SOCIAL POWER AS SEEN IN MARVEL COMIC'S *MS MARVEL* (2014)

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Gaining the

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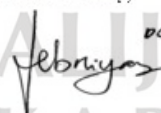Setelah memeriksa, meneliti, dan memberikan arahan untuk perbaikan atas skripsi Saudara:

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SOCIAL POWER AS SEEN IN MARVEL COMIC'S *MS MARVEL* (2014)

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ABSTRACT

Social power cannot be separated from human life because humans are inherently social creatures. This research aims to look at how this issue plays out in Marvel Comic's *Ms. Marvel*, a story about a Muslim teenage girl named Kamala Khan who belongs to a minority group in her neighborhood due to her superpower ability to change her body shape. Even with great physical power, Kamala uses social power to achieve her goals. Using French and Raven's theory of the bases of power, this research identifies what types of social power are used by Kamala Khan and analyzes why she uses this kind of power. Since the research object is a comic, comic theory is also used to help enhance the analysis. Qualitative methods are used in this study. This research found that the types of social power the comic's heroine uses are reward power, coercive power, and legitimate power. Kamala Khan exercises not all types of social power because each type of social power has different terms and criteria in using them, such as informational power, expert power, and referent power. Moreover, it is also found that Kamala Khan uses social power when dealing with situations where her physical strength cannot be used, such as when Kamala is dealing with people who have a close relationship with her. It can be concluded that even though a character has a superpower, as long as they are a human, social power is still needed because not everything can be achieved by using physical strength.

Keywords: *Social Power, Superheroine, Marvel Comic*

SOCIAL POWER AS SEEN IN MARVEL COMIC'S *MS MARVEL* (2014)

Oleh: Adityo Darmadi

ABSTRAK

Kekuatan sosial tidak dapat dipisahkan dari kehidupan manusia karena manusia pada hakikatnya adalah makhluk sosial, sehingga dengan menggunakannya dapat mempermudah manusia dalam memecahkan masalah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana masalah ini terjadi dalam komik Marvel Ms. Marvel, sebuah cerita tentang seorang gadis remaja Muslim bernama Kamala Khan yang termasuk dalam kelompok minoritas di lingkungannya meskipun dia memiliki kemampuan superpower untuk mengubah bentuk tubuhnya. Bahkan dengan kekuatan fisik yang besar, Kamala menggunakan kekuatan sosial untuk mencapai tujuannya. Menggunakan teori dasar kekuasaan sosiolog French dan Raven, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi jenis kekuasaan sosial apa yang digunakan oleh Kamala Khan dan menganalisis mengapa dia menggunakan jenis kekuasaan ini. Karena objek penelitiannya adalah komik, maka teori komik juga digunakan untuk membantu meningkatkan analisis. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif. Dalam penelitian ini, jenis-jenis kekuasaan sosial yang digunakan oleh tokoh utama komika adalah kekuasaan imbalan, kekuasaan koersif, dan kekuasaan legitimasi. Kamala Khan tidak menggunakan semua jenis kekuasaan sosial karena setiap jenis kekuasaan sosial memiliki syarat dan kriteria yang berbeda dalam menggunakannya, seperti kekuasaan informasional, kekuasaan ahli, dan kekuasaan referensi. Selain itu, juga ditemukan bahwa Kamala Khan menggunakan kekuatan sosial ketika menghadapi situasi di mana kekuatan fisiknya tidak dapat digunakan, seperti ketika Kamala berurusan dengan orang-orang yang memiliki hubungan dekat dengannya. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa meskipun seorang tokoh memiliki kekuatan super, selama menjadi manusia, kekuatan sosial tetap diperlukan karena tidak semuanya dapat dicapai dengan menggunakan kekuatan fisik.

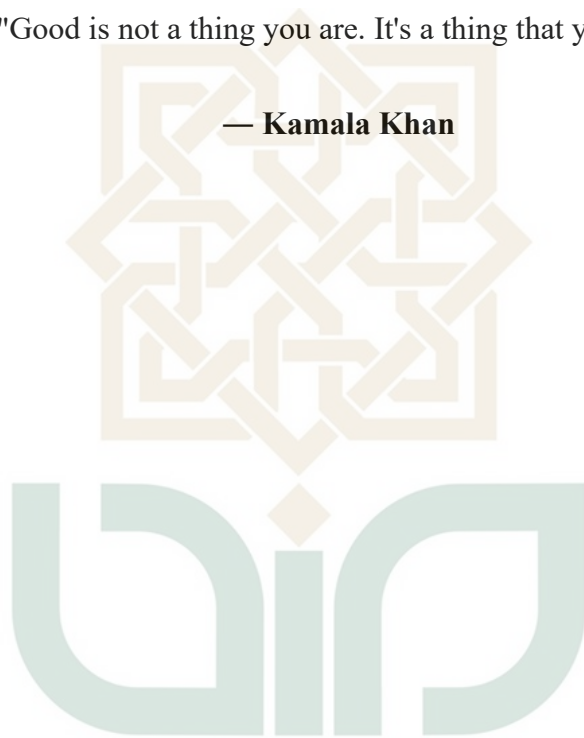**Kata Kunci**: *Kekuatan Sosial, Pahlawan Super, Komik Marvel*

MOTTO

"To see the world, things dangerous to come to, to see behind walls, draw closer,

to find each other, and to feel. That is the purpose of life."

— James Thurber

"Good is not a thing you are. It's a thing that you do."

— Kamala Khan

DEDICATION

I dedicate this graduating paper to;

My beloved father and mother

My beloved brother and sister

My great lecturers

My dear friends

My big family of

English Literature Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

The readers

and last but not least,

To myself

Yogyakarta, December 4th, 2021

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Lastly, I realize that there are imperfections in this graduating paper. Therefore, comments and suggestions are very welcome to improve this research. Hopefully, this research can be helpful for all the readers.

Yogyakarta, December 5th, 2021

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Every person has different measures of power since everyone in this world is unique, has their own experience, and has their own point of view, which is why even the most minor thing may be very different for everyone. There are several kinds of power, such as physical power, personal power, mental power, intellectual power, and social power (French and Raven, 1959:259). Such power may be needed to attain a particular position, social prestige, or personal goal, but achieving all of those requires knowledge of what is needed in order to get it, how and when to use it, and what effects will be caused when using power. For example, the election of people's representatives, governors, and even the president is determined by the amount of social power. When two people compete for the most votes, the side that can influence more people to vote for them wins.

Influence has a significant role in forming humans and nature that exist nowadays. There are many examples of the use of influence around us. The use of influence can be seen in small things such as changing the shape of an object that is affected by other entities. One of the most frequently encountered influences is social influence since humans are inherently social creatures. Social influence comes from the use of social power. John French and Bertrand Raven, who are professors and also sociologists, defined social influence as a change in the belief, attitude, or behavior of a person (the target of influence), which results from the

action of another person (an influencing agent) (1959:259). From the statement above, it can be concluded that social power is the potential for an influencing agent to change the actions, opinions, mindsets, objectives, needs, values, and other aspects of a person's psychological fields using available resources.

Social power can be found in almost all aspects of human life, including religion. In its development, religion certainly uses social power to spread its beliefs. Religion can influence one's beliefs, values, thoughts, and many others with social power. Several kinds of social power can be used to influence someone. French and Raven divided social power into six sources of power, each of which has its way of use and effect (1959: 262-265). The division of social power by French and Raven is very helpful in maximizing the potential of social power. By using social power that is appropriate to the situation and condition, the level of success in influencing the target of influence will be higher. Many genius's inventions fail to be realized because of the lack of social power. By having knowledge about social power, it is hoped that things like that will not happen again. Humans have always looked for ways to make it easier for someone to achieve their goals. Social power is one of the ways to make it easier for someone to achieve their goals. That is why the study of social power is significant for the future of humankind.

Social power is also frequently used in literary works because it raises the reader's awareness of a particular issue. Social power can unveil the complexity of social issues and sensitize the readers about the complexity of human beings, no matter how physically powerful they are. For example, as happened in the

storyline of the comic book entitled *Ms. Marvel*, Kamala, the main character, uses her social power to get other people to help Kamala achieve her goals. By combining visual images with text, comics can make the readers feel the experiences, and the author can better tell their imagination to the readers. According to Scott McCloud in his book entitled *Understanding Comics*, "Comics are a juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (1993:9). Unlike novels or other media that only use words, comics use images that make them more accepted by people. What makes comics different from the other literature is that comics also require a mix of visual arts. Comics need a combination of drawing skills and imagination. Coupled with its easy, cheap, and fast production, comics can easily reveal the current social problems.

This comic talks about a Muslim teenage girl named Kamala who has a problem with her friends and family. Her father pressures Kamala to behave like a good Muslim woman, and because of that she runs away from home but gets bullied by her schoolmates when she tries to blend. One night after she runs away, Jersey City is enveloped by a gen-changing (terrigen) mist released by Black Bolt of the Inhumans. Inside the mist, Kamala is unconscious and hallucinating seeing heroes. After waking up, she realizes that she gets a superpower to change her body freely, big, tall, or small. Then, using the superpower and social power to get help from the others, Kamala fights an evil guy who intends to destroy humanity.

The researcher chooses this comic for some reasons. First, research that uses the base of power theory and uses comics as its object is still scarce, even

though comics, especially ones with superhero characters, can potentially illustrate this kind of issue. Second, Ms. Marvel is a superhero who uses a physical superpower, and she has the power to polymorph. The researcher wants to evaluate why Ms. Marvel, who has great physical power, also uses social power to achieve her goal. Last, *Ms. Marvel* talks about the life of a Muslim immigrant family living in a city where most people are non-Muslim and tells how a Muslim family lives around non-Muslim, how teenage Muslim women live as minorities, and how they are treated. The researcher wants to find out why Kamala, a Muslim woman who lives under the influence of social power from religion, environment, and family, gains extraordinary physical power but is still unable to escape from social power.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What types of social power are exercised by Kamala Khan in *Ms. Marvel* comics?

2. Why does Kamala Khan, a superhero with great physical power, use social power to help herself achieve her goal?

1.3. Objectives of Study

The researcher aims to identify the types of power are exercised by Kamala Khan in *Ms. Marvel* and to find out why Kamala Khan, who already possesses great physical power, still needs to use social power.

1.4. Significances of Study

The researcher hopes this research can be a useful reference for research that applies the theory of social power, especially one by French and Raven. It can also be an example of literary research on comic, which is quite understudied in English Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Moreover, by analyzing a Muslim character, this research is expected to contribute to the development of literary research which is integrated-interconnected with Muslim issues.

1.5. Literature Review

The researcher finds some papers which also use *Ms. Marvel* comics as the object of their analysis. The first one is a thesis written by Ashika Prajnya Paramita (2016) from Gadjah Mada University entitled "A Representation of The Muslim Immigrant's Identity: A Study of Marvel Comics 'Ms. Marvel". This thesis focuses on how Muslim immigrants survive in the American setting as a minority group and why they are represented that way.

The second literature review is "Ms. Marvel: Changing Muslim Representation in the Comic World" by Casey L. Trattner (2016). The researcher focuses only on the story's description in this paper and does not use any theory to analyze this object. The researcher compares the stories of Muslim women who are represented in a hero's story named *Dust and Ms. Marvel*.

The third literature review is a paper written by Ernesto Priego (2016) entitled "Ms. Marvel: Metamorphosis and Transfiguration of the 'Minority' Superhero." This paper discusses how metamorphosis and transformation affect a

character. The writer of this paper analyzes what enables the teenage Muslim female protagonist to transform into Ms. Marvel's metamorphosis; whether a female minority protagonist can modify Superman's master narrative, or whether Kamala's story, regardless of her differences as an individual and emblematic of a larger group, is the same as every other superhero story.

The fourth literature is a paper written by Johannes A Smit and Denzil Chetty (2018) entitled 'Debunking Marvel Comics' First Pakistani-American Born Muslim Female Superhero: Reading Religion, Race, and Gender in Ms. Marvel (Kamala Khan)". This paper discusses the intersections of religion, race, and gender by employing "social constructionism" as an interpretive and analytical theoretical approach.

From the literature above, the researcher concludes that there has not been any research on *Ms. Marvel* using bases of social power. This study is expected to contribute to the research using the bases of social power theory by French and Raven on this particular comic and serves as a reference for the application of this theory.

1.6. Theoretical Approach

In this research, the researcher focuses on analyzing social power, its influences on other people, the reasons behind the uses of social power, and the factors that influence social power, using social power theory as the main theory and comic theory as the secondary theory.

1.6.1. Bases of Social Power Theory

Power can be understood as the ability to make one do something they would not otherwise do, and there are many forms of power, such as physical, mental, and social. This research focuses on the uses of social power. According to French and Raven, social power is needed to achieve a goal, and several types of social power are classified into six bases of social power (1959:263-268), as follows:

1. Reward Power

The basis of reward power is a reward. Reward power depends on the ability of the influencing agent to administer positive valences and decrease negative valences. Reward power also depends on the influencing agent's probability to mediate the reward and the ability of the target of influence to complete the action requested by the influencing agent.

2. Coercive Power

Similar to reward power, but the basis of coercive power is punishment. Coercive power makes the agent change by threatening the target with negative, undesirable consequences if the target does not comply.

3. Legitimate Power

Legitimate Power stems from social norms requiring that the target of influence complies with the request or order of the influencing agent. Legitimate power is divided into four: position, reciprocity, equity, and responsibility.

4. Expert Power

Expert power results from the target's faith – that the agent has superior insight or knowledge about the best action under the circumstances.

5. Informational Power

The basis of informational power is information. Like expert power, informational power comes from knowledge but only works once; because once you give your information away, you give your power away.

6. Reverent Power

The sources of reverent power come from the target's identification with the agent or perception of the agent as a role model to imitate.

Several factors influence the success rate of using social power. According to French and Raven, social power will affect changes in behavior, opinions, attitudes, goals, needs, values, and all other aspects of the person's psychological field (1959:260). It is necessary to evaluate the circumstances before and after the application of social power to determine the effect of social power. Each influencing agent has a different level of power depending on the situation and condition he faces. The success rate of an influencing agent can be measured by the amount of influence they have and the amount of rejection given by the target of influence. The greater the influence the influencing agent gives over the resisting power, the higher the success rate. Another factor that affects the level of power of the influencing agent is dependency. The influencing agent's potency increases with the target of influence's dependency on the influencing agent.

1.6.2. Comic Theory

The object of this research is a comic book, so the researcher uses comic theory by Scott McCloud as a supporting theory. The purpose of using comic theory is to collect data and not to analyze the problems that exist in the study, therefore comic theory is not used in research analysis. Scott McCloud defines comic as a book or magazine that tells a story or series of stories through drawing sequences (1993:9). The comic theory used to collect data from the object comprises of:

1. Panel

Panel is display segments of action or "stills" and dialogue. The panel contains an icon that refers to "any image used to represent a person, place, thing or idea". The panel cannot be considered a mere picture because the panel is not as a single instant but a real portion, of varying dimensions, of the narrative, where something takes place and takes time.

2. Gutter

Gutter is the blank space between the panel. Space contains all that happens between the panels, which the reader has to infer to reconstruct the narrative's euphoric flow.

3. Balloon

It is the space in which most of the verbal text is contained. Balloons are used to report speech or thought. The tail of the balloon indicates the character to whom the speech (or thought) belongs.

4. Caption

Caption is the other element of comics that contains verbal text. Normally such text represents the narrator's voice, which fundamentally has the function of adding information to the message conveyed by the rest of the panel.

To read a comic where the gutter separates the panel, the reader needs closure. The closure is the act of understanding two separate panels and mentally connecting them. Closure in comics is the "phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (McCloud, 1993: 63). The author needs the reader to imagine and conclude what happens between the panels where the gutter takes place for time and motion. To control the imagination of the readers, the author can use the transition to influence which conclusions are significantly drawn. In his book of *understanding comics*, Scott McCloud divides transition into six types (1993: 112-125):

1. Movement-to-movement transitions show basic movements occurring.

2. Action-to-action transitions show a single subject progressing through a specific movement.

3. Subject-to-subject transitions stay within a specific scene or idea and call for more reader involvement.

4. Scene-to-scene transitions take place across significant distances within time and space.

5. Aspect-to-aspect is unique in that it shows different aspects occurring simultaneously within the same scene.

6. Non-sequitur provides no logical connection between panels.

1.7. Method of Research

1.7.1. Type of Research

The researcher uses qualitative type as the type of research because it does textual research. In this research, the researcher looks for the amount of social power used by Kamala Khan and then analyzes the data found previously. According to Creswell, a qualitative method is used to explore and understand human or social case, whether individuals or groups, then interpret them (2009: 1). Therefore, the researcher uses qualitative research because there is a need for interpretation.

1.7.2. Data Sources

Marvel Comic's *Ms. Marvel* which was published in 2014 is the primary source in this research. The researcher paid attention to the comic's intrinsic elements such as theme, setting, characterization to help answer the research question and then applied comic theory by looking at the panel, gutter, balloon, caption, and closure to find the social power used in this object. The secondary data sources in this research are data taken from books, journals, e-books, the internet, and articles related to the topic in this research.

1.7.3. Data Collection Technique

The researcher used two steps of the data collection technique. First, the researcher attentively read all of the chapters of *Ms. Marvel* 2014. The researcher then identified the scenes that contain social power and then applied French and Raven's social power theory to organize the data found in line with their

respective type. Second, the researcher searched for other data references such as journals, articles, and other references supporting the research.

1.7.4. Data Analysis Technique

There are a few steps in analyzing data.

a) First, the researcher read the comic and examined the relevant data by identifying different aspects such as what, when, where, who, why, and how, in relation to the research questions.

b) Second, after examining the collected data, the researcher categorized into which types of power the ones that Kamala Khan exercises.

c) Last, after categorizing, the researcher analyzes all the data found for each category to understand why Kamala needs to exercise social power even when she has great physical power.

1.8. Paper Organization

This paper consists of four chapters. The first chapter describes the background of the study, research question, objective of the study, significance of the study, literature reviews, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter is to find and describe the intrinsic elements of comics by Ms. Marvel. The third chapter identifies the use of social power and analyzes the factors that affect social power. The last chapter is the conclusion of this research as well as suggestions for the next researchers.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1. Conclusion

After the researcher analyzes the object using the theory of power from French and Raven, as well as comic theory as the supporting theory, the researcher found eleven cases where Kamala uses social powers. There are two reward powers, three coercive powers, and six legitimate powers. The researcher did not find cases where Kamala uses informational power, expert power, or referent power. Kamala's use of social power is based on her inability to solve problems using physical power and personal power. Based on the analysis above, reward power is used because Kamala wants to get something that requires the approval or help of others. In Kamala's case, she uses it because she wants Bruno to make her a superhero suit and when she wants to keep Lockjaw, a dog in her house. Coercive power is used because Kamala wants to solve problems quickly and to avoid other problems. In Kamala's case, she has the advantage when using coercive power because her physical power is greater than other people. Kamala uses coercive power in the form of physical threats when her target of influence is someone she considers evil and uses psychological threats when the target of her influence is someone close to her. Legitimate power is used when Kamala is at a disadvantage or even when she is in a defenseless position. Kamala uses

legitimate power because she is facing a problem that cannot be solved with just her physical power and needs the help of others to solve it.

Kamala does not use informational power, expert power, or referent power because each of them has special conditions when they want to use it. In Ms Marvel's story, Kamala does not have the capability to use each of the above social powers because one must have expertise in a field to use them. Even for someone with great physical strength, social power will still be necessary because not all achievements can be obtained from physical power and personal power alone. Social power will also be needed in certain conditions and situations where physical power cannot be used. Each social power has a different way of using it, different influencing factors, and different goals. One must know the uniqueness of each social power so that the results of the use of social power can be in accordance with the desired expectations.

4.2. Suggestion

After conducting this research, the researcher realizes that social power can be applied in various ways and cannot be separated from daily life, and it will be helpful when someone wants to achieve a goal. This research only covers a little of the contents of Ms Marvel comics. Further research can still explore more about Ms Marvel Comics. Starting from the style of language, symbols, structure, gender, and many more. This research only focuses on Kamala as the main character, therefore further researchers who use the bases of power theory can further explore the other characters. The researcher realizes that this research is still far from perfection and needs correction and improvement. The researcher

hopes that this research will be useful for the reader and can be a reference for other researchers, especially for those researchers that use the theory of social power by French and Raven.

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