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### Women's Empowerment: Discovering Women's Subjectivity in Arabic Novels Based on Juliet Mitchell's Feminist Psychoanalysis

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#### Abstract

As women play an important role in shaping the character of a quality generation, women's empowerment is an investment for a better future. This study aims to; 1) reveal women's subjectivity in Juliet Mitchell's feminist psychoanalysis perspective; 2) analyze the role of women's empowerment reflected to female characters; and 3) explore the dynamics between social structure, culture, and psychology of female characters in the novel *Zeina* by Nawal El Saadawi. This research uses a descriptive-qualitative method. The data source of this research is the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi and complemented by theoretical and other references that have relevance. Data collection techniques use translation, reading and note-taking techniques. Data analysis techniques use the Miles and Huberman models. The results of this study show that; 1) the subjectivity of female characters in the novel "Zeina" includes; identity differences, resilience and self-formation, internal and external conflicts, and struggles for emancipation and freedom 2) The role of empowerment reflected in female characters, includes; women becoming entertainers, women becoming magazine leaders, and women becoming literary critics as well as department heads. 3) The dynamics that occur between social, cultural, and psychological structures of female characters are; the influence of trauma in identity formation, identity reconstruction, and identity transformation through trauma healing. This research confirms that women can empower themselves, even in a patriarchal environment. Empowerment through education, employment, and psychological support is important as a foundation for women's role as agents of change.

**Keywords:** Arabic Novel, Feminist Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, Women's Empowerment.

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## 1. Introduction

In order to improve the quality of life, women and men need to work together in various sectors. Women play an important role, for example in controlling child nutrition (Setiadi & Dwijayanti, 2020), advancing the economy through MSMEs (Raspati & Kadiyono, 2023), strengthening gender awareness (Anjellika & Lestatika, 2024), minimizing gender-based violence (Ramadhan & Ma'sumah, 2018), and contributing to the creation of a more just and equal society (Marditama et al., 2021). In addition to the aspects mentioned, the topic of women's empowerment can also be found in literary works through a series of narratives, storylines, and characterizations. This can certainly be explored using a feminist psychoanalytic perspective, because this branch of science examines matters related to psychological conditions.

Psychoanalysis has been used to help individuals understand themselves and develop their personalities (Ardiansyah et al., 2022), and has now developed into various branches of science. One of them is feminist psychoanalysis, which is an approach to exploring psychology that is specific to women (Mitchell, 2000), both in literary works and others. With this incorporation, feminist psychoanalysis is interesting because it offers a framework for understanding literary works that discuss gender issues and develops psychoanalytic readings with a more progressive and emancipatory feminist view (Eflin, 2023; Merina & Muhaimin, 2024). Thus, feminist psychoanalysis allows for a different exploration of women's empowerment. Gender issues such as patriarchal culture, social injustice, and efforts to become a free woman are not only influenced by social factors, but also embedded in psychological structures.

The psychoanalytic feminist approach through the 'reading as a woman' method can open new perspectives (Fitriana, 2021). One of the Arabic literatures that is full of the complexity of gender issues is the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi. Nawal El Saadawi's works always represent the voice of gender issues, especially women in the Middle East. The story reflects the exploration of female identity, patriarchal resistance, and liberation efforts, with narration and characterization as a call for gender equality by Nawal El Saadawi. To see in detail about women's empowerment in the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi, the researcher intends to analyze it using psychoanalytic feminist theory with Juliet Mitchell's perspective because there is a connection between the two. The selection of the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi as the object of this research is based on its correlation with psychological conditions in finding the subjectivity of female characters, Zeina, Mageeda, and Bodour.

With regard to feminist psychoanalytic research, there are several studies that have discussed it. These studies focus on: 1) cross-cultural psychoanalytic feminist studies among three novels (Atiyat et al., 2022), 2) representation of female characters (Daragmeh & Hamamra, 2021; Kisweka, 2021), 3) feminist strategies to criticize patriarchal culture (Fatimah et al., 2024), 4) women's resistance to patriarchy (Amanda & Nugroho, 2024; Fitriana, 2021; Nugroho, 2019), 5) the influence of patriarchy on the formation of women's identity and psychology (Hoefel, 2022), 6) traumatic suffering due to patriarchy, (Igbaria, 2024). In addition, studies on the object of the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi have been conducted with different theories and research focuses: 7) feminism ideology (Basid & Aulia, 2018), 8) moral values of characters (Febrianisa, 2023), and 9) translation quality techniques (Prayogo & Yuniarti, 2021).

This research has similarities and differences with previous studies. The similarity lies in the use of feminist psychoanalytic theory as an analytical knife in the research. While the differences, apart from the focus of the study mentioned above, there are also differences in the object of research studied. Among them, the object of study is a humor video on the YouTube platform (Fatimah et al., 2024), the object is a novel with different languages:

English novels (Atiyat et al., 2022; Daragmeh & Hamamra, 2021; Hoefel, 2022; Kisweka, 2021), Indonesian novels (Amanda & Nugroho, 2024; Fitriana, 2021; Nugroho, 2019), and Arabic novels (Atiyat et al., 2022; Igbaria, 2024). While in studies that have the same object of study of the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi, the difference lies in the focus of research and the theory used, namely the theory of genetic structuralism from Lucien Goldmann's perspective (Basid & Aulia, 2018; Febrianisa, 2023), and translation techniques from Newmark's perspective (Prayogo & Yuniarti, 2021).

Based on the similarities and differences to previous research, the position of this study is to complement research findings in the context of gender issues, especially in women's empowerment. The novelty in this research is the exploration of how women can be empowered in living the role of 'being a woman', which is seen by integrating psychological dynamics based on feminist psychoanalytic perspectives and gender construction in Arab socio-culture, which has never existed in previous studies. This study aims to: 1) reveal women's subjectivity with Juliet Mitchell's feminist psychoanalytic perspective 2) analyze the role of women's empowerment reflected in female characters, and 3) explore the dynamics between social structure, culture, and psychology depicted in the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi through the lens of Juliet Mitchell's feminist psychoanalytic perspective.

Through this research, readers will have greater insight into the psychological aspects that can influence characters in Arabic literary works to reflect struggles and strategies to defy patriarchal norms. This can encourage readers, especially women, to be brave in facing gender-related issues. This study argues that patriarchal systems are common in Arabia, but Nawal El Saadawi's novel "Zeina" opens up new insights and enthusiasm. Despite facing psychological challenges, women can utilize thoughts about desires from their subconscious as a basis of strength to rise and stand tall on female subjectivity.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1. Feminist Psychoanalytic Perspective of Juliet Mitchell**

Some feminist critics have theorized feminist psychoanalysis inspired by the traditional psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan (Gamble, 2006). In contrast to other feminists, Juliet Mitchell views Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory as not merely the banal 'biology is destiny' (Tong, 1998). Rather, Mitchell asserts that Freud's thought shows that social beings are not merely biological but that human psychosexual development is a process of "social interpretation" of biology, not a manifestation of an immutable biological destiny (Mitchell, 1971). Feminist psychoanalysis emerged to revise traditional psychoanalysis that was perceived as supporting patriarchal norms and pathologizing femininity (Fatimah et al., 2024; Mitchell, 2000a). At the same time, it explores subjectivity and liberation from patriarchy through a psychological understanding of gender roles (Thornham, 2010). Subjectivity is the understanding that a person has their own views and beliefs, which can be influenced by interactions with their environment (Sharp, 2020). Subjectivity is formed through an ongoing process, through interaction with language, symbols, and culture (Kristeva, 1980).

Men and women are both born helpless (Rosyidi, 2015), not biological differences between men and women that bring patriarchy (Novarisa, 2019). However, the root of gender problems come from the culture formed in social society (Huda, 2020). Mitchell explains that understandings of sexuality; concepts of masculinity and femininity, are transmitted through the unconscious and spread between generations. (Mitchell, 2000) Mitchell emphasizes the influence of the family on 2 aspects: the vertical axis, or the relationship between children and parents (Mitchell, 2000), and the lateral axis, or the relationship between children and their siblings (Duschinsky & Walker, 2015). The family is the first arena of a child's life, the interaction in which allows the emergence of understanding and formation of gender identity

(Sholeha & Baqi, 2023). Freud emphasized that family can cause neuroses and phobias, anxiety and fear that carry over into adulthood, including in terms of sexuality. However, it can be a good place to grow up if the family is harmonious (Rousselle, 2020).

In addition, the main idea of psychoanalysis is the unconscious mind. The unconscious is the normal part of the mind that contains ‘repressed’ desires but remains until they are reawakened, such as desires that come from the past, which are pushed into the unconscious, and then the realization process is altered. Desires that are unacceptable to consciousness are transferred to the unconscious and appear in a new form (Mitchell, 2000b). Mitchell believes that unconscious factors are also very important for understanding irrational violence and oppression against women (Mitchell, 1971). Meanwhile, gender identity formation occurs from childhood through unconscious currents and the influence of family environment and social norms (Mitchell, 2000).

### **3. Methods**

This research uses a descriptive-qualitative approach. Researchers present the main data in the form of narratives presented with interpretations according to the context (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). The presentation of data is mentioned descriptively because it examines a situation that explains social and cultural phenomena through narration, dialogue, symbols, and characterization in the novel “Zeina” by Nawal El Saadawi (Idrus, 2009).

The data source of this research comes from two sources; the primary data source is the Arabic novel “Zeina” by Nawal El Saadawi. The novel with 224 pages was first published by Dar Elsaqi in Beirut-Egypt in 2009. Furthermore, in 2023 it was republished online on the Hindawi Foundation website. Data sources from the novel are narratives and dialogues that show psychological aspects as well as social and cultural phenomena underlying women’s struggles in discovering subjectivity in a patriarchal environment in the novel “Zeina” by Nawal El Saadawi based on Juliet Mitchell’s feminist psychoanalytic perspective. Secondary data sources were taken from a number of books and scientific articles related to the research theme.

The data collection process was carried out using translation, reading, and note-taking techniques 1) The translation technique was used to translate the Arabic novel into Indonesian to make it easier to understand; 2) repeated reading; the first reading process was used to understand the content of the novel as a whole (Nurgiyantoro, 2018), the next reading was focused on finding data relevant to the research theme; 3) recording data findings relevant to the research theme in the form of narration, dialog, or symbols (Nartin et al., 2024). The researcher included page numbers and noted the context of the story to ensure consistency of meaning in the analysis (Pugu et al., 2024).

The Miles and Huberman data analysis model was used to process data in this study. The data analysis process goes through three stages (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Data reduction is done by sorting out data records that show women’s empowerment through narration, dialogue, and characterization. Data presentation is done by describing, analyzing, and classifying sub-themes. After presenting and processing the data, the next stage is to draw conclusions and verify them; at this step the researcher provides an interpretation that is derived from each sub-theme.

### **4. Findings and Discussion**

The novel “Zeina” by Nawal El Saadawi highlights the dynamics of the lives of three female characters; Zeina, Mageeda, and Bodour, who have different life experiences and backgrounds. Bodour is Zeina’s biological mother, she gave birth outside of marriage and dumped Zeina on the sidewalks of Cairo streets because social pressure considered her a disgrace. Furthermore, Bodour married Zakaria Al-Khartiti, and had a daughter named

Mageeda. The different interpretations of each female character's self-identity are influenced by different experiences and living environments. This research will further explain how a proportional mindset can lead to women's empowerment, through the following data and discussion.

**Table 1. Result**

No	Research Objectives	Elements of Juliet Mitchell's Feminist Psychoanalytic Theory	Research Findings
1	To Reveal Female Subjectivity in the Novel "Zeina" based on Juliet Mitchell's Feminist Psychoanalytic Perspective	Family Influence  Unconscious	Identity Differences Resilience and Self-formation Internal and External Conflict  The Struggle for Emancipation and Freedom
2	To Analyze the Role of Women's Empowerment for Female Characters in the Novel "Zeina" Based on Juliet Mitchell's Feminist Psychoanalytic Perspective		Women become Entertainers  Women become Magazine Leaders  Women become Literary Critics as well as Head of Department
3	To Explore the Dynamics of Social Structure, Culture, and Psychology of Female Characters in the Novel "Zeina" Based on Feminist Psychoanalysis Theory by Juliet Mitchell		Trauma's Influence on Identity Formation Identity Reconstruction Identity Transformation through Trauma Healing

#### 4.1 Female Subjectivity in the Novel "Zeina" based on Juliet Mitchell's Feminist Psychoanalytic Perspective

##### 4.1.1 Family influence

###### a. Identity Differences

Data (1)

يتراكم الإعجاب والحسد في قلب مجيدة الصغير. عمرها ثمانية أعوام، تكبرها زينة بنت زينات بعام واحد، تبدو كأنما أكبر منها بمائة عام، كأنما عرفت الحياة والموت، والله والشيطان، ولم تعد تخافهم. لكن قلب مجيدة مليء بالخوف، تخافنار جهنم الحمراء بعد الموت. تخافكف أببها حين ترتفع في الهواء لتسقط فوق وجهها أو وجه أمها.

*A sense of awe and envy welled up in little Mageeda's heart. She was eight years old. Zeina bint Zeinat was older than him by a year, but she looked a hundred years older than Mageeda, as if she knew life and death, God and Satan, and she no longer feared either. Unlike Mageeda's heart was full of fear. Mageeda feared the red hell of Jahannam after death. She*

*was afraid of her father's palm as it rose in the air and fell on her face or on her mother's face* (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 47).

Data (1) highlights the significant differences between the two. Although born from the same womb, Zeina and Mageeda live contrasting lives. Mageeda lives in a luxurious house with her respectable parents, while Zeina is dumped on the streets of Cairo. This very different life certainly affects the psychological condition and the process of identity formation through unconscious factors, relationships with family, both with parents and siblings (Mitchell, 2000).

Zeina has no family, so she explores life independently, and she has freedom over herself. Zeina's individual autonomy is key to the formation of her identity (Mitchell, 2000). While Mageeda has always been submissive to all the words and norms of society encountered in her family (Butler, 1990) and the absence of emotional openness from the family (McGhee & Frueh, 1975). Similarly, previous research (Hoefel, 2022), found that the patriarchal system influences the formation of gender identity and women's psychological state.

The different identities of Zeina and Mageeda show the significant influence of family and environment on psychology and personality. Zeina lives without a family, growing into an autonomous, critical, and courageous soul. while Mageeda lives in a patriarchal family, growing into a coward. this confirms, family and environment shape identity, psychology, personality, and understanding of women's roles.

#### **b. Resilience and Self-formation**

Data (2)

لم تكن طفلة مثل بنات العائلات، تدربت على المقاومة في الشارع، فقدت عذريتها منذ تركتها أمها فوق الرصيف، لم تعد تخاف اللصوص وقطاع الطرق. كانت في التاسعة من العمر، يكبرها بستة وثلاثين عامًا،

*She is not a child like the daughter of the family. She has been trained to fight on the streets. She had lost her virginity when her mother left her on the sidewalk. She is nine years old, but looks like she is thirty-six* (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 54).

Data (3)

يدبُّ الأطفال بأقدامهم المشققة فوق الرصيف، يحوطن زينة بنت زينات كالأم، يرددون وراءها الأغنية، يرقصون معها على الإيقاع،

*Street children crawled with cracked soles on the sidewalk. They surrounded Zeina bint Zeinat like a mother. They repeated the song after her. They danced with her in the rhythm* (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 72).

Data (2) and (3) highlight the street life experienced by Zeina and other abandoned children. Unlike girls who have their needs met. Zeina lives without a family and home to shelter from the sun and rain, and without security. But for the other children, Zeina is like a mother to them. Living on the streets without a family makes Zeina lose hope to feel the comfort and affection that children her age should experience. The harsh demands of life experienced by Zeina, to the point of experiencing sexual violence in the form of rape (Webster & Dunn, 2005), is a form of external experience that forces individuals to develop in ways that are not in accordance with normal psychological stages (Mitchell, 2000).

Zeina refused to be a passive victim, but redirected her traumatic experience and developed psychological defense mechanisms to challenge the bad stigma on street children and show her strength (Alfikri & Dwiatmaja, 2023). Zeina's independence in dealing with the impact of rape is the same as the female character Carolyne in the study (Atiyat et al., 2022). Meanwhile, other studies suggest that women fight back on the basis of psychological

encouragement, which comes from moral teachings and parental upbringing that rejects violence (Fitriana, 2021).

Data (3) highlights the lateral relationships between Zeina and other street children. Apart from siblings, lateral relationships also include relationships with close relatives and peers, which are equally influential in the formation of one's identity and personality (Mitchell, 2003). Despite not having a family, Zeina has friends who are street children who strengthen each other. Togetherness in a simple suburban environment creates happiness and comfort for Zeina and other children.

Zeina is only a few years older than the other children, but her maturity surpasses that of other children her age. She manages to provide comfort to others, like a mother figure who provides protection and affection, despite her deprived circumstances (Chodorow, 1999). Mitchell explains that these gender roles are shaped by social structures and the collective unconscious embedded in family relationships and personal experiences (Mitchell, 2000). Despite being abandoned by her biological mother, Zeina was raised by Zeinat's mother who encouraged her to develop a maternal role.

The same thing was found in research (Amanda & Nugroho, 2024), that pressure from the social environment encourages a person to find strategies to find subjectivity and affirmation of gender identity. Zeina's interactions with peers replaced family support, shaping her identity, personality and maternal role. Even without a nuclear family, Zeina shows how experiences and environment shape gender roles, surviving trauma and finding new meaning as a woman.

### **c. Internal and External Conflict**

Data (4)

أنشره في جريدة معارضة يا محمد، المجلة دي بتاعة الحكومة، والحكومة بتشتغل مع الأمير والجماعات إياها، والكل بيشتغل مع أمريكا وحلفاءها، كان صوتها يرتعد من خلال أسلاك التليفون، ترتعش السماعة في يدها البضة السمينة، تنقل عضلات وجهها في نوبة عصبية حادة، يتقطع صوتها، يتحول إلى نسيح مكتوم  
مبحوح.

*"I will publish the article in the opposition newspaper, Muhammad. This newspaper belongs to the government and the government works with Amir and his organization. They work with America and its allies..." His voice trembled from the gap in the phone cord. The phone vibrated in his stocky hands. The muscles of his face creased. His voice trailed off, turning into a choked, stifled sound (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 162-163).*

After growing up, Mageeda had the courage to make a big decision in his work, which was to publish a controversial article. Data (5) shows Mageeda's instruction to Muhammad, a staff writer at the organization she leads. Mageeda continues to grow up with the characteristics of a patriarchal family upbringing. Mageeda unable to determine her life path and is subject to all the rules that restrain her, reflects how patriarchy in the family instills a mindset of subordination in women (You, 2021). This shows that in a person's mind, gender roles are indirectly embedded as a result of the construction of society, which is transmitted from generation to generation (Azzahidah et al., 2023).

However, in the end, Mageeda had the courage to make the decision to publish this controversial article. Mageeda's action shows that the process of searching for her subjectivity has been surpassed. His decision to move from a subject shackled by rules and restrictions, to a subject capable of self-determination (Benjamin, 1988). The process involved a confrontation with her subconscious mind which was influenced by the pressures she experienced in her past (Mitchell, 2000), but Mageeda tried to resist the constraints of the rules.

One of the reasons the government criticized her publication was because of the subordination of women, as well as the assumption that music and dance are haram, but Mageeda showed resistance and came out of her fear. This finding is in line with (Kisweka, 2021), that every individual has authority and empowers themselves despite social and psychological constraints of patriarchy. Mageeda is an example that women are able to fully master their authority and get out of the shackles of patriarchal subordination. In line with research that utilizes the YouTube platform to represent criticism of subordination and patriarchy (Fatimah et al., 2024).

## 4.2 Unconscious

### 4.2.1 The Struggle for Emancipation and Freedom

Data (5)

تخرجت من مدرسة الشارع، عرفت قاع الحزن وقمة الفرح، لم تعد تخاف القاع ولا القمة، لم يملكها رجل، ولا يمكن أن تكون مملوكة لأحد، حتى الموسيقى لم تملكها، هي التي ملكت الموسيقى وتحررت بها من الفقر والخوف والعبودية.

*She graduated from street school. She knows the bottom of sadness, and the top of happiness. She no longer fears the bottom and the top. No man owns her, and she cannot be owned by anyone. Only music possesses her. She who owns music and is free from poverty, fear, and slavery is with music (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 95).*

Data (6)

وقد تشطب بدرية بعض العبارات التي لا تعجبها في الرواية، بل قد تحذف فصلاً كاملاً أو تضيف فصلاً من عندها،... ذلك اليوم اتخذت بدرية قرارها أن تتحرر من العبء الثقيل داخل جسدها، أن تتحرر من الذكرى الأليمة في خلايا عقلها.

*Sometimes Badriyah crossed out some terms she didn't like in the novel, and even omitted a chapter or added a chapter... That day Badriyah made the decision to break free from the heavy burden in her body, to be free from the painful memories of her mind cells (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 34-35).*

In data (5) and (6), it can be seen that both of them show an attempt to free themselves from social restrictions through their subconscious. However, there are differences between their efforts. Zeina achieves both physical and psychological freedom through her experience living on the streets, while Bodour can only find freedom through the character of Badriyah in her novel. Zeina does not allow external control over her body and mind. The trauma of losing her virginity does not bring her down, but rather leads her to progress, challenging patriarchy and freeing herself from the control of others (Mitchell, 1971). More than that, Zeina deconstructs object status in social relations and becomes an autonomous subject (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1999). In this regard, Zeina's actions are in line with research findings (Nugroho, 2019) who reject social construction and break free from patriarchy.

Bodour fights for her freedom through the imaginary character Badriyah, which is a manifestation of her subconscious desire to be free from patriarchal oppression (Mitchell, 2000). For her, writing is therapy and a form of empowerment, she can explore her desires that are not realized in the real world. With this creativity, bodour is encouraged to be assertive and brave to free herself from patriarchy. In accordance with semiotic revolt, writing with creative language serves as a form of empowerment, especially for women (Kristeva, 1984).

This finding is in accordance with research (Hoefel, 2022), in the search for subjectivity. However, the results are different, Zeina and Bodour continue to try until they achieve the freedom they are aiming for, while the struggle of the female characters in research (Hoefel, 2022), ends in resignation and ending their lives. Both Zeina and Bodour



have tried to free themselves from the shackles of patriarchy and find their subjectivity, although with different paths. This shows that the tenacity of determination and efforts made by the female characters will definitely meet their final goal. So, no matter what form and no matter how small the effort, women should not just remain silent about the limitations of patriarchy.

## **4.2 The Role of Women's Empowerment for Female Characters in the Novel "Zeina" Based on Juliet Mitchell's Feminist Psychoanalytic Perspective**

### **4.2.1 Women become Entertainers**

Data (7)

زينة بنت زينات فنانة من نوع غير عادي. تبدو عبقريتها في أبسط حركة، مجرد أن تدخل إلى قاعة الحفل أو فوق خشبة المسرح، يُلغى حضورها حضور الأشياء الأخرى، لا تشبع العيون من التطلع إليها،

*Zeina bint Zeinat is an extraordinary artist. Her genius is seen in the simplest of gestures, once she enters a concert hall or stage, her presence negates everything else, many eyes never tire of looking at her* (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 164).

Zeina developed her talent and potential in the field of music despite the limitations of her life on the streets. Zeina only focused on herself and the things she liked, without caring about the rules and gender constructions in society that often hindered her. This is because there was no family figure in the process of forming an identity that was formed since childhood (Mitchell, 2000). So Zeina created her own autonomous space, because women's empowerment can be achieved when women take control of their lives (Mitchell, 1971).

Zeina's persistence is proof that regardless of a woman's background, all have the opportunity to develop their potential without being constrained by stereotypes and gender discrimination. This finding is in accordance with research (Daragmeh & Hamamra, 2021), despite limitations, women can utilize the autonomy space they have to launch women's empowerment strategies that are unreachable by patriarchy. With this, the gaps that exist can be a stepping stone for women to empower themselves.

### **4.2.2 Women become Magazine Leaders**

Data (8)

أصبحت مجيدة تملك عمودًا في مجلة النهضة،

*Mageeda now has an Awakening Magazine column* (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 29).

As an adult, Mageeda worked as a writer for a daily newspaper and editor-in-chief of the government-affiliated *Kebangkitan Magazine*, on the recommendation and even coercion of her father. Previously, Mageeda had to face pressure from her family and patriarchal environment that bound her with various rules, as well as internal conflict in the form of a desire to overcome this powerlessness. This internal conflict reflects her drive to fight gender repression, which comes from the subconscious (Mitchell, 2000).

With her position as a leader, Mageeda maximized her performance to deconstruct herself into a subject position, her efforts made it possible for her to become a woman who was able to challenge limitations, find her own subjectivity and freedom (Butler, 1990). Her efforts show her determination to redefine her existence as a woman amidst patriarchal domination. This finding is in accordance with research (Daragmeh & Hamamra, 2021), which states that one of women's efforts to empower themselves is to use the roles they play as a place to express themselves.

### **4.2.3 Women become Literary Critics as well as Head of Department**

Data (9)

كانت أمي أستاذة كبيرةً مثل أبي، ربما أكبر منه قيمةً؛ فهي رئيسة قسم النقد الأدبي في الجامعة، تحمل درجة الدكتوراه بمرتبة الشرف.

*My mother was a professor like my father, perhaps a higher position than my father. She is the head of the department of literary criticism at the university with a doctorate degree cum laude (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 18).*

Data (10)

كانت أمها تكتب في النقد الأدبي، تلقي المحاضرات في الجامعة عن الأدب والشعر والروايات والمسرح وأفلام السينما.

*Her mother wrote literary criticism. She gave lectures at the university on literature, poetry, prose, drama, and cinema films (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 32).*

Data (9) and (10) show Bodour's position as a woman with a brilliant career in academics. She became a professor with cum laude predicate who served as the head of the department in the field of literary criticism. All of these achievements show that Bodour is an intellectual and professional woman, in an academic world dominated by men. This is proof that she has succeeded in going beyond the traditional boundaries of women constructed by Egyptian society (Butler, 1990).

Despite facing trauma and patriarchal violence, Bodour remained focused on her career. Despite failing to achieve happiness in life, her success is an inspiration for other women to empower themselves, driven by a subconscious desire to continue achieving goals. Because the desire to move comes from a subconscious drive to continue trying to achieve their goals (Mitchell, 2000). In this case, Bodour is a reflection that by developing cognitive, women can challenge gender repression and take over areas previously dominated by men. This finding is in accordance with research (Daragmeh & Hamamra, 2021), one of the efforts made by women to empower themselves is by utilizing the roles they play as a place to express themselves.

### 4.3 Dynamics of Social Structure, Culture, and Psychology of Female Characters in the Novel "Zeina" Based on Feminist Psychoanalysis Theory by Juliet Mitchell

#### 4.3.1 The Influence of Trauma on Identity Formation

Data (11)

في سريرها كانت ابنتها مجيدة تنتفض، من خلال الجدار تسمع الصفعات والضربات، لا تعرف من يضرب من؛ أبوها يضرب أمها، أم العكس؟ منذ الطفولة تسمعهما يتشاجران، السنة وراء السنة، أربعًا وعشرين سنة،

*On her bed, her daughter, trembling. Through the crack in the wall, he could hear the sounds of slaps and punches. She didn't know who was hitting whom. Her father hitting her mother, or vice versa? Since childhood she had heard them fight, year after year, for twenty-four years (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 57).*

Data (12)

والكهولة ظلت هذه الصفحات البيضاء ترمقها بسخرية، صوت يهمس في أذنها له فحيح إبليس، أو ربما صوت لله يقول لها: أنت يا مجيدة لست موهوبة، أنا يا مجيدة الذي أعطي الناس الموهبة، وقد أعطيتها لزينة بنت زينات؛ لأنني حرمتها من الأب والأم.

*Those white sheets always looked at him with mockery. A voice whispered in her ear like the hiss of a demon, or perhaps the voice of God saying. "You are not gifted, Mageeda. I give talent to humans, Mageeda. And I have given it to Zeina bint Zeinat, for I have made her unclean from mother's father" (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 32).*

Data (11) shows that Mageeda grew up to be a timid child due to the trauma of witnessing her parents' domestic violence. Living in a patriarchal family made her feel helpless and difficult to make choices, so she became vulnerable to being dominated into adulthood. Data (12) shows Mageeda's inner conflict over her lack of self-confidence. Ristiani & Lustianingrum in (Sari et al., 2024) define self-confidence as a person's view of things related to himself. Mitchell emphasized that the subconscious often holds hidden desires that are not realized (Mitchell, 2000).

Mageeda's mentality was suppressed by her parents' and teachers' expectations for her to become a writer like her father, even though she was more interested in studying music like Zeina. Family and kinship ties are the first and closest, but sometimes their role is more potentially oppressive (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2022). Patriarchal pressures in her family and these social demands created a power relationship that cornered Mageeda so that she doubted her own abilities (Benjamin, 1988). A patriarchal environment that tends to adhere to the phallogocentric ideology will lead to "women being controlled and guarded by men", meaning that authority and dominance are in the hands of men. (Pasopati et al., 2024) Mitchell states that the rigid division of gender roles in the family supports the transmission of patriarchal values from generation to generation (Duschinsky & Walker, 2015).

Mageeda grew up to be a child who could not make her own decisions and was easily anxious. This is evidence that the family is the first arena of life, where children learn the values of life in society (Mitchell, 2000), which has the potential to cause neurosis and trauma (Rousselle, 2020). Neurosis refers to a mental disorder in the form of excessive anxiety and fear, as well as obsessive thoughts (Zaman et al., 2021). Alfred Adler stated that 'neurotic' women exist because they are confined in their efforts to overcome helplessness in their childhood (Adler, 1927). The findings of this study are in line with research (Hoefel, 2022), who stated that patriarchal pressure causes women to lose, even alienated from expressing their own identity.

#### **4.3.2 Identity Reconstruction**

Data (13)

افخري بأمك واسمك زينة بنت زينات، اسم الأم أكثر شرفاً من اسم الأب؛ لأن الأب يتخلى عن أطفاله من أجل نزوة جنسية، لكن الأم لا تتخلى أبداً عن أطفالها، إلا إذا كانت مريضة نفسياً أو فقدت عقلها.

*Be proud of your mother and your name Zeina bint Zeinat. The mother's name is more honorable than the father's name, because the father only releases the leap of his children's seed unless he is mentally ill or loses his mind (el Saadawi, 2009).*

Zeina refuses to say her name complete with the names of her father and grandfather, as is generally the tradition in Arabia (Engelcke, 2020). Data (13) shows Zeina rejecting the social construction and Arab culture that requires mentioning the father's name. Her subconscious refuses, so she only writes her own name. Zeina has no family, she was born out of wedlock, her father died during a demonstration. So, Zeina chose another alternative way to build her identity (Irigaray, 1985), becoming an independent and free woman, without having to submit to the values of paternity.

Whether or not to mention one's father's name is a private matter, but such traditions are often the cause of women's oppression (Thornham, 2010). This custom has been constructed in society, which falls under the category of Jacques Lacan's concept of "symbolic order", which explains how cultural structures and language shape human relationships with the world through certain standards and symbols (Mitchell, 1973). Data (13) illustrates a form of rejection of societal constructions and traditions that are considered to force genealogical identity on everyone (Irigaray, 1985). Not all children have a father figure, such as children who are abandoned on the streets and do not know who their parents

are. It is not that they do not want to name their father, but there is no one to name. Zeina bint Zeinat is a representation of the phenomenon of children born without marriage ties, therefore the child's nasab is attributed to the mother (Armi et al., 2023).

The findings of this study are in accordance with research (Amanda & Nugroho, 2024), in a cornered situation, female characters prefer to focus on themselves and prevent unnecessary conflict. Zeina resisted patriarchal social construction by refusing to mention her father's name in her identity, because only Zeinat's mother played a role in her life. Her attitude is a critique of the patriarchal system that oppresses women through tradition.

#### 4.3.3 Identity Transformation through Trauma Healing

Data (14)

فَكَتَّ قَيُودَهَا مِنْ قِمَّةِ الرَّأْسِ حَتَّى بَطْنِ الْقَدَمَيْنِ، تَحْرُرَ اللَّحْمَ وَالْعِظْمَ مِنَ الْأَسْرِ، انْفَلَكَّ  
اللِّجَامُ الْمَرْبُوطُ حَوْلَهَا، تَرَكَتْ جِسْدهَا يَسْبِجُ فَوْقَ الدِّكَةِ الطَّوِيلَةِ كَالسَّفِينَةِ، هَمَسَ فِي  
أَعْمَاقِهَا صَوْتٌ: لَسْتُ زَوْجَةً وَلَا أَرْمَلَةً وَلَنْ أَرَى حَزَنًا،

*His shackles were removed from head to toe. His flesh and bones were freed from captivity. The binding bridle was freed. She let her body float, swim, on a long seat like a ship. A voice whispered within her, "I am not a wife, and I am not a widow, and I will never see sorrow."* (el Saadawi, 2009, p. 188).

Data (14) shows Bodour who feels that her mind and body have been freed from captivity. Badriyah's character, as described in data (6), plays a role in encouraging Bodour's subconscious to decide to break free from the shackles of past trauma and patriarchy. Bodour chose to rise up and experience total liberation. She wants to let go of the social identity imposed by the patriarchal social structure, which has been shackling her psychological and physical freedom.

Freud in (Mitchell, 2000) describes this process as working through, after undergoing various stages, Bodour then reflects on herself in resolving internal conflicts within herself. Bodour detaches herself from the labels 'wife' and 'widow', she does not want to be labeled with anything and hopes to rediscover her subjectivity (Mitchell, 2000). This is a representation of her resistance to patriarchy. The findings of this study are similar to research by (Igharia, 2024), that patriarchal pressure can cause psychological conflict in women. One way to overcome it is by expressing themselves through dreams and trying to find happiness by opening up to a better future.

Bodour creates her own internal space through Badriyah's character to reconstruct her subjectivity, eliminate irrelevant social labels, and find an independent self-definition. This process shows how patriarchy affects women, causing internal conflicts in women's psychological aspects. Bodour is a clear example that women are able to release themselves from the trauma of their past after experiencing various stages. Women's struggle to transcend social boundaries and find subjectivity is inseparable from psychological conflict.

## 5. Conclusion

The subjectivity of female characters in the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi based on the feminist psychoanalytic theory of Juliet Mitchell includes two main factors, namely family influence and unconscious factors. Family influence is found in the form of; 1) differences in identity, 2) resilience and self-formation, 3) internal and external conflicts. Unconscious factors are found in the form of; 4) the struggle for emancipation and freedom. Then, the role of empowerment reflected in female characters is found in the form of; 1) women becoming entertainers, 2) women becoming magazine leaders, and 3) women becoming literary critics and department heads. Meanwhile, the dynamics that occur between the social, cultural, and psychological structures of female characters in the novel "Zeina" are

found in the form of; 1) the influence of trauma in the formation of identity, 2) identity reconstruction, and 3) identity transformation through trauma healing.

Women have the ability to find or define their own subjectivity even though they live in the confines of a patriarchal culture. Through reflection of desires from the subconscious mind, courage, and struggle, women can free themselves from social, cultural limitations, and past trauma. By utilizing every opportunity and potential, or through any role they play, every woman has the opportunity to become stronger and more empowered. Although in every process it is inseparable from the dynamics between social, cultural, and psychological structures. This challenge can be overcome with a strong determination from the subconscious to redefine identity without caring about irrelevant social constructions.

The limitation of this research is that the analysis of women's empowerment in the context of Arab culture is only done through the novel "Zeina" by Nawal El Saadawi, without involving other media that can provide a broader perspective. In addition, the researcher only uses Juliet Mitchell's feminist psychoanalytic perspective, without considering other theories that may be relevant. Future researchers can expand the analysis to various other media such as films, mass media, television series, or social media to get a more comprehensive picture of women's empowerment and the process of discovering subjectivity.

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