

FAMILY VALUES IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S
LITTLE WOMEN



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Hasanuddin University as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to
obtain Sarjana Degree in English Literature*

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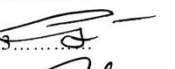



Today, September 17th 2021, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by **ELVIRA RAMADHANTI** (Student Number: **F041171546**) entitled:

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Submitted in fulfillment one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, September 17th 2021

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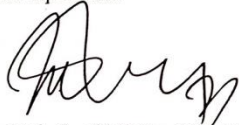
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DECLARATION

The thesis by **Elvira Ramadhanti** (Student Number: F041171546) entitled, **Family Values in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*** has been revised as advised during the examination on September 17th 2021 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduated Thesis Examiners:

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STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by herself. This thesis does not contain any materials which have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except the quotations and references.

Makassar, September 22nd 2021

The writer



Elvira Ramadhanti

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ABSTRACT

ELVIRA RAMADHANTI. “*Family Values in Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women*” supervised by **Muh. Syafri Badaruddin** and **A. ST. Aldilah Khaerana.**

This thesis was aimed to identify the family values of American family as reflected in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* novel. The researcher employed the novel *Little Women* as the object of the study. The objectives of this study are (1) to identify the family values as reflected in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, and (2) to elaborate the family values of American family reflected in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*.

This research is a qualitative study that applied sociology of literature approach. The object and primary data of this research is *Little Women* novel written by Louisa May Alcott that published by Harper Collins publisher based in London, 2013 edition with a total of 286 pages. The secondary data are any related data to the analysis of this study that taken through library research.

The results of this study show that there are some family values of American families during the Civil War that identified in Alcott’s *Little Women* in religious, economic, education, and social aspects that in relation to real fact of American society.

Keyword: little women, family values, sociology of literature, American civil war

ABSTRAK

ELVIRA RAMADHANTI. “*Family Values in Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women*” dibimbing oleh **Muh. Syafri Badaruddin** dan **A. ST. Aldilah Khaerana.**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai keluarga dalam keluarga Amerika yang tercermin dalam novel *Little Women* karya Louisa May Alcott. Peneliti menggunakan novel *Little Women* sebagai objek utama dalam penelitian ini. Adapun tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah (1) untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai keluarga yang tercermin dalam novel *Little Women* karya Louisa May Alcott, dan (2) untuk mengelaborasi nilai-nilai keluarga Amerika yang tercermin dalam *Little Women* karya Louisa May Alcott.

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosiologi sastra. Objek dan data primer penelitian ini adalah novel *Little Women* karya Louisa May Alcott yang diterbitkan oleh penerbit Harper Collins yang berbasis di London, edisi 2013 dengan total 286 halaman. Data sekunder adalah data yang berhubungan dengan analisis penelitian ini yang diambil melalui studi kepustakaan.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa nilai keluarga dalam keluarga Amerika selama Perang Saudara yang diidentifikasi di *Little Women* novel oleh Alcott dalam aspek keagamaan, ekonomi, pendidikan, dan sosial yang terkait dengan fakta nyata masyarakat Amerika.

Kata Kunci: little women, nilai-nilai keluarga, sosiologi sastra, perang saudara Amerika

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has six elements; background of study, identification of problem, scope of problem, research question, objective of problem, significance of problem, and sequence of problem.

1.1 Background of Study

Literary works published during a particular time period can be physical evidence of socio-cultural, religious, political, economic and educational aspects. However, not all literary work is a representation of the situation and circumstances at the time it was published. Literary works consist of various types and forms such as short-story, songs, plays, drama, poem, novel etc.

The term “novel” is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of *fiction* written in prose. As an extended narrative, the novel is distinguished from the *short story* and from the work of middle length called the *novelette*; its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes. (Abrams, 1999 :190)

Based on the quotation above, it can be concluded that novel has a more complex structure compared to the other genres of literary works. One of the distinguishing features of novel with other literary works, such as short stories, is that in the novel, character improvisation to conflict is more profound and complex.

There are many literary works which are written by women authors and take family as the main theme of its content. One of them is *Little Women* novel. *Little Women* is a novel written by an American woman author, Louisa May Alcott. This novel was written into two parts which published in 1868 and 1869. The first volume entitled *Little Women* which consist of 217 pages and 23 chapters, while the second volume entitled *Good Wives* contained chapter 24-47. It was an instant bestseller, *Little Women* selling 2,000 copies that time.

After Louisa May Alcott succeeded with *Little Women* (1868), she also writes several novels like *Old-Fashioned Girl* (1870), *Little Men* (1871), *Eight Cousins* (1875), *Rose in Bloom* (1876), *Jo's Boys* (1886). nb\ Alcott is one of the influential American authors. *Little Women* is also known as a semi-autobiographical novel. March family in *Little Women* is assumed as Alcott's family. The March's parents are good and awesome parents, they have four daughters with different characters, personal passion and ambition. They are Margaret 'Meg', Josephine 'Jo', Elizabeth 'Beth' and Amy March.

The researcher is interested in analyzing family values in Alcott's *Little Women* due to the several reasons. Firstly, scholars classify it as an autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novel which makes this novel even more interesting. The readers can find out the life story and understanding of how the author's experiences have influenced them as a person just by reading their works.

The characters in *Little Women* are very varied and their traits make all of them alive because they do not only portray how the real emotions of people are, but also their precise relationship with one another. Due to the unique characters and traits, the four March sisters are unforgettable.

Secondly, the novel has a lot of moral values. Rather than writing about major events in the war, Alcott writes about things that seem unimportant, which has been so often written off as frivolous or petty, but that actually are the most common things people experience. One of the core issues in *Little Women* is about the bond and relationship between family members and also about family values that they find in the midst of different polemics and difficulties in their family life.

Furthermore, this novel itself is still popular and relevant classics until today even though it has been more than a century since its publication. *Little Women* has been adapted into several plays and movies with the same title. It is amazing that this story still rings true more than 100 years later.

Therefore, analyzing *Little Women* novel is necessary in order to understand the values of family in social life. Specifically, the Civil War affected March family circumstances, and how the March family struggled to grow up in an all-female household. From that, the researcher applies the structural analysis to learn about family values through the relationship between one and another character, along with sociological theory to analyze the social situation and its relation to real fact of American society. With all of the previous explanation, the title of the study is *Family Values in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women*.

1.2 Identification of Problem

After reading *Little Women*, a novel by Louisa May Alcott, the researcher finds out some point of discourse, such as:

1. The effects of American civil war on March family life.
2. The March sisters' struggle growing up in all-female household.
3. The values portrayed by Jo as the main character.
4. The family's sacrifice in the absence of father in family.
5. The family values in the novel.

1.3 Scope of the Problem

Little Women is the famous American novel that does not only present the story about four March sisters and their different characters, but this novel also presents the family values. This research is limited and only focused on analyzing the family value of American family as reflected in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* by applying structural analysis along with sociology of literature approach.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background of study, identification of the problem, and scope of the problem above, the researcher proposes the problem into the following research questions.

1. What is the family values reflected in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*?
2. How is the family values of American family reflected in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*?

1.5 Objective of Problem

According to the research question above, the researcher formulates the objective of the study as follows:

1. To identify the family values as reflected in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.
2. To elaborate the family values of American family reflected in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to give both theoretical and practical significances as follows:

1.6.1 Theoretical

The result of this study is expected to give information about the family values in *Little Women* novel by Louisa May Alcott through the sociological approach. This study is also expected to provide the description of American family values particularly during the Civil War.

1.6.2 Practical

The study is expected to enrich the knowledge and experience of the writer and other students of Hasanuddin University or other university students as an academic reference that have interest to analyze the same type of literary work which is *Little Women* novel by Louisa May Alcott.

1.7. Sequence of the Chapters

This research is systematically organized into five chapters. Each chapter discusses different matters as follows; Chapter one provides introduction that consists of background of the study, identification of problems, scope of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and sequence of writing. Chapter two elaborates previous related studies and theoretical background of the study. Chapter three provides research method that consists of source of the data, technique of data collection, and technique of data analysis. In addition, chapter four consists of analyses and discussion and finally, chapter five describes conclusion and suggestion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Related Studies

A previous related study is presented to elaborate the differences and the similarities between the previous studies and this study to prove the originality of this research. Several researchers have conducted studies about family values in several novels and movies, including:

The first researcher is **Septa Pradana. A.** (2013) who wrote *The American Family Values in Little Miss Sunshine Movie*. This research focused on the social problems which are raised in the movie through the structural elements and the American family values which are presented in *Little Miss Sunshine* movie. The researcher employed two research techniques, namely research methods focused on study literature and sociological and exponential approaches method. As a result of this research, the writer stated that the *Little Miss Sunshine* movie can be viewed as a representation of American family values. Despite the fact that the family members are in conflict with one another, but all of them work together to try and solve the problems that visualize togetherness, make stability and loyalty in the family. As a conclusion, the first researcher believes that this movie has three main family values: togetherness, stability, and loyalty.

The second is **Cinda Amilia Rahman** (2018) entitled *The Struggle of Victorian Women in Novel Little Women by Louisa May Alcott*. The purposes of

this study are to describe the struggle of women in the novel who had fight for life with their own support without men on their sides in aspects of family, education and public work environment. The writer declared in the final conclusion that March family struggle is not easy to live everyday life because they have to live without their father. In addition, the family's togetherness and responsibility to each other teach us that family makes you strong.

Moreover, **Miranti Anindita Putri Wardani** (2018) writes her thesis entitled *The Family Values Depicted in The Inside Out Movie*. Her research aims to explain how Riley's Family deals with problems using the family values theory. The researcher approaches literary works from a sociological viewpoint, and the data was collected through library research. According to the findings of this research, the daily events in Riley and her family have family values based on three values: togetherness, stability, and loyalty. It can be proven that several elements of each value can strengthen relationship in a family as whole.

The researcher assumes that there are similarities and also differences between previous related studies above and the researcher study, either from the object or theory and approach. The similarity between those previous studies is on the same approach and method applied, which is sociological approach and analyzing values of family in the works. The difference of these studies is the first and third researchers are used movies to be analyzed and focused on the family values as reflected in the movies. However, the second researcher is used Louisa's *Little Women* novel.

In summary, based on the reasoning given above, the researcher argues that this research is important to be done. Thus, the researcher analyzes *Family Values in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women* focusing in describing the family values of American family in the novel.

2.2 Theoretical Background

There are two elements in the novel as a literary work, namely intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements are the elements that build the literary work itself, the content of literary works such as theme, plot, setting, character and characterization. On the other hand, extrinsic elements are elements that exist outside of literary text but they also have an impact on that literary work. These elements include sociology, politics, philosophy, anthropology, and so on.

In this sub chapter, the researcher explains the theory used as the theoretical basis on this research. First, intrinsic element which includes: character, plot, setting, and theme. The next discussion is studies related to the sociological approach to literature. The following are the theories which this study is focused on.

2.2.1 Intrinsic Elements of Novel

In this study, the intrinsic elements of literature are used as a tool to determine the text contained in the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. The word "intrinsic elements" refers to elements that make up literary works and it cannot stand alone because they complement each other. Intrinsic elements must be thoroughly understood in order to understanding the entire literary work. Those

intrinsic elements must be thoroughly understood in order to understanding in the entire literary work, it described in details as follows:

1. Plot

Plot is the sequence of incidents, ideas or events in the novel. The story of the novel progresses through numerous plots and conflicts. The story in the novel is set up in such a way to show the connection between one and another events that make literary works complete.

The plot in dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects. (Abrams, 1999: 224)

There are five stages of plot:

1. **Exposition** is introduction to the major characters and their relationship with minor and one another. The exposition providing introduction to the readers such as introduction to characters' descriptions until the setting where the plot takes place, and so on.
2. **Rising Action** is the first stage of conflict between characters, as it starts to arise and evolve in the story. The story become complicated and the internal and external conflicts are revealed that can lead this story to bigger conflicts.
3. **Climax** or it is also known as turning point for the characters in the story where the problems and conflicts happened in the story.

4. **Falling Action**, it is the stage that happened after the climax, and even reveals the causes of the problems that occur at the climax.
5. **Resolution** is the last stage of plot or the ending of the story and resolves several conflicts that have occurred.

From explanations above, it can be concluded that plot is a sequence of events, the plot is often referred to as a narrative outline arranged in a timeline that shows a causal relationship in the story.

2. Characterization

Character is one of the major elements in intrinsic that impersonate the story. Then, characterization is a clear depiction of a person in story. It can be a person, animal, being, creature, or thing in a story. An author uses characters to perform the actions and speak dialogue, that moving the story along a plot line.

According to Abrams:

“Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it-the dialogue- and from what they do-the action.” (Abrams, 1999: 32)

Baldick (2001: 37) adds that term ‘character’ is a personage in a narrative or dramatic work; also a kind of prose sketch briefly describing some recognizable type of persons. Characterization may include direct methods like the attribution of qualities in description or commentary, and indirect (or ‘dramatic’) methods inviting readers to infer qualities from characters’ actions, speech, or appearance.

From explanations above, it can be concluded that character is a fictional or imaginary person who is portrayed in a story or literary work in a narrative manner. The major component of the story is how the characters are portrayed, because everything that the characters determine the direction of a story.

Furthermore, character is one of the important elements of fiction. There are two types of characters in the novel: major and minor characters. Major characters are those who play a significant role in the story, while minor characters who support the main character's role.

3. Setting

Setting of a story is the place where the events of the story provide details about the situation (place, time, social environment) in the story. Certain times (day, month and year), physical locations, climate, weather, and even the social and cultural situation may be part of the setting.

The overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locate, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of a single episode or scene within such a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place. (Abrams, 1999: 284)

There are three kinds of setting:

1. **Setting of Place:** The locations of the events in the fictional works take place. Where the story revolves around one location to another.

2. **Setting of Time:** Related to the time issues like “when” the event happens in a story. It can also be connected to the factual events like historical and others.
3. **Setting of Social:** Social setting directs to the problems which are related to the behavior of social life in specific place and at a certain time in a literary works. Social setting has connection with the system of social life that contains many problems in broader context; it can be living habits, customs, belief and religion, ideology, and way of thinking.

Based on previous explanations, concluded that setting is an event that occurs at a certain time and place over a period of time. A custom, tradition, belief and life habit formed during that time period which made all of these components into the socio-cultural setting.

4. Theme

Theme is the central idea of literary works that gives readers a better understanding of the story. As Abrams (1999: 170) said, “Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘motif,’ but the term is more usefully applied to a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.”

Theme is a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work’s treatment of its subject-matter, or a topic recurring in a number of literary works. While the subject of a work is described concretely in terms of its action (e.g. ‘the adventures of a newcomer in the big city’), its theme or themes will be described in more abstract terms (e.g. love, war, revenge, betrayal, fate, etc.) (Baldick, 2001: 258)

An author presents the main idea that is usually referred to as themes. The existence of a theme is very important because it forms as the base of the literary work as a whole. As a function of the theme, readers find a greater understanding of the main character's conflicts, experiences, discoveries, and emotions.

Theme is an idea or concept for creating a story or giving meaning to all of the events in the story through characterization, images and action. An author tried to offer his readers an idea of how the author sees the world and how the world works based on author's point of view.

2.2.2 Sociology of Literature

The sociology of literature is branch of sociology that studies the relationship between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created. The sociological analysis of literature is extremely useful in understanding socio-economic condition, political issues, author's world views and imagination.

Sociology of literature is a branch of literary study that examines the relationships between literary works and their social contexts, including patterns of literacy, kinds of audience, modes of publication, and dramatic presentation, and the social class positions of authors and readers. (Baldick, 2001: 238).

The experts classified sociology literature as 1) Sociology of author, it is about the author's life background, social status, political ideology and so on. 2) Sociology of literary work, which discussed the literary work itself. 3) Sociology of reader, about the reader and its social influence on society.

According to Swingewood and Laurenson, (1971: 11) "Sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of

social institution and social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists.”

Meanwhile, as Abrams states:

The term “sociology of literature,” however is applied only to the writings of those historians and critics whose primary, and sometimes exclusive, interest is in the ways that the constitution and form of a literary work are affected by such circumstances as its author’s class status, gender, and political and other interest; the ways of thinking and feeling characteristic of its era; the economic conditions of the writer’s profession and of the publication and distribution of books; and the social class, conceptions, and values of the audience to which author addresses the literary product, or to which it is made available. (Abrams, 1999:288)

It can be concluded that the term “sociology of literature” refers to an analysis of literary work by considering the social aspects. Sociology of literature is an interdisciplinary study between sociology and literature which has the same object, humans in society. Literary works reveal many sides of human life in society that are defined in the author’s theme. The social aspects contained in the novel are very broad, because of the various situations in the society including family life and its values.

Traditionally, both law and social science have specified that the family consist of people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. (Lamanna, 2009:2). Family is a small social group of people made up of several individuals who communicate with one another and each has a social role, for example, father as husband, mother as wife, sister and brother as children.

Sociologists define the idea of a family is a groups of people who are related by genetics, marriage, or choice, and who share materials, emotional, and

economic resources. Family is a bounded set of people who shared goal of the well-being and mutual support of its members.

Thus, the researcher concludes that family is most significant things in social life consist of a group of people who has a relationship with each other. When talking about relationship, every family member's always have conflicts with one another. Conflict is a natural event that happens in everyday living in society and it is part of sociology.

Based on several descriptions above, researcher analyzed Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* using the sociology of literary works about its social relations to describe family life and its values contained in the novel. Through social interaction between main characters with the other characters, these social relations are built and created. The relationship can cause conflict, love story, kinship, and anything else that refers to social phenomena that exists in society as a whole.

2.2.3 American Family in the 1890s

Every family has their own principles about family values. However, Lamanna and Riedmann argue that "Values of American family such as family togetherness, stability, and loyalty focus on the family as a whole." (2009:13). Spending more quality family time as simple as to gather and talk as a family is a great way to strengthen family bonding. Family is the most significance person who helps during difficult times and supports in every circumstance.

As Murdock said:

“The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It concludes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults.” (Murdock, 1949:1)

The quotation above indicates that family is the smallest but also most important aspect in social environment. The family not only shares common residence as mentioned above, but also cooperates with each physically, emotionally, socially, and economically.

When the Civil War started, life became even more difficult for the average American. Many of the guys were drafted or enlisted in the army. Meanwhile, the women were left at home to labor on the farm or pursue jobs on their own to support the family.

Many American family situations in the 1890s or during and after the civil war were uprooted as they witnessed the destruction of their homes and land holdings. (Taylor, 2020). Their life changed since then, every family had to deal with the ordeal of separation because the father and son in the family have to go to battlefield.

There were many effects that occurred as the result of the Civil War that brought changes in households and lives. Faust stated that with the departure of so many men to the battlefield, the Confederate homefront became a world of white women and of slaves. (Faust, 1996: 31).

There were even terms to portray those situations; “thinned out of men” or “no men left.” During Civil War era, many families experienced the loss of a husband or a son to battle, leaving women and children particularly wives, daughters, sisters, and other female kin on their own to provide for themselves.

As women grew helpless with the loss of their husbands, and as soldier became resentful of the poor living conditions of their families, public protests by women and desertions by men became common. (Clinton, 2000: 78).

Women played important roles both at home and on the battlefield. In the house, they had to manage the household while their men were fighting in the battle. Women were forced to take on new jobs as a result of the large number of men who had gone to war. They labored in the fields, on farms, and in factories that produced goods for the armies. Several women served as nurses in the army, helping wounded soldiers in their recovery, some women even served in the military.

Little Women emphasized on the family aspect because in this aspect the novel depicts the struggle of four March sisters as a family on facing the circumstances of life. On that process, it can be seen how the American family values during the American Civil War are reflected in the March family.

There are some aspects and values that the March family embraces. On the religious aspect, March family believes in Christian-based values as seen in several chapters in the novel. Meanwhile in economic aspect, the average American families have to face financial difficulties during the war. In education

aspect, the four March sisters who turn into women in America during Victorian Age shares their dreams and ambitions in life. While in social aspect, it shows about how March sisters socialize with different social classes. Social class is divided into three classes, there are upper class, middle class, and lower class.