

**THE PORTRAYAL OF FIRDAUS DILEMMA IN NAWAL
EL-SAADAWI'S *WOMAN AT POINT ZERO*: A CARE-FOCUSED
FEMINISM ANALYSIS**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for Gaining
the Bachelor Degree in English Literature



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2020

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this thesis is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this thesis. Other researcher's opinions or findings included in the thesis are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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EL-SAADAWI'S WOMAN AT POINT ZERO: A CARE-FOCUSED
FEMINISM ANALYSIS**

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Atas perhatiannya, saya ucapkan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

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MOTTO

“Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp,
but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.”

-Nathaniel Hawthorne-



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DEDICATION

My Father

His love and memories will always live in my heart forever.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to say Alhamdulillah, because Allah SWT has given His grace and blessings to me to complete and finish this graduating paper. Second, I would sincerely thank the following people that have helped them during this entire time:

- a. Dr. Ubaidillah, M.Hum., as the head of English Department in Sunan Kalijaga State University, thank you for your advice and your help during this time.
- b. Danial Hidayatullah, S.S., M.Hum., as my thesis advisor. I would like to say thousand thanks, for dedicating your time, energy and patience to guide me during this thesis-finishing process. You have helped me a lot and listened to me. I hope you are always happy.
- c. All of the English Department Lecturers from Sunan Kalijaga State University, Dr. Witriani, M.Hum, Febriyanti Dwiratna Lestari, S.S., M.A, Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S., M.Hum., Harsiwi Fajarsari, S.S., M.A, Bambang Hariyanto, S.S, M.A, Arif Budiman, S.S., M.A, Aninda Aji Siwi, S.Pd., M.Pd., and others.
- d. My beloved Parents, Sukarsilah and Supriyanto (alm) thank you for all material, spiritual and affectional support. You both always believe in my dreams, and for my father I wish you were here to celebrate this life-accomplishment of mine.
- e. Oky Sarini and Syaifullah, my sister and my brother in law, who always support me to achieve my goals and also Khilma Hawa Saakinah and Inara

Putri Khairunissa, my beautiful and cute nieces. Thank you for always making me happy. You both are so adorable.

- f. All of my English Department friends batch 2016, thank you for always give rainbow-unicorn colors to my journey since the first semester. I will never forget and will cherish all the memories we have created together.
- g. Irwan Febriyansah, my special partner. Thank you so much for always loving, cheering, understanding, and accepting the way I am. You are my everythingship and I am so grateful to have you in my life. *Tu me tienes loco, loco contigo!* I hope the best for our future.
- h. Deanda Nurhanifah and Vivin Diah Invari, my best friends who always bring spirit and support me since high school. I hope our friendship will last forever until we are bored to try thousands of yaa.molli filters.
- i. All the reviewers, Metri Kumala Ayuningtyas, Tri Ayu Widyaningsih, Puja Alviana Dewantri, Reno Forma S.W, Farah Nailil Izzah, thank you for all the constructive critics and suggestions toward my graduating paper.

Last, for all readers who read this graduating paper, I'm waiting for all construct suggestions to improve this graduating paper of mine.

Yogyakarta, February 20 2020

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the struggle of Firdaus through care-focused feminism by Carol Gilligan. Care-focused feminism divided into three stages, pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. The care-focused feminism analysis model reveals the missing-link of the idea being a feminist that Firdaus experiences during her life struggle. This research also aims to conduct a different form feminism analysis in *Woman at Point Zero*. Researcher uses the previous *Woman at Point Zero* researches as supporting point of view and comparison to strengthen the analysis. The result of care-focused feminism analysis toward Firdaus character is she experiences dilemmatic phase while she enters the conventional stage of care-focused feminism. It creates self-crisis that influences her struggle to fight the patriarchy.

Keywords: *Woman at Point Zero*, Care-focused feminism, Firdaus.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis usaha usaha Firdaus melalui care-focused feminism oleh Carol Gilligan. Care-focused feminism di kategorikan menjadi tiga bagian, pre-conventional, conventional dan post-conventional. Model analisis dari care-focused feminism dapat mengungkap potongan-potongan kosong mengenai gagasan bagaimana menjadi seorang feminis yang Firdaus alami semasa perjuangan hidupnya. Penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk memaparkan bentuk analisis feminisme yang berbeda terhadap novel *Woman at Point Zero*. Peneliti menggunakan penelitian-penelitian yang sebelumnya mengenai *Woman at Point Zero* sebagai sudut pandang pendukung dan pembanding untuk memperkuat analisis. Hasil dari analisis menggunakan care-focused feminism terhadap Firdaus karakter adalah dia mengalami fase dilematik ketika dia memasuki tahap conventional di dalam analisis care-focused feminism. Hal tersebut menimbulkan krisis kepribadian yang mempengaruhi usaha-usaha nya untuk melawan patriarki.

Kata kunci: *Woman at Point Zero*, Care-focused feminism, Firdaus.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Choosing the Subject

Woman at Point Zero novel is one of the interesting Middle Eastern literatures. The novel was written by Nawal El-Saadawi, a writer, psychiatrist and feminism activist in Cairo. *Woman at Point Zero* was published in 1983, and the novel was translated into many languages including English and Indonesian version. The novel tells about the complexity of woman in patriarchy that reflects the Egypt society. In the novel, Saadawi portrays the Egypt society as a religious society that places male with many privileges more than women. The impact of male privileges causes several negative impacts for women, for instance sexual abuse, male domination, domestic violence, oppression, sexism and others. She depicts that complexity in a tragic life story of a woman character, Firdaus.

The story of Firdaus apparently begins when she starts to respond the injustice of patriarchy. In Firdaus' childhood, she lived with a patriarchy family. Once, she experienced genital mutilation and was sexually abused by her uncle. When she becomes an adult, Firdaus defends herself from the domestic violence that her 60 years old husband does. Then, she unleashes herself from the hand of Sharifa, a pimp that forces her to be a prostitute in a prostitution place near the Nile River. After that, Firdaus tries to live her life and works in a company.

She takes the job in the company for only three years until she decides to be a prostitute again. The researcher is interested in the way Firdaus fights to claim the freedom of her body. She has the courage to stand by herself and takes a decision against the male supremacy, even though it brings her to the death. She also has a unique struggle. Sometimes she fights the injustice explicitly, sometimes she fights implicitly and other times she accepts the way it is. Moreover, she has various ways to fight towards the oppression, injustice and other male domination. In line with Firdaus story, the issues of woman in patriarchy is continuously exist decades by decades in every forms and cases.

Firdaus is apparently one of the feminist character that is portrayed through a novel since the story totally depicts her struggle to fight the patriarchy. This research analyses how Firdaus responds and/or fights against the patriarchy culture through the stage one of feminism thought by Carol Gilligan. Carol Gilligan is an American feminist-psychologist that contributes her thought in feminism. Care-focused feminism is a feminism thought that was born after psychoanalytic feminism. According to Carol Gilligan (as cited in Rosemarie Tong, 2009:164-165), care-focused feminism is a moral assessment for women related to self-interest as a form to fight the injustice.

Furthermore, care-focused feminism is different from other feminism thoughts. Through this theory, we are able to assess women struggling through three stages of Gilligan's care-focused feminism. The three stages are pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. This research examines whether Firdaus struggles can be categorized as a feminist through Carol Gilligan care-focused feminism or not. Also, this research is not used only to apply the theory but also to test and review the care-focused feminism.

Patriarchy is a social system where men have more privilege than women. According to Sylvia Walby, patriarchy is a structural system and social practice that places the men as the dominance group in order to dominate the women through oppression and exploitation (1998: 20). The impact of patriarchy for example are the injustice between the men and the women rights, then the patriarchy may cause the marginalization of the women in any scope of life. As the result of patriarchy, there is a response and movement to fight for it which is called feminist movement.

Feminism is a response to end the patriarchy. According to Humm, feminism is a movement to get justice for women rights and it is also a form of ideology to create a world for women (2002: 158). It means that the world is free from the oppression, exploitation and male domination. A study that was conducted by Tong stated:

“There are many feminism thoughts, for instance liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, psychoanalytic

feminism, care-focused feminism, multicultural global feminism, postcolonial feminism, ecofeminism and postmodern feminism” (2009:3).

In this research, the researcher examines how Firdaus struggles using Carol Gilligan care-focused feminism. According to Gilligan, “Care-focused feminism divides into three stages, they are pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional” (1985: 8). The relation among the three of them is cause and effect that defines the way woman struggle in society and lead them to the feminist act. The focus of this research is to prove the effort of Firdaus character in *Woman at Point Zero* through these stages that can be considered as a movement of a woman by plotting the character effort as portrayed in the novel into Carol Gilligan stages.

The story of *Woman at Point Zero* that is analyzed through Carol Gilligan theory is a part of literature. Therefore, literature is a result of human creativity. It represents the way human live. The representations of literature are the result of human thought, feeling or even human experiences by manifesting it into a literature work such as writings. A study conducted by Wiley Blackwell said that literature is a product that has relation with life, where we can discover many life values in it with different point of view through the lens of literature (2013:7). Moreover, literature consists of drama, prose and poem as the result of human creativity that reflects the society and the issues in it.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher of this paper aims to discover the answer of the problem as follows:

1. How do Gilligan's stages of Care-Focused Feminism fit Firdaus' struggles?

1.3 Objective of Study

The aim of this research is to determine whether the struggles that Firdaus has done can be categorized as feminist or not based on Carol Gilligan's stages of care-focused feminism. The second aim of this research is to examine the stages of pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional in Firdaus struggle and to know which one that fits the most. The third aim in this research is to uncover the missing link of the concept in feminist struggle in *Woman at Point Zero* through Gilligan's theory.

1.4 Significance of Study

The first significance study of this research is to build an understanding towards the struggles that a character in *Woman at Point Zero* has done through Carol Gilligan's stages of care-focused of feminism. Second, the significance study of this research is to emphasize a knowledge about how the struggle of the character can fit into a theory. Third, the significance of this research is to enrich the analysis of feminism in *Woman at Point Zero* analysis through care-focused feminism.

1.5 Literature Review

The researcher finds some research and studies about Nawal El-Saadawi's work, *Woman at Point Zero* below:

First research is titled "*Perspektif feminis dalam Novel Perempuan di Titik Nol (terjemah Novel Imraatun Inda Nuqthah Al-Shifr) karya Nawal El-Saadawi dan Perempuan Berkalung Sorban karya Abidah El-Khalieqy*", it was written by Ambarwati (2009) from Gadjah Mada University. This research focuses to analyze the potential value that women have to show off their existence in the patriarchy culture.

Second research is titled "*Feminism analysis in the novel Women at Point Zero*", written by Eka Wilany (2017) University of Kepulauan Riau. This research analyzes the struggle of Firdaus' rights, not only as a woman but also as a human.

Third research is a journal titled "*Depiction of Women as the Primary Architects of Their Own Oppression: A Masculinist Critique of El-Saadawi's Women at Point Zero*", written by Abdulrahman Abdulwaheed Idris (2018) University Putra Malaysia. This journal focuses on the oppression that men and women have done in Firdaus' life, and examine how she gets freedom from the oppression.

Fourth research is titled "*Dismantling Prostitution as Institution in Nawal El-Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero*", written by Nenden Syahbana Mandakini, from Surabaya State University. This research analyzes that prostitution can replace the marriage institution and working institution for fallen women.

Fifth research is titled “*Riwayah Imraah Inda Nuqthati Shifr Li Nawal El-Saadawi (Dirasah Tahliliyah Naqdiyah Abadiyah Nisaiyah)*”, written by Siti Munawaroh (2004) State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This research criticizes feminist literature by showing off to the reader that women have their own value in life.

Sixth research is titled “*Manifestations of Hysteria in Nawal El-Saadawi’s Women at Point Zero*”, written by Omar Mohammed Abdullah, Universiti Putra Malaysia. This research focuses on hysteria according to Freudian perspective, in order to explore its symptoms and reactions as well as action undertaken absolute and actualized the self in Nawal El-Saadawi’s *Women at Point Zero*.

Seventh research is titled “*The Meaning of Three Kinds of the Life Journeys as Experienced by Firdaus, The Major Character of Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero*” by Nita Tifani Manulang (2013), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to look for the meaning of the three life journeys in Firdaus’ life, the main character in Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero*.

Eighth research is titled “*Membaca Diskursus Post-Feminism melalui Novel ‘Perempuan di Titik Nol’*” by Kuncoro Bayu Prasetyo (2010), Semarang State University. The goal in this research is to find out the value of post-feminism that is represented in the novel and it used Indonesian women as the context.

Ninth research is titled “*The Feminist and Religious Features in Some of Nawal El-Saadawi Literary Works*” by Abdullah al Mhairat and Dr. Nayera Al Miniawi (2016), Al Balqaa Applied University, Jordan. The aim of the research to discuss the religiosity and the feminism aspects in *Woman at Point Zero* and memories of a main character in the novel.

Tenth research is titled “*Cradle to Grave: An Analysis of Female Oppression in Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero*” by Fwangyil, Gloria Ada (2012), University of Jos, Nigeria. The aim of the research is to examine the oppressions that occurs to woman in *Woman at Point Zero* novel.

Eleventh research is entitled “*A Study of the Main Character’s Motivations for Accepting the Death Sentence in Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero*” by Dewi Maharani Purba, Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to study the reasons why Firdaus chose to accept the death sentence instead of fighting for her life.

Twelfth research is titled “*On the Condition of the Colonized Woman: The Nervous Conditions of Firdaus in Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero (1983), Giunti, Firenze*” by Francesca Coin (2006). The aim of the research is to examine the representation of colonized women as Firdaus depicted in the novel.

Thirteenth research is titled “*Empowering the Subaltern in Woman at Point Zero*” by Saddik Gohar (2016), Bridge Water State University. The aim of the research is to deconstruct the meaning of patriarchy and the domination of the culture in Firdaus’ life.

Fourteenth research is titled *“Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero: The Influence of Religion and Politics on Woman’s Life in Egypt”* by Lusi Kusumasari (2005), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to discuss the values of Islam that is applied in Egypt such as family law, marriage, education, inheritance, etc.

Fifteenth research is titled *“The Influence of Firdaus’s Experiences with Men on Her Perception towards Men as Reflected in Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero”* by Anggita Lisa Febriana (2012), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to analyze Firdaus’ experiences with men, and how it influences the way Firdaus struggles.

Sixteenth research is titled *“The Influence of Islamic Culture Seen in Firdaus’ Family Relationship in Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero”* by Yusi Riyandari (2009), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to find out the impact of Islamic culture and family relationship in Woman at Point Zero novel.

Seventeenth research is titled *“Orientalising the Other Today: Arab Feminism in Western Discourse”* by Jane Lewty (2014), University of Amsterdam. The aim of the research is to reveal the patriarchal supremacy towards the female body in discourse context.

Eighteenth research is titled *“The Meaning of Love Experienced by Firdaus the Main Character of Nawal El-Saadawi’s Woman at point Zero”* by

Raras Sekar Kinasih (2013), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to analyze the meaning of love based on Firdaus' experiences with men.

Nineteenth research is titled "*Firdaus' Motivation in Becoming a Prostitute as Revealed in Nawal El-Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero*" by Rigen Prastitisari (2004), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to discuss the influence of society towards Firdaus' motives in becoming the prostitute.

Twentieth research is titled "*Firdaus' Searching for Freedom as Portrayed in Nawal El-Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero*" by Ratna Juwita Sheina Putri (2011), Sanata Dharma University. The aim of the research is to reveal how society treats the women in the novel and to find out Firdaus' motivation for fighting the inequality.

Twentieth one research is titled "*Sexual Harassment Reflected at Nawal El-Saadawi's Women at Point Zero (1983): A Feminist Approach*" by Harsiti Helen Padang Rahayu (2015), Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. The aim of the research is to discuss the values of feminist in *Woman at Point Zero* novel.

The differences between all the research above compared to this research is it discusses about the problem that the researcher wants to bring about how a character can be categorized as a feminism through Carol Gilligan theory of feminism. This research focuses in digging into the main character named Firdaus and her struggles to unleash herself from patriarchy culture through three model stages of Carol Gilligan.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

Care-focused feminism is one of the feminist thought by Carol Gilligan. According to Carol Gilligan, care-focused feminism is an assessment of women struggling to get the freedom and the injustice through a model of moral assessment (2009:164). Therefore, the struggling of women starts by discovering their needs as the first step to unleash from the patriarchy. Then, it continues by deciding what women want to do as the self-liberation and self-emancipation. The care-focused feminism focuses on finding the connection towards oneself as a form to fight the patriarchal social order. The theory divides into three stages they are: pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional. Below is the explanation about each stages.

a. Pre-conventional

Pre-conventional is the first stage in care-focused feminism. In the pre-conventional stage, a woman has to discover what are the needs of herself. Then, she needs to identify what she wants to achieve. For example, she starts to be aware that living under male domination, oppression and exploitation is not healthy. Thus, she discovers that she needs to free herself from those unhealthy lives.

b. Conventional

Conventional is the second stage in care-focused feminism. In this stage, the realization of needs in a woman's life can be distinguished into two potentials which are equilibrium or disequilibrium. The first potential

is the equilibrium. It occurs when the woman's needs meet what's inside the understanding of society. It means that the needs of self are accepted in society. The equilibrium does not cause psychological violence in a woman such as dilemma. Shortly, the equilibrium is when the needs of self-meet the conformity between self and others. In the other hand, the second potential which is disequilibrium occurs when the needs of a woman do not meet what's inside the understanding of society. It means that the needs of self are not accepted in society. The disequilibrium can cause psychological violence such as dilemma. Shortly, the disequilibrium is when the needs of self-do not meet the conformity and may cause dilemma to the woman.

c. Post-Conventional

Post-Conventional is the last stage of the care-focused feminism. In this stage, the meaning of post-conventional is when the woman's self becomes the arbiter from all the needs. It means that this stage is when a woman makes a decision about the needs that she has discovered in her life despite the equilibrium and the disequilibrium that she experienced. Therefore, this part contains the decision of the women self-needs.

This research aims to analyze whether the struggles that Firdaus do can be categorized as a feminist through stages of Carol Gillian. This research is done by filling the stages with the struggles that Firdaus has done through practically and ideologically aspects. Moreover, this research

fills and examines all the struggles that Firdaus has done by putting into the stages.

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Type of Research

This research uses qualitative method to analyze the data. According to Arora and Stoner (2009) qualitative method is a way to collect data with observing deeply in order to gain many information towards the issue, cases or event. As further explanation the researcher uses qualitative research in *Woman at Point Zero* to answer the research question above. According to Creswell (2002) qualitative research is aimed to get deeper exploration by studying the phenomena in their natural setting. Therefore, the researcher focuses on the elements inside the novel and presents it descriptively.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The data sources that the researcher presents in this research consist of two data, they are primary and secondary data. First, the primary data of this research is the *Woman at Point Zero* novel by Nawal El-saadawi. The main analysis focuses on the main character named Firdaus. The researcher examines the direct and indirect speech that are related to how Firdaus struggles in patriarchal culture. The secondary data are the journals, books, thesis, and the other sources that support the formal object and the theory.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher collects the data by reading the *Woman at Point Zero* comprehensively to understand the intrinsic elements. Then, the researcher takes notes of the necessary information that leads to the data. Next, the researcher collects all the sentence, paragraph and discourse to get the detailed information about the novel that are related to answer the research question. Last, the researcher collects all the data with three different categories of care-focused feminism such as pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis technique is done through the following technique. First, the researcher read *Woman at Point Zero* to get the comprehensive understanding and also to figure the problem out. Then, the writer categorizes the struggles that Firdaus has done whether it is in practical or ideological forms. Next, the writer puts in the evidence such as sentence, paragraph and discourse in categories above completed with the analysis in each of them. After that, the researcher put those evidence to Carol Gilligan stages of care-focused feminism such as: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. Last, the writer examines and makes a conclusion whether the struggles of Firdaus can be categorized into feminism struggles by seeing it on the Carol Gilligan's stages.

1.8 Research Organization

This research is divided into four chapters: the first chapter consists of the research background, research questions, objective studies, significance of studies, definition of concepts and theoretical approach, as well as a definition of concepts and theory that is used, method of research, analysis of data research and research organization. Second chapter consists of the intrinsic and extrinsic elements in the novel. The third chapter presents the findings of *Woman at Point Zero* analysis in reference to the conception of Gilligan's theory. The last chapter which is the fourth chapter provides the conclusion and suggestion of the research.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter consists of the conclusions and the suggestions of the research. There are two parts, first is the conclusions and the second is the suggestions. The conclusions contain about some concluding points related to Firdaus' feminism as portrayal in Nawal El-Saadawi's novel. Some points reflect the findings in the previous chapter. Last, the suggestions contain about some suggestion points from the researcher. It could be suggestion to the future researcher that may use Gilligan's theory or others.

4.1 Conclusion

Feminism is a respond to fight the inequality towards the patriarchy culture. It can also be the movement for a woman against the exploitation, sexism and oppression that men have done. Feminism is also a way to build an awareness in order to seek equality rights between women and men. Furthermore, feminism is a respond to a patriarchal society that chains women's right in order to get freedom and unleash from any kind of injustice.

There are many ways for women to fight for their rights in order to gain a true liberation from any form of patriarchy culture, for example Firdaus. She is the most influencing character in *Woman at Point Zero* that during her life time she struggles to get the equality. Nawal El-Saadawi shapes Firdaus into a feminist character. The conclusion of this research is that the entire struggle that Firdaus has done is not only depicted by the previous researches but also from the new

evidences that is found through Carol Gilligan's theory. The researcher found the missing link that is considered as a new perspective about the feminist struggle in *Woman at Point Zero*, such a psychological violence called dilemma. In Firdaus' case, the scope of dilemma itself for example is self-conflict on sexual oppression, self-confuse on religious culture, self-surrender on male supremacy and self-indecision on prostitution. Those missing links are the compliment from several previous researches toward the analysis of *Woman at Point Zero*.

Furthermore, the dilemma that is found in Firdaus' struggle is a sign that feminist struggle is a complex struggle that cannot be pinned down as a certain pattern. Sometimes, it can intersect with other category such as religion, culture and gender. It occurs because the feminist struggle cannot be monopolistic since it has a complex and various forms.

4.2 Suggestions

Woman at Point Zero novel tells about a feminism story. The researcher applies the Care-Focused Feminism by Carol Gilligan that focuses on the main character of the novel. Thus, the researcher suggests the next researcher may apply the representation theory to depict the Hegemony of Egypt society. The researcher also suggests that the next researcher may use the theory of masculinity to find out the masculine values through the men character in the novel.

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