. It could be proven as follows:

That night by the fire Laura asked again when she would see a papoose, but Pa didn't know. He said you never saw Indians unless they wanted you to see them. He had seen Indians when he was a boy in New York State, but Laura never had. She knew they were wild men with red skins, and their hatchets were called tomahawks. Pa knew all about wild animals, so he must know about wild men, too.

(Wilder, 1971:55-56)

That evidence showed that Laura wanted to know the existence of a savage human being, like wildmen. Laura's curiosity was transmitted by Pa because he taught Laura to make a good relationship with the stranger people. Pa showed up his experience that he had traveled to New York and he met the Indians. His experience proved that Pa could socialize with the stranger people. Laura's behaviour was influenced by Pa's patriarchal ideology in which Laura wanted to make a new relationship with the Indians. They were a stranger people for Laura. She had never met them before who called wildmen in The Indian Territory.

Laura also had a polite behaviour to respect others. Pa also had a polite behaviour to respect the people who he had just met. That was evidenced by the conversation between Pa and Ma as follows:

"Unless I miss my guess," Pa said, "that was French he spoke. I wish I had picked up some of that lingo."

"Let Indians keep themselves to themselves," said Ma, "and we will do the same. I don't like Indians around underfoot."

Pa told her not to worry. "That Indian was perfectly friendly," he said.

(Wilder, 1971:229)

That evidence showed that Pa had a polite behaviour to respect the Indians who came to Ingalls family's house. Pa regarded Indians as his family even though he was prohibited by Ma. Pa considered that Indians became his best friends and a family.

Pa's polite behaviour to respect others influenced Laura through Pa's patriarchal

ideology. Laura had the similiar behaviour. It can be proven as follows:

Pa had not said anything about the wolves yet. Laura wished he would. But she knew that she must not interrupt when Pa was talking.

(Wilder, 1971:88)

Laura's polite behaviour toward Pa was evidenced when Laura did not want to bother her father when he was speaking. Laura realized that she should respect her father politely when her father was speaking. Therefore, she did not want to cut off the conversation when Pa was speaking.

The Success of Pa's Patriarchal Ideology on the Laura's Character Building

The Ingalls family consisted of five family members. They consisted of Pa as a father, Ma as a mother, Mary as the first daughter, Laura as the second daughter, and Baby Carrie as the third daughter. Pa was the only Ingalls family members who was a male gender.

The Ingalls family followed a patriarchal kinship system. That kinship system was evidenced in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (1971) through characters' utterances and novelists' narrations. Pa was positioned in the highest roles of Ingalls family members. He had an authority to make a regulations for the Ingalls family, such as he made many kinds of important decisions for them.

Pa's patriarchal ideology was exists to influence Laura's character building which are depicted in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. It can be proven through the novelist's narration:

Everything from the little house was in the wagon, except the beds and tables and chairs. They did not need to take these, because Pa could always make new ones.

(Wilder, 1971:3)

That narration indicated that the Ingalls family was an institution which became a place to transfer a patriarchal ideology as Walby's opinion (1990:93). The Ingalls family became the best institution for Pa to transmit his patriarchal ideology to the other Ingalls family members. Other members of the Ingalls family depended on Pa when they did their daily

activities. Take for example, Pa could do many kinds of carpentry works, but other family members could not do that. Pa fulfilled Ingalls family member's daily needed. Thus, Pa's patriarchal ideology strongly influenced female characters, especially Laura. Laura's character building was built by Pa's patriarchal ideology. It was because Laura and other Ingalls family members regarded Pa as their protector when they needed Pa's help. Pa's patriarchal ideology was succesfully to influence Laura's character building as Pa's daughter through the importance of Pa's position or what Millett (2000) called it as a role. Pa as Laura's father was considered became the protector for Laura and the Ingalls family.

Pa's patriarchal ideology succeed to influence Laura's character building because Pa was positioned as superior by Laura, even Pa was considered as a hero to the Ingalls family. It can be proven through the novelist's narration as follows:

Pa drove the wagon out onto the ice, following those wagon tracks. The horses' hoofs clop-clopped with a dull sound, the wagon wheels went crunching. The town grew smaller and smaller behind, till even the tall store was only a dot. All around the wagon there was nothing but empty and silent space. Laura didn't like it. But Pa was on the wagon seat and Jack was under the wagon; she knew that nothing could hurt her while Pa and Jack were there.

(Wilder, 1971:7)

That novelist's narration evidenced that man was positioned as a superior, while women are positioned as an inferior that is similar according to Sultana's opinion (2011). A daughter liked Laura's character felt weak because she needed a refuge. She had a higher emotional attachment relationship with Pa than Ma. Pa's patriarchal ideology arose in the Ingalls family when the members of the Ingalls family, who were mostly female, felt weak without the protection from a man. Thus, Pa was made a hero by Laura who would protect her in all situation. A hero character attributed to Pa also proved that father was always positioned superior in *Little House on the Prairie* (1971). He was also positioned as the superior one by Laura, even he

was considered became a hero for the Ingalls family.

Pa's patriarchal ideology was obvious when Pa was considered an important battle lives for Laura and the Ingalls family. It can be proven through a conversation between Laura and Ma as follows:

Softly Pa's fiddle sang in the starlight. Sometimes he sang a little and sometimes the fiddle sang alone. Sweet and thin and far away, the fiddle went on singing: "None knew thee but to love thee, Thou dear one of my heart. . . ."
The large, bright stars hung down from the sky. Lower and lower they came, quivering with music. Laura gasped, and Ma came quickly. "What is it, Laura?" she asked, and Laura whispered, "The stars were singing."

(Wilder, 1971:50)

That evidence suggested that Pa's patriarchal ideology transmitted to Laura because of Laura's own way of thinking as similar with Walby's opinion (1990:95). Pa had an image was likened to a star that tried to illuminate Laura's life. Pa was just a picture that Pa was singing under the starlight. However, Laura assumed that Pa played an important role for her life as long as she became Pa's second daughter. The success of Pa's patriarchal ideology influenced Laura's character building as followed what Millett (2000) called it as role. Pa was also considered had an important role by Laura in her life and also the Ingalls family.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that first, the character of Laura had been built by her father's patriarchal ideology through the way of thinking in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (1971). Laura had a forward thinking pattern for the future. She also had the ability to think quickly and logically. She also had a similar thought with her father about the animal skill. She was also able to think critically, as an adult about her safety and the Ingalls family.

Second, the way of Laura's behaving was also built by her father's patriarchal ideology.

Laura had an affectionate behaviour toward fellow creatures. She was also be nice when she made a new relationship with the stranger people. She also had a polite behaviour to respect others.

Third, Laura's father patriarchal ideology was successfully influenced her daughter character building in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. Pa as Laura's father was considered became the protector for Laura and the Ingalls family. He was also positioned as the superior one by Laura, even he was considered became a hero for the Ingalls family. Pa was also considered had an important role by Laura in her life and also the Ingalls family.

Suggestion

Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (1971) is very interesting to be the source of data analysis. It is because that novel becomes American children literary work which also became children's reading material. The problem in that novel will be very complex, if the researcher connects by using the approach in literature theory.

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