

## THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *NORTH COUNTRY* MOVIE

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to identify the kinds of women empowerment dimension portrayed in the movie through Josey as the main female character. Women empowerment has been an issue of immense discussion and contemplation over the last few decades worldwide. This research discusses about women's empowerment in *North Country* movies, and investigates further about Josey Aiems as the main character that showed women power in this movie. In addition, Jo Rowland's theory is employed as the main theoretical basis to answer the research question. The main data of this research were the dialogues, characters' attitudes and beliefs that were related to the research questions in this research. The results of the study are based on the analysis of the research questions about dimension empowerment which is personal, relational and collective to support the empowerment of others in community the dimension makes the power getting stronger than before, and women become able to organize themselves to increase their independent right to make choices.

**Key words:** Women Empowerment, Dimension, Power.

### ABSTRAK

*Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis dimensi pemberdayaan perempuan yang digambarkan dalam film melalui Josey sebagai tokoh utama perempuan. Pemberdayaan perempuan telah menjadi isu diskusi besar dan kontemplasi selama beberapa dekade terakhir di seluruh dunia. Penelitian ini membahas tentang pemberdayaan perempuan dalam film-film North Country, dan mengkaji lebih jauh tentang Josey Aiems sebagai tokoh utama yang menunjukkan kekuatan perempuan dalam film ini. Selain itu, teori Jo Rowland digunakan sebagai landasan teori utama untuk menjawab pertanyaan penelitian. Data utama penelitian ini adalah dialog, sikap dan keyakinan tokoh yang terkait dengan pertanyaan penelitian dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian didasarkan pada analisis pertanyaan penelitian tentang dimensi pemberdayaan yang bersifat personal, relasional dan kolektif untuk mendukung pemberdayaan orang lain dalam masyarakat dimensi tersebut membuat kekuatan semakin kuat dari sebelumnya, dan perempuan menjadi mampu mengorganisir diri untuk meningkatkan hak independen mereka untuk membuat pilihan.*

**Kata kunci:** Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Dimensi, Kekuasaan.

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

According to Greil Marcus and Werner Sollor, literary means not only what is written but what is voiced, what is expressed, what is invented in whatever form. It means literature is not always just something that can be written. However, anything that is inside someone's head and heart, and then is expressed in the form of art. Hence, literature can be classified into five categories: prose, poetry, drama, nonfiction and, media

As a human's invention, literature also portrays human's lives, and one of them is the portrayal of feminism. According to Estelle Freedman in her book *The History of Feminism and The Future of Women*, feminism is a belief that although women and men are inherently equal of worth, most societies glorify men than women. In every aspect of the important tasks in life, society saw men are better than women. Women were considered as weak creatures. For example, there is a study about men being better suited for business than women ( Freedman 2004 ). A view where men have a greater responsibility to work and feed their family, while women are required to be gentle and yield to the opposite gender. But nowadays, women could do more or even better than men, it means women have their right such as; to express their opinions, to continue their study, and to achieve their goals just like men do. Further, more and more women start to be recognized in the society because of their professional achievements. But still, there are many issues that are experienced by women such as sexual harassment, human trafficking, and violence.

The situation that gives impact to women raises the movement done by women to change the condition by building and developing their opinion about themselves which is called empowerment. Women empowerment is a situation in which women are allowed to participate fully in social, political, and economic. The purpose of the study is to identify the kinds of women empowerment dimension portrayed in the movie through Josey as the main female character.

## **B. REVIEW AND RELATED THEORIES**

### **1. Literature.**

There are many explanations about literature. According to Mario Klarer in his book *An Introduction to Literary Studies*, literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression. The restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word. Etymologically, the Latin word literature is derived from "littera" which means letter. Klarer stated that literary works have classification into the different genre has been a major concern of literary theory. The triad epic, drama, film, and poetry proved as the most common modern literary criticism.

### **2. Film.**

Such as novel or short stories, film has similar thing they tell a story but in different way. All of them include the same genres, romantic, historical, detective, thriller, adventure, horror and science fiction. But film also include sub groups such as action, comedy, tragedy, western and war. Klaler has stated the history of film in the nineteenth century is closely connected with that of photography produces for human eye the impression of a moving picture. To create this illusion, twenty four pictures per-second have to be connected to each other

#### **a. Character.**

A character can be defined as any person, animal, or figure represented in a literary work. According to Gill (127), " A character is someone in a literary work has some

sort of identity which is made up by appearance, conversation, action, name, and thoughts going on in the head. Characters are important part of a film to deliver a purpose in the film. Without a character, some film may become a flat story because nobody describes the dialogue in the act. Characters are of central importance for our film experience.

**b. Setting.**

The setting of a story can change throughout the plot. The background of the story take place, but not just a place it includes the time and social conditions from the story in this chapter the researcher will explain about setting on the research. Based on the movie that researcher choose, North Country movie was shot in the northern Minnesota towns of Eveleth on 2005.

**3. Power.**

Jo Rowlands (9) stated power has been the subject of much debate across science. Power can be described as the ability of one person or group to get another person or group to get another person or group to do something against their will. It means, power can change other perspectives if someone has their own power to convince other people to agree with their opinion, the more power one person has, the less the other has.

**4. Empowerment.**

The concept of empowerment is the ability which is conducted by women to convince others of their ideas so the others would agree with women's opinions. According to Jo Rowland (13) on her book *Questioning empowerment*, empowerment is bringing people who are outside the decision to agree with their opinion, it puts a strong emphasis, formal decision making to convince other people to agree with us. But we have to be able to maximise the opportunities.

**5. Dimension Empowerment.**

Based on form empowerment that Jo Rowland had explained before, to makes the power more effective, empowerment must involve undoing negative social constructions, it allow people to see themselves as having the capacity and the right act to decisions empowerment it-self has three dimensions to demonstrated. This wider picture of empowerment can be seen from three dimensions:

1. **Personal**, where empowerment is developing self-confidence and individuals to undoing the effects of internalised oppression. Because before building trust to others we have to convince and building belief from ourselves to makes others people believe in our decision or opinion.
2. **Relational**, after building self-confidence, we have to develop our self to negotiate and provoke the relationship a decision made within it. This dimension helps to build trust between others to agree with the decisions. We have to convince other people with our opinion and makes other people understand the point of the opinion, also makes people have trust on us to work together and get a more impact. It's much better if we explain about the advantage if they work together with us.
3. **Collective**, where individuals have to work together to achieve a more extensive impact than work alone. After gathering and convince other people to agree with our

opinion, we have more change to win the decision. This point where other people has less so the others would to agree with decisions, empowerment can take place on small scale and linking people with others in similar situations through self-help, education, support, or social action groups and network building.

To make a reader easier to understand the point of dimension empowerment, the researcher made a summary table for dimension empowerment is shown as follows:

**Table 1. Dimensions of empowerment**

NO	DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS
1	Personal	Developing self-confidence and individuals to undoing the effects of internalised oppression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Building individual belief or trust.</li><li>- Making other people believe in our decision.</li><li>- Convincing ourselves</li></ul>
2.	Relational	Developing our self to negotiate and provoke the relationship a decision made within it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Building trust between others to agree with decision.</li><li>- Social action group and networking building.</li><li>- Making people have trust on us to work together and get more impact.</li></ul>
3.	Collective	Individuals have to work together to achieve a more extensive impact than work alone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To win the decision</li><li>- Linking people through self-help.</li></ul>

## C. RESEARCH METHOD

### 1. Research Design.

Miles and Huberman have described, “Qualitative data are usually in the form of words rather than numbers” (1). Therefore, the researcher used qualitative research because the researcher’s data are described and explained in the form of words. Qualitative research method was used in this analysis as a method that investigates the experience by watching the movie and read the script, subculture, and social process of the research object (Neuman 40). Therefore, the researcher used this method to describe the women empowerment that happened in *North Country* movie.

### 2. Data and Source of Data.

This study used data in the form of dialogues, narratives and Main character efforts or action to establish justice in *North Country* movie, the researcher used the dialogues, action and narratives to find out the women empowerment issues that happened in this movie. The source of data is the movie of *North Country* and its transcript.

### 3. Research Instrument.

According to Diether “in order to collect data, there are two instrument used; the researcher itself or based on an existing instrument” (30). It could be explicated that the researcher is the main instrument who conducted all of the phases such as analyzing, collecting data, answering the research question, and interpret the data which applied in the movie.

#### **4. Data Collection.**

In collecting the data, the researchers used several steps. First, the researcher watched *North Country* movie several times to understand properly the story itself. Then the researcher identified the data needed and took notes of the important information that indicates women empowerment. And the last step was writing down the information.

#### **5. Data Analysis.**

In this research, the researchers used a theory from Jo Rowland and McWhriter to analyze the data that the researcher collected. Stated in their theory, Miles and Huberman, suggested that qualitative data analysis consist of three processes; Data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing (10)

##### **a. Data Reduction**

This refers to the process of qualitative data that the researcher may obtain by reduced and organized. Miles and Huberman have explained that this process is a process of selectin, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data which has written before or even transcription (10). The qualitative data in this research are the act of Josey which in dialogues and narrative forms. The researcher examined the data by selecting the dialogue and narrative form of Josey’s act that relevant with women empowerment.

##### **b. Data Display**

This is a process where the data is organized and analyzed. Miles and Huberman have explained that “data display is process of an organized, compressed, analyzed, confluence of information that permits conclusion drawing and also action” (11). Therefore, the researcher used Jo Rowland’s theories to analyze the data who classified the dimension of empowerment.

##### **c. Conclusion Drawing**

This process is also called as verifying. This is the process where researcher made conclusion and develop the data that researcher have collected. The researcher concludes the data based on the theories that researcher use to avoid subjectivity during the interpretation of the data analysis.

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Personal Dimension**

The first dimension is personal; this dimension is about developing self-confidence and capacity to undoing the effects of internalized oppression.

#### **(DATA 1)**

Josey : What I was saying was, I think we should go to Pearson. You know?  
Tell him what's going on.

Peg : What do you get out of this?  
Josey : Jezz , peg, I'm just trying to make things better  
Peg : Not you. I'm talking to Sherry. How much do you get paid to sell this stuff?  
Sherryn: Five percent of each sale.  
Peg : Don't expect to get rich from me. I'm not buying.  
Josey : What about what happened to you, Peg...?  
Peg : That's my business.  
Josey : Actually, it's all of our business. It's happening to all of us.  
Sherryn: Tell you one thing, I'm sick of having my ass grabbed by a bunch of old men.

Based on the evidence that researcher find, the situation when Josey tried to make her friend realize about sexual harassment that she and all the female workers experienced at work. Josey and her friend enjoying their time with a bottle of beer, have a nice talk, and joke to each other and Josey tried to open the discussion about tell their boss the problem that Josey and her friend faced because she thinks the things that they all faced were too outrageous. But her friend did not want to take a risk because they all need this job and they not really take serious about what Josey says and continued their small talk. Josey act is to convince and engage her friend to support Josey plan about to tell Mr. Pearson, their boss the problem that Josey and her friend faced. Almost every single day the female workers had sexual harassment experienced. That's why Josey tried to have a conversation with her friend to tell her boss, Mr. Pearson about "what's going on" at work.

From Josey's dialogue with her friend Josey said "what's going on" can be describe as Josey tried to building individual belief with her friend, One of the problems that Josey means from her dialogue "what's going on" can be seen in sherryn dialogue "I'm sick of having my ass grabbed by a bunch of old men", it can be consider as a sexual harassment they bothered the female worker and it means that the male worker did not have any respect to all female workers. From the evidence and from Josey dialogues above, the researcher finds if Josey tried to makes others people belief in her decision about tell Mr. Pearson what's going on at work towards female worker who experienced sexual harassment by male worker and they did not respect female worker. From the evidence above the researcher find first figure of dimension of empowerment which is personal dimension, this dimension where Josey Aimes trying to build her confidence to tell her friends about her plans to tell Mr. Pearson, the owner of the mine about "what's going on" at work with expectations Mr. Pearson will help her with her issue. Josey also tried making other people believe in her decision to support her about tell Mr. Pearson the problem that female worker experienced.

## (DATA 2)

Josey: "I need a lawyer. I wanna sue the mine. The Company. All of them."

White : "Look, Josey, the illusion is that all your problems are solved in a courtroom. The reality is that even when you win, you don't win.....I'm sure you are, but right has nothing to do with the real world. Look at Anita Hill. Because she's you. You think you're outgunned at the mine, wait till you get to a courtroom. It's called the "nuts and sluts defense." You're either nuts and you imagined it, or a slut and you asked for it. Either way, it's not pleasant. Take my advice. Find another job. Start over."



Josey: "I don't have any start-over left."

White: "Look, you're a beautiful girl..."

Josey: "Yeah, I'm a beautiful girl. I could find a guy to take care of me. I'm done looking to be taken care of. I wanna take care of myself. Take care of my kids.

You know it's happening to all of us. Every woman up there. But you don't give a shit, do you?."

Because of her efforts did not find any solutions and none cared about it, Josey started to find a lawyer. She wanted to sue the mine company and she met Bill White, they knew each other after Glory confronted them. At that hockey hall, Josey asked White to be her lawyer but at first White didn't want to be Josey lawyers because, sexual harassment class action never done before. He said that even Josey and he tried hard Josey would not win the court. He also suggested Josey to quit and found another job but Josey defended her decision by saying that she would take care of her and her children by herself. Josey get a little mad and she told White that the problems happened to all women but White did not care of it. Josey statement made White think twice and finally White agree to help Josey. After a long day finally Josey and her lawyers Mr. White filed a lawsuit to the court and ask for the justice to protect all of women and to get legal protection for women workers equal as a man worker.

In this scene Josey also trying to developing self-confidence to make a strong belief from us in order to have more power in the opinion or decision that will expresses because Empowered Individuals are equipped with confidence. Based on the evidence that researcher find Josey use personal dimension because Josey trying to Developing her-self and making other people belief in her decision like Josey and White dialogues above "you know it's happening to all of us, every woman up there. But you don't give a shit, do you?" from Josey dialogues we can see her effort to making White believe in her decision to sue the Mine Company, and Josey act not only for her benefit but also for all of female workers at Mine company to have legal protection and social class.

### **( DATA 3 )**

White : we ask the court to certify a class.A class made up of every woman working at Pearson,because every one of them deserves protection under the law.

Conlin : Doesn't a class actually require more than one plaintiff? This complaint was filed on behalf of one Josey Aimes. The key word being "one. "By comparison, we have affidavits from women .all stating there have been no incidents of abuse

Judge : Please. Get me three plaintiffs.

Conlin : Your Honor, please.

Judge : Counselor, if those affidavits are legitimate, you shouldn't have an objection I'll continue to hear evidence on *Aimes v. Pearson, et al.* If you find three plaintiffs with similar grievances, I'll give you your class action.

White : Thank you, Your Honor.

From the dialogue above, when Josey's lawyer try to negotiate with judge about class action and legal protection for female workers at Mine Company, Conlin, Pavich lawyers tried to denied White desire to sue the Mine Company. After that White and Conlin as Mr. Pavich's lawyer, have a little argument because White asking for class action and Conlin said because the complaint was filed on behalf of one Josey Aimes even tough to apply the class

action and legal protection must have more than one plaintiff. Conlin also said if female workers had “no incidents of abuse”. Josey stand and said if Conlin lied because the truth is all female workers being sexual and verbal harassment experienced. After that the judge said if Josey can bring minimum three plaintiffs, he will approve the lawsuit.

Form the data above this dialogue indicates to personal dimension of empowerment because these dimension where Josey have to develop her self-confidence to provoke and build trust between others to agree with the decision that Josey and White have. As we can see from dialogue “we ask the court to certify a class A class made up of every woman working at Pearson, because every one of them deserves protection under the law” White as Josey mediator trying to provoke and negotiate with others especially the judge, to building trust between others in order people will work together with us to get more impact that is sue the Mine Company.

**(DATA 4)**

White : The reason I'm here is to ask you to reconsider.

Kyle : Jesus, are you fucking kidding?

White : It's not your decision, Kyle. It's hers.

White : Glory, you know all this is not just about Josey. This affects everybody.

Kyle : She already decided.

Josey and White trying to make social group action and networking building to make her action have more power Josey started to gain other female workers to get their consciences to sue the mine together. Her lawyers, White, went to Glory's first at hospital because Glory was sick and told about his and Josey plan to sue the mine. Unexpected, Mr. Pearson lawyers, Conlin was there before White came to ask Glory not to defend Josey with her action because it will makes Glory and other female workers lost their job, but Kyle, Glory husband, getting mad because Glory was very weak, lying because of her illness. After Conlin leave, White trying to convince Glory about Josey plan and same as Conlin, Kyle her husband also mad with White, but White need to talk with Glory because it not just for Josey but for all of the female worker at Mine Company.

And from White dialogue above “you know all this is not just about Josey. This affects everybody” can be described as White tried to building trust between others to agree with the decision. White action indicates to relational dimension of empowerment where White tried to develop his confidence to negotiate with Glory to support Josey even though Glory already has refused to sue the Mine Company when Josey asked her before Glory sick. White as Josey mediator also tried to make a social action group and networking building in purpose to help support Josey get 3 plaintiffs so she can sue the Mine Company like what she already planned.

**(DATA 5)**

Sherry : You think I don't want to stick it up their asses?

Josey : Then why don't you do it?

Sherry : And what if we lost? and I had to go back to that mine every day and face those sons of bitches? No way.

Sherry : Who else you got so far? It'd just be you and me. Are you crazy?

Sherry : You know what they did to me. No way, man. I got my own problems.



Not only White who makes efforts to convince other people, Josey also tried her best to convince other female workers for support her action to uphold the justice. Josey went to Sherry's house and asked her to help her become the plaintiffs in order to fulfill the requirements that The Judge asked to sue the Mine Company. But Sherry said that she would not join Josey because she needed the job and she was afraid of the risk it-self. No one that braves enough to stand with Josey because they really need this job to fed and supports their family.

From the dialogue, Josey said "then why don't you do it" Josey tried to makes people, Sherry to have trust on us to work together and get more impact, Josey tried to convince Sherry to help her if she tired of being sexual harassment. Josey and White trying to making people have trust on them to work together and get more impact. Based on Josey act that asking for help and convince her friend to support her action, Josey tried to build social action from Sherry to sue the Mine Company together. It can be define as personal dimension, because personal dimension itself is developing self-confidence to making other people to believe with the decision.

## **2. Relational Dimension**

The next figure of dimension empowerment is relational, this dimension is about developing ourselves to be brave to negotiate and provoke others.

### **(DATA 6)**

Kyle : "Excuse me."

Judge : "What is going on back there?"

Kyle : "This is Glory. She worked at Pearson's. She wants to say: "My name is Glory Dodge. And I'm not fucking dead yet. I stand with Josey."

Collin : "Your Honor?"

White : "Your Honor said we needed three plaintiffs."

Collin : "It's still only two."

From the last evidence that researcher has collected, in this scene which is the last session, Collin accused that Josey had a sexual relationship with her teacher at one time, White getting mad and said Conlin's statement nothing to do at all with her issues at work and what her and White ask for legal protection. Then Josey told about the fact that Lattavansky, Josey teacher on high school, raped her. The most intense time in the court was at the time when Bobby Sharp became the witness because Bobby was the only one who saw that incident and he was obviously gave the different testimonies. He lied about the sexual history of Josey. He said that there was no raping incident when they were in the same grade in high school. All of the audiences felt touched for Josey's past story. While White and Conlin argue, they all were interrupted when Glory came to the court and give her support to help Josey sue the mine by using her wheelchair, Kyle as her husband, who represented Glory by reading a letter from Glory at the court. After Glory gave her support and said "I stand with Josey" from dialogues above, Glory finally stand to support Josey about her decision to sue the Mine company, but the judge said if Josey can sue the mine if she has minimum 3 witnesses with the same cases, so there must be someone else who would stand with Josey. Not long after Glory came to support Josey. Unpredictable, Sherry stood up to show that she became brave and then she joined Josey. Sherry's motion was followed by

Josey's parents and other people. Most of the audiences supported her. They became plaintiffs to make the class action. Finally Josey won the court and get what she fought for.

Based on the definition of relational dimension, Josey and White tried to make social action group and networking building. Josey has convinced herself and other people who she already convinces work together with her. Because, relational it-self making people have trust on us to work together and get more impact than work alone, power getting stronger in big scale to achieve a more impact. Makes people belief if Josey decisions were the right thing to the entire worker at Mine Company Josey movement also braves enough; she told the entire story in front a lot of people. Josey trying to makes all people who she already convinced to understand if legal protection to female worker at Mine Company were her and all the female worker right, Josey act makes people at the court understand if what Josey did is the right thing. From Glory dialogue " I stand with Josey " showed other people if Glory believe Josey act not only personal desire but for all the female workers at the Mine Company. Because of Josey support the people who already Josey and White convinced finally would to work together to get more extensive impact.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of the research questions about dimension empowerment, the researcher makes the conclusion that women empowerment is divided into three dimension to support the empowerment of others in community, it make the power getting stronger than before, and women are able to organise themselves to increase their independent right to make choices. Women were considered to have weaker physical appearance than men which makes women always seen weak creature. They have smaller bodies and smaller strength compared to the men. Society places women as the second class and then the men are seen as the superior. Because of this consideration, women were sexually discriminated by the society. A society that differentiate the sexes, gives one sex a lower status than the other, and provides little opportunity for mutual respect between the sexes is likely to see continue violence against one sex by the other. Societies are accustomed to educate the young and give the basic understanding that men have to be stronger than women and they have bigger authority so they treat women as their objects. Women are seen as the pretty sex and seen as sexual objects

Women have a smaller change to work outside especially being a miner. Women always have to work at home, obeyed their husband and take care of their family. The society had a belief that men were always right. The job division between men and women also makes the researcher interested. Women were limited to work at the mine. The men workers would like to makes women thinks again if women who wanted to work as a miner. Societies grouped common female occupation such as typist, secretary, tailor, and other jobs which did not use big power. As we known, nowadays women have more strength than men, women have their own right to choose where she want to take a job.

Based on the analysis the researcher realized that *North Country* is a film that is made to give the different opinion and impression of women as the inferior people. We have to know about women empowerment acts and which happened toward the main character, Josey Aimes. Women have their own power and their legal protection at work there should be. The content of *North Country* film can be used to increase women's consciousness, for their

abilities as the men have, and it gains women to give their more power to get the equality. It also can be used to make the men respect women because both of them are equal creatures as a human being.

The researcher realized that *North Country* is a film that is made to give the different opinion and impression of women as the inferior people. As the tagline of the film 'All She Wanted Was To Make A Living, Instead She Made A History', the film describes how an ordinary woman as wife and mother was beaten by her husband, her escape and became a worker in a mine to earn money for her kids, her working days with all the problems caused by her male coworkers and then the film also shows how she faced her day and how she became a brave woman, then her struggles to get the equal treatments such as by suing the company, and finally the success of it gave the benefits for all women at the company.

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