

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology. It contains research design, data source, data collection and data analysis, data presentation, and a summary of the novel.

3.1. Research Design

This research is qualitative in nature in which the data are in the form of words and it does not use any numerical data. Wyse (2011) states that qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. In this research, the exploratory nature deals with an inquiry into how women are subordinated in *Wither* in the above mentioned structures.

Meanwhile, in answering the research question, the research uses textual analysis to describe and interpret the portrayal of women's subordination in the novel. According to Mckee (2003), textual analysis is a way to gather and analyze information in an academic research. This method uses intuitive interpretation, which is based on the reader's sensitivity in responding correctly to a text (Mckee, 2003). In helping to understand the meanings behind the portrayal, Juliet Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory is used in the study.

3.2. Data Source

The data sources of this research were taken from the events in the novel entitled *Wither* written by Lauren DeStefano. This novel is actually the first book of *The Chemical Garden Trilogy*. The trilogy is a post-apocalyptic dystopia series which tells about the destruction of the world after the World War III. The only continent left after the war is North America, with a worrisome living condition. Human life in the countries is threatened by a genetic virus, which causes a limited age of men to 25

years and women up to 20 years. Women's subordination is not the main topic of this novel, but it is one of the forms of the world's destruction. *Wither* (2011) is chosen to be analyzed because women's subordination in the trilogy starts here. Thus, compared to the other two books, namely *Fever* (2013) and *Sever* (2013), women's subordination appears in the first novel the most.

Wither consists of 27 chapters. The data of this study are related to events that represent women's subordination. The portrayal of women's subordination was analyzed using Juliet Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory and by analyzing literary elements proposed by Roberts and Jacobs (2004). Mitchell (1966) analyzes women's subordination in four different fields: production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization. Meanwhile, Roberts and Jacobs (2004) discuss in their book *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing* five main elements in literature: plot, character and characterization, structure, theme, and the writer's tools, which include narration, style, point of view, setting, dialogue, tone and irony, and symbolism and allegory.

3.3. Data Collection

The data of this research are in the form of sentences quoted from a novel entitled *Wither* (2011) written by Lauren DeStefano. There are several steps in collecting the data. The very first step was doing a close reading of the novel. Close reading is a reading activity to gain as much information as possible from the novel including the data for the research itself. During the close reading, sentences regarding the portrayal of women's subordination were underlined. Women's subordination here refers to the situation where women are controlled by men and they cannot decide what to do with their lives. The underlined data included the actions done by men and women. Men's actions taken from the novel comprised the act of controlling women as to how women should behave, forcing and committing physical violence against women, as well as determining which places women belong to and areas women can visit in their own homes. Women's actions, on the other hand, included the act of

accepting what men do to them, obeying the rules made by men, and fearing the consequences if they do not obey men. However, sometimes women also refuse to do what is ordered and they even try to run away.

Subsequently, the actions were written down– and put into a table for further analysis. The data were then categorized into different events which show what happens in the novel. Since similar events sometimes happen several times in the novel, then those similar events were included in one title of event (see table 3.1). Therefore, one event can reveal several textual evidences. For example, these two textual evidences, which are “Our hips are measured to determine strength, our lips pried apart so the men can judge our health by our teeth,” (p.2) and “Will I become a murdered reject? Sold into prostitution? These things have happened. There’s only one other option. I could become a bride” (p. 2) can be classified into one event, which is “Women are kidnapped and selected by the Gatherers to find the most suitable one to be brides.” The classification is based on the similarity of what has happened in the textual evidences.

3.4. Data Analysis

Given that the novel presents women’s subordination in which women are unable to achieve equal job positions and opportunities as men, drawing on the theory of Juliet Mitchell’s socialist feminism is seen as the most appropriate framework in analyzing the novel. There are four social structures analyzed in this research: (1) production, (2) reproduction, (3) sexuality, and (4) socialization (see 2.3). Considering that the subordination is portrayed through literary elements, this research therefore also analyzes Roberts and Jacobs’ (2004) elements of a novel (plot, character and characterization, structure, idea, narration, style, point of view, setting, dialogue, tone and irony, symbolism and allegory).

3.5. Data Presentation

The collected data are presented in the form of a table consisting of five columns: ‘event’, ‘textual evidence’, ‘literary element’, ‘social structure’, and ‘analysis’. ‘Event’ shows what is happening in the chosen data. The event is supported by ‘textual evidence’ which is taken from the novel. Furthermore, ‘literary element’ in the textual evidence is observed in order to reveal what element is used to portray women’s subordination.

The next column is ‘social structure’ which presents the structure where the subordination of women takes place. Drawing on Juliet Mitchell’s socialist feminist theory, there are four different social structures: production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization (see 2.3). The last column is ‘analysis’, which presents the analysis of the particular events being highlighted and how it portrays women’s subordination in the novel.

Below are some examples of the collected data:

Event	Textual evidence	Literary Element(s)	Social Structure(s)	Analysis
Women are kidnapped and selected by the Gatherers to find the most suitable one to be brides.	<p>“Our hips are measured to determine strength, our lips pried apart so the men can judge our health by our teeth.” (p.2)</p> <p>“... Will I become a murdered reject? Sold into prostitution? These things have happened. There’s only one other option. I could become a bride.” (p. 2)</p>	Narration; Plot	Sexuality	<p>Women are kidnapped and forced to be polygamous bride. This indicates that they are controlled by men in terms of sexuality. Furthermore, women are referred as sexual object. As seen from the evidence, women are treated as if they are object. Women’s sensitive organs such as hips, lips and teeth are examined by the <i>Gatherers</i>, indicating how men subordinate women in this event.</p> <p>Moreover, women’s subordination is also seen from the utterance ‘there’s only one other option. I could become a bride’. These indicate that women are powerless so that they cannot refuse the coercion to become a bride. Their powerlessness</p>

then causes them to be subordinated. Additionally the word 'swept' in the last evidence also strengthen that men treat women as an object.

Table 3.1 An Example of Analysis of the Portrayal of Women's Subordination

Women's subordination, as shown in table 3.1, is portrayed as occurring in the sexuality sector, where women are kidnapped to further be sold either to a rich man or a brothel if they do not pass the test. The test here is done to select the most suitable woman to be the bride. The suitable bride is selected by considering the capability of women's bodies to produce a baby. Women's sensitive body parts, such as hips, lips, and teeth, are observed by the *Gatherers* during the test. This indicates that women are treated as objects because the *Gatherers*, who are men, do not care about women's right to refuse their bodies to be touched carelessly by strangers.

The event starts when the main character, Rhine, is kidnapped by the *Gatherers* – men who earn money from kidnapping and selling young girls – then she is locked up in a van with tons of other young girls she does not know. Before the girls meet rich men, the *Gatherers* will make them undergo a medical test to see if the girls' bodies are capable of producing a baby. Further, the girls who pass the medical test will be presented to rich men to be selected and married. On the other hand, those who do not qualify the test will be sold to a district of prostitution. In addition, the subordination includes the practice of polygamy. The kidnapped young women marry as a polygamous bride, which means they are not the only bride married to a man. In this case, Rhine marries a rich man along with two other brides. Mitchell (1966) argues that polygamy is a form of women's oppression as well as a humiliation to women's autonomy. The practice of polygamy further results in men's domination (Mitchell, 1966).

As has been stated in the previous paragraph, the subordination is seen from the plot. In addition to plot, women's subordination is also portrayed through narrative perspective. The subordination is portrayed through Rhine's narration of the

story. The portrayal uses first person point of view or internal narrator, which means the narrator is a character in the novel (Klarer, 2004).

3.6. A Brief Summary of *Wither*

After the world war III, North America was the only remaining state. In the midst of the destruction of the world, a virus arose from the failure of a genetic experiment causing man's age to reach only 25 years and woman's age for only 20 years. Rhine, a sixteen-year-old girl, was kidnapped by the Gatherer (men) to be married to a rich man. Mass abduction was done by the gatherer in order to gather young women who were suitable to be brides and to produce children. The ultimate goal of this activity was to save human from extinction.

Rhine was married to a young man named Linden, together with two other brides. However, she did not want to spend four years of her remaining life confined with a husband she did not know at all. She wanted to be free, so along with Gabriel, a servant in Linden's house, Rhine made up a plan to escape. On the other hand, Linden's sincerity in facing the rebellion of Rhine had melted her heart a little. However, she still denied that her heart had sympathized with Linden and continued her plan to escape.

3.7. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explained the methodology adopted in the research. It includes the research question, purpose of the research, data source and context, research procedure, data collection and analysis and data presentation. Further elaboration of the data is provided in the next chapter. The analysis follows the procedure that has been mentioned in this chapter.