

PARVANA'S STRUGGLES AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY IN TALIBAN SOCIETY IN DEBORAH ELLIS' *THE BREADWINNER*: A FEMINIST CHILDREN'S LITERATURE STUDY

By: Endah Ratnasari
Yogyakarta State University
ratnasari.endah003@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to identify the harms that gender inequality put on female children in Taliban society, Parvana's struggles against gender inequality in Taliban society, and the significant meanings of Parvana's struggles in Taliban society. This research used qualitative-descriptive content analysis. The results of this research show that there are three harms that gender inequality put on female children in Taliban society: fear and lack of confidence, desperation and unwillingness to struggle, and dependency. Parvana does some struggles against gender inequality in Taliban society, namely disguising as a boy to become a breadwinner and fulfill other needs of the family, optimizing her attempts to save her family, encouraging her family, and helping other women to survive. The study also reveals that there are three significant meanings of Parvana's struggles in Taliban society: boosting her self-esteem, improving a sense of pride on herself and arousing a feeling of satisfaction of her efforts.

Keywords: Parvana, struggle, gender inequality, harm, female children, Taliban society

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality has become a problem faced by women from ancient time until now. They are severely restricted to access the activities done by men. Gender inequality is not only a problem for women. Yet, female children also experience the same problem. One of female child who experience gender inequality is Parvana who lives in Taliban society. It is the society ruled by the Taliban group which highly limits women's freedom outside of their house. Parvana and the other female children must struggle harder to cope with gender inequality since they are still underage. Certainly, gender inequality put some harms to them. Therefore, gender inequality in children's literature gender inequality in children literature is important to study deeper in order to create an insight for the readers that gender equality for female children is worth fighting for.

Gambel (1998: 3), feminism refers to the efforts that aim to fight for the patriarchy system.

It is a system which places men in the higher hierarchy than women. While Freedman (in Meade and Hanks, 1999: 186) explains feminism as a belief that women are basically equal to men. Since gender gap exists because of the hierarchy which places men as the most powerful group in the society, the gap between men and women should be fought for by the action of every layer of the society.

Feminism always deals with the struggles to fight for women's equality. Struggle is an attempt that needs some difficult efforts in achieving the goal. In related to gender inequality, the biggest obstacle fought is male-dominated system in a society. Taliban society is one of society which holds a male-dominated system. In the Taliban society, women are prohibited to go to school and work. Women are demanded to stay at home and forbade going outside home. If they really have to go outside, women in Taliban society should be accompanied their *mahram*, their male relatives. They also

have to wear *burqa* whenever they go outside. *Burqa* is the absolute requirement for women to be present in the public area. It is a kind of clothes that completely cover women's body from their head to toe with only two spaces of open parts the eyes and the nose Physician for Human Right, 1998: 30).

Hook (2000: 3-50) states that there are three forms of struggles against gender inequality: pursuing education, bounding a sisterhood, and working. Those struggles are important to do in the patriarchal system which hampers women's freedom. It is a time for women to take a real action and challenge the difficult situation in order to change people perception to them. Hence, women's struggles can be the forms of women's empowerment in order to be equal to men. To analyze women's idea embedded in literature, feminist literary criticism was used. Cuddon (1999: 315) explains that feminist literary criticism is an effort to examine women's behaviors and ideas in any kind of literature: novel, poetry, and drama. It criticizes the males' idea and interpretation in literature. It is a means to evaluate males' perspective toward women in patriarchal system. Feminist literary criticism challenges the male-based values and gives women more privilege to explore their idea.

Female children may experience the same problem to female adults. It can be portrayed in most children's literature. However, children's literature is not only a means to understand an event through story. Yet, it give childrens a pleasure as well. Lukens (1999: 9) states, "Children, too, seek pleasure from a story, but the sources of their pleasure are more limited. Since their experiences are more limited, children may

Parvana's Struggles against (Endah Ratnasari) not understand the same complexity of ideas." The quotation above intends to say that children undergo shorter process of life compared to adults. Therefore, they get less experience than adults. Unlike adults, they are not that capable to understand the complicated thoughts embodied in the story. However, they still can gain pleasure and understanding.

Children are different entity than adults. However, it does not diminish the fact that children also have the ability to think and understand particular issue just like adults do. Lukens (1999: 9) states, "Children are not little adults. They are different from adults in experience, but not in species, or to put differently, in degree but not in kind." It intends to say that both adults and children are all human that need to know about the information, issues and phenomena of life. The difference between them is that children have limited experiences compared to the adults. Therefore, it is logical that the way of children's thinking is still limited since they do not have many experiences like adults. It is due to the idea that experience can shape and determine the way of people's thinking.

Children are able to cognitively develop. Piaget (in Cook, 2005: 5-6) says that people including children will construct their thinking and understanding through what they have known and understood in order to interpret their new experience and environment. When children interact with their environment, they will have complex way of thinking. When children are more mature, they will experience more complex thought.

In regard to children's empowerment in children's literature, children are viewed to be powerless entities because of their inferiority. This view exists due to the opinion that children have less capability and knowledge than adults. Nodelman (2008: 68) explains that in children's literature, children's limited experiences can be the barrier for them to take some actions. However, it does not mean that children are incapable to change and learn. Childhood is a perfect time to learn. Thus, from learning, children can determine their own action and it is how children can change. Furthermore, the experiences of children can be improved along the process of learning. Therefore, children can actually create their own empowerment.

It is in line with Withmore's idea about empowerment. Withmore (in Lord and Hutchison, 1993) states that the empowerment is a process of interaction between the experience people have and the dynamic of social phenomenon which make the people able to act and influence others and in order for them to be impacted by this process.

Deborah Ellis' *The Breadwinner* is a children's literature which tries to explore how Parvana lives in a conflicted country ruled by the Taliban. Parvana actually faces varied problems in this story. First, Parvana suffers from a poverty and lack of capital resources. Second, Parvana also experiences biased perspective about Western idea from the Taliban. Lastly, in friendship, as a child, Parvana has to feel lonely because she rarely makes a friend in the conflicted area. However, the biggest problem that Parvana has to face is gender inequality. The text explores more how female child, Parvana,

lives in a Taliban society and how she struggles against gender inequality. Therefore, the researcher decides to focus on Parvana's struggles as a female child against gender inequality in a strict Taliban society.

The objectives of this research are to identify the harms that gender inequality does to the female children in Taliban society, Parvana's struggles against gender inequality in Taliban society, and the significant meanings of Parvana's struggles in Taliban society.

This research can give significances to the readers in giving more information and knowledge about the study of female children who face the problems of gender inequality; what kinds of harms they get and the struggles that the main figure of female children does against it. The finding of this research is also expected to increase the awareness of people that female children have the same capability to male children or male adult. Furthermore, this research also can give understanding that the study about children's literature is worthy to conduct.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative research design. It is because the data of this research are in the form of words, phrases, clauses and sentences embedded in Ellis' *The Breadwinner*. Therefore, quantitative research design is impossible to apply because the data are not qualified in the numeric standard. Vanderstop and Johnston (2009: 167) state that qualitative research has a purpose of *descriptive*. Since people's interpretation is the main element of qualitative research, its products are in the form

of description. In order to analyze the data, content analysis was used in this research.

The data source in this research was Ellis' *The Breadwinner* published in 2000. The data used were the words, phrases, clauses and sentences related to the harms the harms that gender inequality does to the female children in Taliban society, Parvana's struggles against gender inequality in Taliban society and the significant meanings of Parvana's struggles in Taliban society which are embedded in Deborah Ellis' *The Breadwinner*.

There were two research instruments used in this research. In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher herself. The second instrument was a secondary instrument. The secondary instruments in this research were any media and devices which contribute to the data collection and data analysis. The media and devices included worksheet, pen, highlighter and computer.

There were two steps in collecting the data in this research. The first step was the process of reading and rereading the data sources in order to get understanding in the deep manner. The second step was collecting, classifying and categorizing the data. Firstly, the data were highlighted and noted. The noting process was done by rewriting the main idea of the words, phrases, clauses and sentences related to Parvana's struggles against gender inequality in Taliban Society and the page where it belongs to. Secondly, the data were classified based on the objectives of the research.

To analyze the data, the significant expression of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which has the similar meaning were

Parvana's Struggles against (Endah Ratnasari) categorized into one category. The data were interpreted and analyzed. To achieve the data trustworthiness, triangulation was applied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Harms that Gender Equality Put on Female Children in Taliban Society

1. Fear and Lack of Confidence

Living under the control of Taliban group is not easy for everyone, particularly for female children. Taliban group places themselves as superior actor in the society. As a result, female children in the society which is ruled and controlled by Taliban group experience inferior feelings in the form of fear and lack of confidence.

I can read that letter as well as Father can," Parvana whispered into the folds of her chador. "Well, almost."

She didn't dare say those words out loud. The man sitting beside her father would not want to hear her voice. Nor would anyone else in the Kabul market. Parvana was there only to help her father walk to the market and back home again after work. She sat well back on the blanket, her head and most of her face covered by her chador".

She wasn't really supposed to be outside at all. The Taliban had ordered all the girls and women in Afghanistan to stay inside their homes. They even forbade girls to go to school. Parvana had had to leave her sixth grade class, and her sister Nooria was not allowed to go to her high school. Their mother had been kicked out of her job as a writer for a Kabul radio station. For more than a year now, they had all been stuck inside one room, along with five-year-old Maryam and two-year-old Ali. (Ellis, 2000: 7)

The datum above shows two things. First, it shows the gender inequality that female children face. Female children are not supposed to pursue their education. Furthermore, they are obliged to

only stay at home and do anything inside the home. Second, it shows the feeling of fear that Parvana has. The restriction made by the Taliban group causes a fear on Parvana. She feels afraid to say something louder because she worries that the Taliban people hear her. Therefore, she only whispers to express her thought. In addition, Parvana really tries to hide her face with her chador. She does not want the Taliban people know her face. She is also afraid if the Taliban people know there is a girl who goes outside on her own, she will be punished by them.

2. Desperation and Unwillingness to Struggle

The second harms that gender inequality put on female children in Taliban society are desperation and unwillingness to struggle. People who are desperate lose a hope that there will be a better change in the future. Therefore, the desperation eventually creates further impact that is unwillingness to struggle in order to survive. They stuck on a passive state not to do anything because they believe that any action they do will not bring any result.

The feeling of desperation is represented by Nooria in this datum: "How can we be brave?" Nooria asked. "We can't even go outside. How can we lead men into battle? I've seen enough war. I don't want to see any more" (Ellis, 2000: 29). The restriction to women to go outside has made Nooria lose her bravery. She keeps asking how she can have such a bravery to lead the war. Keeping asking the question is a sign that she has a doubt that she can create a change. It signifies the desperation that she feels. She gives up hoping that she can be brave to lead the battle. She does not have a hope at all to make everything better. Furthermore, Nooria's

expression also shows that she does not want to make some efforts to go outside. She does not want to see a war again, so she does nothing. It means that she does not struggle to create a better condition.

3. Dependency

The last harm that gender inequality put on female children in Taliban society is dependency. Dependency is a state when someone cannot do something with his or her own capability. This person only can rely on other people to live their life. In regard to the harms of gender inequality to female children in Taliban society, the tight regulation Taliban people made to limit them in doing some activities makes them to be dependent on men.

"Nooria never goes for water, nor does Mother. Maryam doesn't, either. She doesn't have to do anything!"

Parvana knew she was mumbling nonsense, but she kept it up anyway. Maryam was only five, and she couldn't carry an empty bucket downstairs, let alone a full bucket upstairs. Mother and Nooria had to wear burqas whenever they went outside, and they couldn't carry a pail of water up those uneven broken stairs if they were wearing burqas. Plus, it was dangerous for women to go outside without a man." (Ellis, 2000: 20)

It explains that female children in Parvana's family are not able to fetch the water. They should wear *burqa*, a piece of clothes which completely cover their body, except at the eyes and the nose. They will hardly walk to get the water up the high floor. Moreover, women and girls are forbidden to go outside. The Taliban soldiers can catch and punish them whenever they notice women and girls. As a result, the only one who can fetch the water is Parvana since her father, the only man in her family, has lost one of

his legs. She does not seem to have a body like woman because she is still small. Therefore, everyone including Nooria and Maryam rely on her to fetch the water. Parvana understand this condition, so she always fetches the water even though she complains. It is acceptable since Parvana is still too young to be burdened by all family's members.

B. Parvana's Struggles against Gender Inequality in Taliban Society

1. Disguising as a Boy to Become a Breadwinner and Fulfill other Needs of the Family

The first struggles Parvana does is becoming a breadwinner and fulfilling family's other needs.

Parvana took the envelope from him. The stamp was from Germany. She read the outside. "This is addressed to Fatima Azima."

"That was my wife," the Talib said.

The letter was very old. Parvana took it out of the envelope and unfolded it. The creases were embedded in the paper.

"Dear Niece," Parvana read. "I am sorry I am not able to be with you at the time of your wedding, but I hope this letter will get to you in time. It is good to be in Germany, away from all the fighting. In my mind, though, I never really leave Afghanistan. My thoughts are always turned to our country, to the family and friends I will probably never see again.

"On this day of your marriage, I send you my very best wishes for your future. Your father, my brother, is a good man, and he will have chosen a good man to be your husband. You may find it hard at first, to be away from your family, but you will have a new family. Soon you will begin to feel you belong there. I hope you will be happy, that you will be blessed with many children, and that you will live to see your son have sons. "Once you leave Pakistan and return to Afghanistan with your new husband, I will

Parvana's Struggles against (Endah Ratnasari)

likely lose track of you. Please keep my letter with you, and do not forget me, for I will not forget you.

"Your loving aunt, Sohila."

Parvana stopped reading. The Talib was silent beside her. "Would you like me to read it again?" (Ellis, 2000: 77-79)

She goes to the market and work as a letter reader in disguise as a boy (Ellis, 2000: 65-66). Parvana has short hair and she wears boy's clothes. She does not wear a chador anymore. Parvana meets her first customer and she does her job which is reading him his letter. She is so fluent to read the letter. She masters her customer's language well, so she does not have the difficulty to read him a letter. Moreover, she happens to see her father when he reads a letter for his customer. Parvana eventually can emulate the way her father's read a letter for his customer. Furthermore, Parvana manages her job well by offering her customer to write a reply for the letter. She understands well the way to serve her customer. She does a complete job to read the letter as well as to write a reply of the letter.

As a child, Parvana struggles so hard to gain money for her family. When their friends in her age are safe inside their house, she has to go outside with all the threats that endanger her anytime the Taliban soldiers know her true identity. It is not easy for Parvana to gather her bravery to work in the market. She has to deal with her great fear when she meets her first customer (Ellis, 2000: 76-77). She feels threatened that the Taliban soldier will shoot her and she does nothing to overcome the feeling of fear. After she is extremely scared to him, finally she can be calmed. She begins to read the letter with no doubt. In a very young and fragile age,

she has to experience a tough time to work as a letter reader. She has to fight with her great fear for the sake of her family. Her struggle is a big contribution that needs to be counted by her family.

2. Optimizing Her Attempts to Save Her Family

Parvana does other struggle against gender inequality in Taliban society: optimizing her attempts to save her family. Her attempt is represented by the datum below:

“I’m here for my father!” she called out. Her mother looked down at her through the screen over her eyes. She reached down and took Parvana’s hand. “I’m here for my husband!” she called again.

Over and over, Parvana and her mother kept yelling out. More and more men came to stare at them their mission.

“Be quiet!” ordered one of the guards. “You should not be here! Go from this place! Go back to your home!” One of the soldiers snatched the photo of Parvana’s father and tore it into pieces. Another started hitting her mother with a stick.

“Release my husband!” her mother kept saying.

Another soldier joined in the beating. He hit Parvana, too.

Although he did not hit her very hard, Parvana fell to the ground, her body covering the pieces of her father’s photograph. In a flash, she tucked the pieces out of sight, under her chador. (Ellis, 2000: 41-42)

After Parvana and her mother walk so far from their house to the prison, they finally come to the prison. Even though she is still small and young, Parvana gathers her courage and bravery to yell to the Taliban soldiers to release her father. Yet, the Taliban soldiers do not welcome them warmly. Instead, they order Parvana and her mother to go home because women are not supposed to go outside. The Taliban soldiers

totally ignore their demand to release her father by tearing his photo in front of them. Furthermore, Parvana and her mother are also beaten by those soldiers.

It shows how Parvana really struggles to save her father. She has to walk for miles to get to the prison. Her legs are painful and as a little girl, she feels very frightened to meet the Taliban soldiers (Ellis, 2000: 40). She even has to experience the pain because of the Taliban’s beating on her. She struggles to save her father mentally and physically. Mentally, she fights against her feeling of fear to meet the Taliban soldiers. Children who have weak mental condition will not have enough courage to go further to meet the soldiers. Yet, Parvana is brave enough to finally meet them. Physically, she has to bear double pain because of walking and being beaten by those soldiers. As a child, she is strong enough to endure the pain in order to achieve her goal in rescuing her father.

3. Encouraging Her Family

Besides doing the two previous struggles, Parvana also struggles in encouraging her family. After her father is put into the jail by the Taliban soldiers, she lives only with the rest of her family. All of her family members are women except her infant brother, Ali. This condition forces them to keep staying inside the room. As a result, they do not have many things to do. This condition makes them feel bored and distressed. Parvana who disguises herself as a boy is the only one who can go outside without any companion unlike the rest of her family members.

The action that Parvana makes in encouraging her family is shown by escorting them to take a walk around the neighborhood.

For Ali's sake, Nooria went along with the idea. Every day after lunch, Parvana, Nooria, Ali and Maryam went outside for an hour. Ali had been only a few months old when the Taliban came. All he really knew was the little room they had been shut up in for a year and a half. Nooria had not been outside, either, in all that time.

They would walk around the neighborhood until their legs got tired, then they would sit in the sunshine. When there was no one around, Parvana would keep watch, and Nooria would flip up her burqa to let the sun pour down on her face. (Ellis, 2000: 90)

Every day after lunch, Parvana escorts her sisters and her brother to take a walk in the neighborhood. Nooria and Ali never get any chance to go outside at all. They never have any opportunity to enjoy the fresh air outside their room. Maryam once happens to go out when Parvana asks her to the water tap. Yet, she still has lack of experience to take a walk in the street. When they have been tired, they stop and they enjoy the sunshine. When they spend their time walking in the neighborhood, they can feel the sunshine touches their skin. They can breathe the fresh air and they see the view outside of the room. This activity makes them happy and relieved because they have a good time by going outside.

Parvana shows her struggle by becoming the escort for her family. As the escort, she is aware of the fact that she is the one who will bear the consequences if something happens to her family when they are outside. It also means that she has to protect them from all the threats that possibly come to them. What Parvana does is to encourage her family and make them happy.

4. Helping Other Women to Survive

The last struggle Parvana makes against gender inequality is helping other woman to survive. It is represented by the datum below:

"Come with me," Parvana said. "My mother is away, but Mrs. Weera is at home. She can fix any problem." She struck another match and held it up to the woman's face. It suddenly dawned on her that she could see the woman's face. It wasn't covered up.

"Where is your burqa?" She looked around but couldn't see one. "Are you outside without a burqa?"

The woman nodded.

"What are you doing outside without a burqa? You could get in a lot of trouble for that."

The woman just shook her head.

Parvana had an idea. "Here's what we'll do. I'll go home and borrow Mrs. Weera's burqa and bring it back to you. Then we'll go back to my place together. All right?" (Ellis, 2000: 145)

When Parvana meets the woman, she tries to offer some helps to her. She offers her to come to her place. She believes that Mrs. Weera who is in her home can help her. When Parvana know that the woman does not wear the *burqa*, she initiates to create an idea to bring her safe to her place. She will go home first to get Mrs. Weera's *burqa* and she will come back to the place to pick her up. Hence, they will go to Parvana's home together.

Parvana knows that it is dangerous to let woman being outside in the place which is ruled by the Taliban. Moreover, the woman does not wear *burqa* or chador. It is more dangerous for her. Parvana has seen a lot of women being punished, kidnapped or beaten. She does not want these things happen to the other girl or women. Therefore, she expresses her sympathy by giving some tangible helps to the woman including

bringing her into her house and taking care of her well. Since she should hide her from the Taliban soldiers, Parvana struggles to save the woman with some big efforts. It is not an easy matter but Parvana manages well to do it.

C. Significant Meanings of Parvana's Struggles in Taliban Society

1. Boosting Her Self-Esteem

Parvana's struggles against the rules of the Taliban which restrict women to take an action based on their own consent can give significant meaning to all female children in Taliban society. First, Parvana's struggles against gender inequality can boost her self-esteem. It is represented by her expression when she wants to save her family in Mazar. "We'll find them," Parvana said with complete confidence. "We'll find them and bring them home" (Ellis, 2000: 160). It implies that Parvana has a strong feeling of confidence that she and her father can meet her family in Mazar. She also feels so sure that they will succeed in taking them back in their home safely. Parvana's struggles to be the breadwinner of her family and the one who optimizes her attempt to save as well as encourage her family create a strong bond among her family. Therefore, Parvana is highly confident that she is able to save her family and bring them back to their home. By saying such a thing, it means that she is ready to bear all of the consequences and risks that she will get in her attempt to save her family.

2. Improving a Sense of Pride on Herself

Parvana's struggles against gender inequality in Taliban society do not only boost her self-esteem or confidence but they also

Parvana's Struggles against (Endah Ratnasari) 11
improve her pride. Parvana's struggles can motivate female children in Taliban society that they should acknowledge their capability in accomplishing something that they have done. Parvana's improved feeling of pride can be portrayed by this datum:

Parvana left the shop with rice and tea, feeling very proud of herself.

"I can do this!" she whispered.

Onions were cheap at the vegetable stand. She bought a few.

"Look what I got!" Parvana exclaimed, as she burst through the door of her home. "I did it! I did the shopping, and nobody bothered me." (Ellis, 2000: 71)

It shows how Parvana feels so proud of herself because she has managed to buy rice and tea. She struggles to buy foods for her family. She goes out of her house and she should deal with the Taliban soldiers' threat outside. Finally, she succeeds in doing these. She is so excited to show her family what she has bought. She also shows off that no one annoys her in the market. Therefore, she is extremely proud of her own effort.

3. Arousing a Feeling of Satisfaction of Her Efforts

Besides boosting Parvana's self-esteem and improving Parvana's pride on herself, Parvana's struggles can give other significant meaning, that is, arousing a feeling of satisfaction of her efforts. Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness of something that has been done. It does not come to the extent of acknowledging someone's capability. Yet, it is only happiness feeling because something has been achieved. Parvana's satisfaction is represented by this datum:

It was good to make a sale, to have more money to stuff away in the little pocket in the side of her shirt. It felt so good that she

almost felt no regret as she watched the vibrant red cloth flutter in the breeze as it was carried away into the crowded labyrinth of the market, never to be seen again. (Ellis, 2000:81)

It shows that Parvana is satisfied to what she has done in the market. She is happy because she is able to sell something. She is also happy to earn money from her selling activity. Parvana has done big effort in selling the *shalwar kameez* that her mother asks to sell. She manages to get the money and she thinks that it is a good thing to sell something and have money from it.

D. Discussions

It becomes common perception in the society that someone who is strong and qualified to be the heroes are always men while women are always portrayed as the victims that needs so much help from men. It is due to the idea that such a perception is habituated even from childhood. Most children's literature put males as a central hero character. Children read the book directly or children are told by their parents about the story. Besides, they also see people around them doing the activities that add the perception of heroic quality of men.

Ellis' *The Breadwinner* is a children's literature which tries to break this perception. Parvana's struggles against gender inequality or the Taliban's rules that extremely restrict women's movement show some qualities that female children actually have. These qualities signify that equality can be achieved by female children. The first quality is having capability in taking the decision and the real action. From Parvana's struggles, it can be seen that she is able

to take a decision as well as real action. She is able to decide what thing that she can do. She decides to disguise as a boy because she thinks that her family need her and the only thing she can do to help them is disguising as a boy. Even though her family gives her an option about the disguise, finally she chooses to do that considering it will be beneficial for their family (Ellis, 2000: 65-66). She is also able to do a real action to earn money by becoming a letter reader, seller, and bones digger. She takes real action to go to the jail to save her father. She protects the other woman by bringing her home. These actions are the proofs that Parvana is capable in taking the decision and the real actions.

The second quality is becoming independent child. Parvana struggles independently without any helps from other people. Everyday, she goes to the market and does her activities alone. Even though she has a friend, Shauzia, in the market, it does not mean that she is dependent on her. Both of them work independently. Yet, they are together in working. She uses her own effort in selling the cigarette, digging up the bones and reading the letters. She even becomes the one whom everyone depends on. Her family cannot go outside, so they get the food and other needs from Parvana. Her family can go outside only if they are escorted by her. It shows that she is independent to do many activities unlike her other family's members.

The third quality is becoming brave and confident child. Parvana's happens to be a child who is afraid to even show her face in front of the Taliban soldiers. Her struggles make her gain her bravery. She is confident and brave enough to yell at the Taliban soldiers in order to save her.

She even confidently stay by herself in Kabul to wait for her father to come back to her home while the rest of her family go to Mazar. Furthermore, she is not afraid to go to Mazar to save her family.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing Deborah Ellis' *The Breadwinner* based on feminism and children's empowerment theories, the conclusions that can be drawn are explained below.

1. The regulations of Taliban group which extremely limit women's actions are certainly harmful to women generally and female children especially. There are three harms that gender inequality put on female children in Taliban society. The first harm is fear and lack of confidence. The Taliban's hard punishment to the women and female children who disobey the rule make them afraid and less confident in taking the decision and some actions. The second harm is desperation and unwillingness to struggle. Female children in Taliban society mostly are unable to see a better future for them. There is no chance for female women to do an action since the Taliban highly restrict their movements. Furthermore, the restriction causes them to have unwillingness to struggle. The third harm is dependency. Gender inequality has put men in the higher hierarchy rather than women and female children. Therefore, in order to survive, the only thing they can do is depending on men to get them their daily needs.
2. Parvana does some struggles to make her family and other people survive in Taliban

Parvana's Struggles against (Endah Ratnasari) 13 society. Firstly, she disguises as a boy to become a breadwinner and fulfill other needs of the family. Secondly, she optimizes her attempts to save her family. Thirdly, she encourages her family. Lastly, she helps other women to survive. Under the Taliban rule, these jobs are supposed to be done by only men. Yet, Parvana is the one who is considered to be able to replace her father's responsibility. Therefore, in her disguise as a boy, she does some struggles against gender inequality in Taliban society. She struggles against the rules of the Taliban that limit women's movements.

3. Parvana's struggles also create several significant meanings that can be noted. Firstly, her struggles can boost her self-esteem. Secondly, her struggles can improve a sense of pride on herself. Thirdly, her struggles also can arouse a feeling of satisfaction of her efforts.

In conclusion, Parvana's struggles show that living in the restricted Taliban society does not weaken female children. As female children in other society, they are capable of taking the decision and the real actions to run their life. They are also independent, brave and confident. These qualities prove that female children are equally worthy and capable to male children and male adults.

REFERENCES

Cook, Joan Littlefield and Greg Cook. 2005. *Child Development Principles and Perspective*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Cuddon, J. A.. 1999. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Clays Ltd.

Ellis, Deborah. 2000. *The Breadwinner*. Canada: Groundwood Books/ House of Anansi Press.

Gamble, Sarah et all. 2006. *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. New York: Routledge.

Hooks, Bell. 2009. *Feminism Is for Everybody*. Canada: South End Press.

Parvana's Struggles against (Endah Ratnasari)

Lord, John and Peggy Hutchison. 1993. "The Process of Empowerment: Implications for Theory and Practice". *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 12:1, pp 5-22.

Lukens, Rebecca J. 1999. *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature (Sixth Edition)*. New York: Longman.

Meade, Teresa A. and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks et all. 2004. *A Companion to Gender History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Nodelman, Perry. 2008. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Vanderstoep, Scott W and Deidre D. Johnston. 2009. United Kingdom. *Research Methods for Everyday Life*. San Fransisco: Jossey Bass Wiley.