

**FEMALE VIOLENCE REFLECTED AT NAWAL EL SAADAWI'S
WOMEN AT POINT ZERO (1983):
A FEMINIST APPROACH**

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Abstract

The major problem of this study is how Female violence is reflected at Nawal E Saadawi *Women at Point Zero* (1983): A feminist Approach. The objective of this study is to analyze the novel based on the based on Femae violence uses feminist approach. The researcher uses descriptive qualitative research. The data of the research consists of primary data and secondary data. The primary data of the research is the *Women at Point Zero* novel and the secondary data of the research are other materials related of the study. The result to the study shows the following conclusion. Based on feminist approach, it shows that *Women at Point Zero* novel illustrates a Firdaus how a woman is able patriarchal culture, Firdaus as prostitution get oppression and violence, in the society. It is based on the reality in daily long-life story that women as Firdaus. In this reality this condition women in Mubarak Era, a women feels condition and situation patriarchal culture in Egypt

Keyword: *female violence, Firdaus, women at point zero, feminist approach*

A. INTRODUCTION

Women at Point Zero is a novel by Nawal El Saadawi and he was published in 1983. The book was first published in London. It was the at major work of fiction to be produced by Nawal El Sadawi and translater by Sherif hitata. This novel is an Initially, Egyptian publishers rejected the book and the first edition was published in Lebanon in 1985. *Woman at Point Zero* has subsequently been published in twenty-two languages. The English language translation was originally published in 1983 by Zed Books Ltd. in London and Room 400 in New York.

She began research on neurosis in Egyptian women, during which she met a doctor at Qanatir Prison who talked to her about the inmates, including a female prisoner who had killed a man and had been sentenced to hanging. Saadawi was interested in meeting the woman and visiting the prison, and her colleague arranged for her to conduct her research at Qanatir Prison in the autumn of 1974. Saadawi visited many women in the cell block and in the mental clinic and was able to conduct twenty-one in-depth case studies for her 1976 publication, *Women*

and Neurosis in Egypt, but Firdaus remained, a woman apart. Firdaus was executed in 1974, but she left a lasting impact on Saadawi, who said she could not rest until she'd written about Firdaus' story and finished the novel in one week. Saadawi describes Firdaus as a martyr and says she admires her because, "Few people are ready to face death for a principle. Later, when Saadawi was imprisoned in Qanatir in 1981 for political offenses, she reflected that she would find herself looking for Firdaus among the prison population, unable to believe that the woman who had inspired her so much was truly dead.

The writer presents the previous study that deals with the study of this novel. There are others writers who conducted different studies of the women at point zero for their thesis. The thesis of charity Izzumi Isaka (2010) entitled the Situation of the Women in Patriarchal African society: A Study of Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by The Nile and Women at Point Zero*. Fwangyil, Gloria Ada (2012) in his thesis entitled *Cradle to Grave: an Analysis of Female Oppression in Nawal El Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero*. Priccilia Wulan Agustin (2011) in her thesis entitled *Fighting Patriarchy Woment at Point Zero by Nawal El Saadawi*. Christine Rene, in her thesis entitled *A Study on Men's Oppression and its Effect toward Firdaus which Leads to Her Search for Self Esteem in Nawal El Saadawi's Women at Point Zero*. Francesca Coin (2006) in her thesis entitled *On the Condition of the Colonized Woman: the Nervous Conditions of Firdaus in Nawal El Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero* (1983), Giunti, Firenze 2001.

The word feminist as a word gained widespread usage in the western world's in the 1890s. "It emerged at this time as a way to identity individuals who supported not merely an increased public role women but also women's right to define themselves as autonomous beings" (Mandell, 1995: 4). According to the Wood (2009: 3) feminism is defined as a movement for social, political, and economic equality of women and men. The other definition about feminism is centrally concerned with sex as an organizing principle of social life which is thoroughly saturated with power relations.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer uses a qualitative research. The steps to conduct this research are determining the type of the study, the object of the study, data and data source, technique of data collection, and technique of data analysis. The object of the study Female Violence reflected at Nawal El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero* (1983) by using Feminist Approach.

There are two data sources needed to do this research, namely: primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data sources are directed study Female Violence *Women at Point Zero* (1983) by Nawal El Saadawi. The secondary data sources are other sources related to the study, such as: website,

dictionary, some books that support the analysis. The technique of data analysis, the writer used take notes as the method of collection data in this research. The technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis.

C. FINDING and DISCUSSION

After analyzing this novel, the researcher found some research findings. The research findings will be discussed below.

1. Women's Position

The main character, Firdaus, a give up of male subordination is a symbol of a harassed and powerless woman in a society in which women have limited options. Firdaus is performance prototypes as a persecuted and lower-class female farmer image. While these descriptions point to the disturbing psychological effects and emotional injure inflicted by the different forms of male oppression represented in the text, they raise questions about the narrator's dependability as an important narrative voice because of her extremely selfish language. Her closing words on men ring with a dim pessimism: "My life means their death. My death means their life (WAPZ, p.100).

When one of his female children died, my father would eat his supper, my mother would wash his legs, and then he would go to sleep, just as he did every night. When the child that died was a boy, he would beat my mother, then have his supper and lie down to sleep (WAPZ, p.18). .

My father never went to bed without supper, no matter what happened. Sometimes when there was no food at home we would all go to bed with empty stomachs. But he world never fail to have a meal. My mother would hide his food from us at the bottom of one of the holes in the oven. He would sit eating alone while we watched him. One evening I dared to stretch out my hand to his plate, but he struck me a sharp blow over the back of my fingers (WAPZ, p.18-19).

At the first time, women's position in the society described in this novel is under man. As a child, Firdaus's uncle uses any opportunity he has to exploit. Her aunt and uncle view her as a useless burden after her graduation, and marry her off to the elderly Sheikh Mahmoud.

'Supposing she refuses'?

'Why should she refuse him?... besides she has inherited nothing, and has

no income of her own. We will never find a better husband for her than Sheikh

Mahmoud'

'Do you think Sheikh Mahmoud will welcome the idea?'

'If I speak to him I am sure he will agree. I intend to ask him for a big dowry.'

'How much?'

'A hundred pound or perhaps even two hundred if he has the money.'

'If he pays a hundred pound then Allah will indeed have been generous to us

and I would not be greedy to ask for more.'

'I will start with two hundred. You know he is a man who can argue for hours

over five millimes and kill himself over a piaster.'

'If he pays one hundred pounds that will be sufficient blessing from Allah. I will be able to pay my debt and buy some underwear as well as a dress or two for her'(WAPZ, p.37).

And then after Firdaus married with Sheikh Mahmoud, Firdaus to show that women's position still under man in advance. But Firdaus get oppression lives with Sheikh Mahmoud.

The day came when I depart from my uncle's house and live with Sheikh Mahmoud. Now I slept on a comfortable bed instead of the wooden couch. But no sooner did I stretch out my body on it to rest from the fatigue of cooking, and washing and cleaning the large house with its rooms full of furniture, than Sheikh Mahmoud would appear by my side. He was already over sixty, whereas I had not yet turned nineteen (WAPZ, p.43).

On one occasion he hit me all over with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised. So I left the house and went to my uncle. But my uncle told me that all husbands beat their wives, and my uncle's wife added that her husband often beat her. I said my uncle was a respected Sheikh, well versed in the teachings of religion, and he, therefore, could not possibly be in the habit of beating his wife. She replied that it was precisely men well versed in their religion who beat their wives. The precepts of religion permitted such punishment. A virtuous women was not supposed to complain about your husband. Her duty was perfect obedience (WAPZ, p.44).

Firdaus reflected figure in the women power stronger in this novel. But, Firdaus has a feeling that a woman was powerless. In this situation Firdaus gives a say about this not good from policemen.

At the first I could see nothing, but a moment later I glimpsed a policemen approaching in the dark. He came right up to me, caught me by the arm, and said:

‘Where are you doing?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Will you come with me?’

‘where to?’

‘To my house.’

‘No... I have no trust in men any more.’

I opened my small bag, and showed him my secondary school certificate. I told him I was looking for a job with my secondary, or even with my primary school certificate. That if I did not find something this way, I was prepared to do any work.

He said, ‘ I’ll pay you. Don’t think I want to have you for nothing. I am not a like Policemen. How much do you want?’

‘How much do you want? I don’t know.’

‘Don’t play game with me, and don’t try to haggle with me either, or I’ll take you off to the police station (WAPZ, p. 62).

2. Women’s Role

In the context of the *Women at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi creates a major Character named Firdaus as a figure a women. Living wage in men domination, women usually are limited to do the whole thing that they can. Women that’s their disabilities are unspecified not capable to full be taking and partnership role. It means that women are always associated with domestic role: their roles as daughter, wife, and mother. Women public role a women decides to work external the house they will face many form of oppression from their husband or father and from the government in that place.

Another character is Firdaus’s father. He signifies the severity of the unlimited powers men have in patriarchal societies. He is presented as an insensitive and an abused man who would do anything to wield power in the home.

In summer I would see her sitting at his feet with a thin mug in her hand as she washed his legs with cold water. When I grew a little older, my father put the mug in my hand and taught me how to wash his legs with water. (WAPZp.16)

Firdaus give injustice from Uncle. Uncle Firdaus attend classes in E Azhar, and study at a time when Firdaus was still a child and had no yet learned to read or write.

When my uncle would clamber into the train, and bit me farewell, I would cry and beg him to take witj him to Cairo. But my uncle would ask,

‘What will you do in Cairo, Firdaus?’

And I would reply: ‘I will go to El Azhar and study like you’

Then he would laugh and exxplain that El Azhar was only for men. And I would cry , and hold on to his hand, as the train started to move.but he would pull it away with a force and suddenness that made me fall flat on my face (WAPZ, p.16).

For a long time, Firdaus had qualified “self-definition” as a problem. Self expansion was an unfilled view for Firdaus. For most of her life, Firdaus had been treated as an object. She had been sexually physically abused as a kid, as a wife, and as a prostitute. Her uncle molested her and arranged her marriage. Her husband used her body as an object for his own hunger. Like a hungry man who cleans the dish, Firdaus’ body was her husband’s food. In this live with Sheikh Mahmoud, Firdaus be hard done by Sheikh Mahmoud as servant.

One day hit me with his heavy stick unti the blood ran from my nose and ears. So, I left, but this time I did not go to my uncle’s house. I walked through the streets with swollen eyes, and a bruised face, but no one paid any attention to me (WAPZ, p.45).

The behavior of Sheik Mahmoud is a pointer to the fact that any society which tries to forbid or reject women their rights ends up achieving nothing but a crowd of ills and problems that have in trouble their societies to the lowest of the low, in the form of pain and desertion on the part of women. Therefore it could be said that pain and abandonment associated with rejection is often the result of such relationships and not the happiness

that it is supposed to create for both social gathering concerned in the marriage.

Her come backs to her uncle's house hopeful to find support but when Firdaus complains, her uncle simply tells her that "all husbands beat their wives" (WAPZ, p.69) and her uncle's wife disclose to being flattened often. Her aunt tells her: "A virtuous woman is not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty is perfect obedience."(WAPZ, p.70).Firdaus cannot believe this and argues with her: "I said my uncle was a respected Sheikh, well versed in the teachings of religion, and he, therefore, could not possibly be in the habit of beating his wife."(WAPZ, p.71) However, her aunt replies ironically that it was "precisely men well versed in their religion who beat their wives. The precepts of religion permitted such punishment."(WAPZ, p.72).

3. Women's Right

Women's right is the importance of education for women. Education imparts knowledge, discernment, exposure and self esteem. El Saadawi shows how much Firdaus struggles to be educated and how as often, she was frustrated. Firdaus give injustice from Uncle. Uncle Firdaus attend classes in E Azhar, and study at a time when Firdaus was still a child and had no yet learned to read or write.

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‘What will you do in Cairo, Firdaus?’

And I would reply: ‘I will go to El Azhar and study like you’

Then he would laugh and explain that El Azhar was only for men. And I would cry , and hold on to his hand, as the train started to move. But he would pull it away with a force and suddenness that made me fall flat on my face (WAPZ, p.16).

Firdaus was not yet nineteen when she was married to Sheikh Mahmoud, an over-sixty, physically hideous man with a tumor on his lip. Her uncle arranged her marriage, and made sure that Firdaus would serve her husband dinner, cook for him, and share his bed and his familiarity. Throughout her marriage, Firdaus was often abused and punished. On many occasions her husband would hit her violently. One time he punished her for throwing away a little piece of food.

Firdaus becomes the reactive agent in a study about her in which she is rendered irrelevant and therefore her voice is silenced. Unspoken and reactive, she is leaved an object, hence allowing her uncle and his wife to make decisions for her. By deciding what Firdaus needs, even in a most personal way, her uncle, a respected sheik and his wife do not only humiliate her but also are opposed to the natural rights of individuals to be free of any form of subjugation.

One day he hit me with his heavy sticks until the blood ran from my nose and ear. So, I left, but this time I did not go to my uncle's house. I walked through the streets with swollen eyes, and a bruised face, but no one paid any attention to me. People were rushing around in buses and in cars, or on foot. It was as though they were blind, unable to see anything. The street was an endless expanse stretched out before my eyes like a sea. I was just a pebble thrown into it, battered by the waves, tossed here and there, rolling over and over to be abandoned somewhere on the shore. After some time I was worn not out by walking, so I sat down to rest on an empty chair that I suddenly came upon placed upright on the pavement (WAPZ, p. 45).

Living wage on the road was a new form of liberty for Firdaus. Lastly she could buy her own food. She could eat from a plate where no one had already eaten before. She could say no male right. But she had to make her living by promotion herself as a prostitute. The preposterous posture taken and the double moral standards of society are demonstrated in the character of government officials who patronize prostitutes. The absurdity such public figure personifies, generous nothing to people like Firdaus in terms of self-respect yet expecting something from her body is disparage. Firdaus explains how a president sends his body guard to lure her for him:

Once he offered me money, on another occasion, he threatened me with prison, on still a third; he explained to me that refusing a head of state could be looked as an insult to a great man and lead to strained relations between the two countries. He added that if I really loved my country, if I were a patriot I would go to him at once. (WAPZ, p.98).

Important personalities want prostitutes in their bed like any common pimp would do and yet a talk in dignified tone of patriotism and moral principle is used. It is made to seem as if "where national duty was

concerned, a prostitute is awarded the highest honour and murder could become an act of heroism.” (WAPZ, p.99)

Firdaus becomes a rich and successful as prostitute, she draws the wicked notice of a man who wants to exploit her work in exchange for protection. Firdaus describes her relationship to her pimp as the relationship of a slave to a master: Firdaus had to work for him for days and nights without pay. He would take her money and hold her prisoner. “You will never leave me”, he threatened her (WAPZ, p. 95). Firdaus could not conceal from him. She could not get away.

The killing of the pimp has a liberating effect on Firdaus: such violent action was Firdaus’ first action as a subject. Almost a symbolic act for Firdaus’ emancipation, such violent, oppression, subjugation action presented her freedom, and it allowed Firdaus to find her own identity.

4. Women’s Participation

In this Novel *Women at Point Zero*, this situations about the novel. Firdaus gets nature power for long-life. Firdaus has a spirits and powers. Although Firdaus loves education, she is denied access to it because it is regarded as the sole preserve of the men.

Sometimes I imagined that I would become a doctor, or an engineer, or lawyer or a judge. And one day the whole school went out on the streets to join a big demonstration against the government. Suddenly I found myself riding high up on the shoulders of the girls shouting,

‘Down with government.’

When I got back to school my voice was hoarse, my hair in disarray, and my clothes were torn in several places, but all through the night I kept imagining myself as a great leader or head of state (WAPZ, p.25).

Firdaus knows that women did not become heads of the state. She was discovered these entire rulers were man. Firdaus cannot an opportunities to work about with the government.

I knew that women did not become heads of state, but I felt that I was not like other women, nor like the other girls around me who

kept talking about love, or about men. For these were subject I never mentioned. Somehow I was not interested in the things that occupied their minds, and what seemed of importance to them struck me as being trivial (WAPZ, p.25).

I discovered that all these rulers were men. What they had in common was an avaricious and distorted personality, an never-ending appetite for money, sex and unlimited power. They were men who showed corruption on the earth, and plundered their peoples, men endowed with loud voices a capacity for persuasion, for choosing sweet words and shooting poisoned arrows. Thus, the truth about them was revealed only after their death, and as a result I discovered that history tended to repeat itself with a foolish obstinacy (WAPZ, p.27).

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I raised the knife and buried it deep in his neck, pulled it out of his neck and then thrust it deep into his chest, pulled it out of his chest and plunged it deep into his belly. I stuck the knife into almost every part of his body. I was astonished to find how easily my hand moved as I thrust the knife into his flesh, and pulled it out almost without effort (WAPZ, p. 95).

5. Female Violence

A child, uncles uses any opportunity he has to exploit her sexually. While she is manipulate dough to heat for family use, her uncle, under the guise of reading a book, rubs her thighs and gradually moves

upwards to her private part. He only stops when he hears a sound or movement and ‘I would watch them as they continue to press against my thighs with a grasping almost brutal insistence’ (WAPZ, p.13) when silence is restored to the situation.

She pronounced the last word and then immediately dropped fast sleep. My eyes remained wide open, staring into the darkness. Slowly, distant, half-forgotten images started to emerge from the night. I saw Mohammadain lying on a bed of straw under to open seller. The smell of the straw crept up my nose, and the touch of his finger moved over my body. My whole my body shuddered with a far away yet familiar pleasure arising from some unknown source, from some indefinable spot outside my being. And yet I could feel it somewhere in my body, a gentle pulsation beginning like a tender pleasure, and ending like a tender pain. Something I tried to hold on to, to touch if only for a moment, but it slipped away from me like the air, like an illusion, or a dream that floats away and is lost. I wept in my sleep as though it was something I was losing now: a loss I was experiencing for the first time and not something I had lost a long time ago (WAPZ, p.26).

This understanding is masterminded by her uncle’s wife who complains that ‘the house is too small and life is expensive. She eats twice as much as any of our children’ (WAPZ, p.35). This is in spite of Firdaus obvious importance to the house in supporting with the daily are domestic household tasks. Although she runs from the house when she overhears this plan, she returns home to be married to Sheik Mahmoud when she discovers that the society she belongs to does not have a safe haven for children who require parental be in love with, be concerned, and security, and whose human rights are violated. She later suffers physical, emotional and verbal abuse in her wedding. She is forced to marry an old man and goes throughout embarrassing experiences. After Firdaus suffers a cruel beating in the hands of Shiek Mahmoud, her husband, she runs to her uncle for support.

On one occasion he hit me all over with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised. So I left the house and went to my uncle. But my uncle told me that all husbands beat their wives, and my uncle’s wife added that her husband often beat her. I said my uncle was a respected Sheikh, well versed in the teachings of religion, and he, therefore, could not possibly be in the habit of beating his wife. She replied that it was precisely men well versed in their religion who beat their wives. The precepts of religion permitted such punishment. A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about your husband. Her duty was perfect obedience (WAPZ, p.44).

a. Prostitution

Firdaus is a famous prostitute that hates men, kings, princes and rulers, gender and class oppressors. Her parents passed away when she was a young person, and after their death she was sent to live with her protective uncle in Cairo.

After Firdaus run away to the streets from her husband's violence, she meets Bayoumi, a coffee shop owner. He initially offers to help Firdaus and shows her kindness and care. He accommodates her in his apartment and provides her crucial wants. When Firdaus expresses the wish to get a job instead of sitting at home all day, this is how she expresses her worrying experience in the hands of Bayoumi:

He jumped up and slapped me on my face... His hand was big and strong and was the heaviest slap I had ever received on my face... The next moment he hit me with his fist in the belly until I lost consciousness immediately (WAPZ, p.51).

In order to make sure that Firdaus does not run away from the house, Bayoumi locks her in the room until he returns from his coffee shop. A neighbor helps her to escape by calling a carpenter to break the door. While on the streets, she meets Sharifa Salah el Dine, an old professional prostitute, and is introduced to prostitution. In spite of being a prostitute, Firdaus is sexually abused by men from all walks of life.

Sharifa said to me one day, 'Neither Bayoumi, nor any of his cronies realized your worth, because you failed to value yourself highly enough. A man does not know a women's value, Firdaus. She is the one who determines her value. The higher you price yourself, the more he will realize what you are really worth, and be prepared to pay with the means at his disposal (WAPZ, p. 55).

She suffers this persecute daily until she decides to run away. Although Firdaus resorts to prostitution in order to free her from man's control and sexual exploitation.

Still as a prostitute, Marzouk, a pimp, pressures Firdaus. He tells her that ,every prostitute has a pimp to

protect her from other pimps, and from the police....You cannot do without protection, otherwise the profession exercised by husbands and pimps would die out... I may be obliged to threaten' (WAPZ,p.92) Firdaus.

I thought I had escaped from men but the man who came this time practiced a well known male profession. He was a pimp. I thought I could buy him off with a sum of money, the way I did with the police. But he refused the money and insisted on sharing my earnings. I went to the police only to discover that he had more connections than I. Then I had recourse to legal proceedings, I found out that the law punishes women like me, but turns a blind eye to what men do (WAPZ, p.92).

b. Sexual Harassment

After Firdaus tries to protect her without success, she agrees to share her earnings with Marzouk and he takes the larger share.

he was a dangerous pimp who controlled a number of prostitutes, and I was one of them. He had friends everywhere, and in all professions, on whom he spent his money generously. He had a doctor friend to whom he had recourse if one of the prostitutes became pregnant and needed an abortion, a friend in the police who protected him from raids, a friend in the courts who used his knowledge and position to keep him out of trouble and release any of the prostitutes who found herself in goal, so that she was not held up from earning money for too long. I realized that I was not nearly as free as I had hit her to imagined myself to be. I was nothing but a body machine working day and night so that a number of men belonging to different professions could become immensely rich at my expense. I was no longer even mistress of the house for which I had paid with my sweat (WAPZ, p.94).

Firdaus, first leaves prostitution and begin working in a company, some of the men in the company to sleep with her. The other female workers succumb to the pressures from the men in order to gain positive discrimination.

word went round that I was a honorable woman, a highly respected official, in fact the most honorable, and the most highly considered of all the female officials in the company. It was also said that none of the men had succeeded in breaking my pride and that not a single high ranking official had been able to make me bow my head, or lower my head to the ground (WAPZ, p.76).

c. Rape and Sexual Assault

In spite of the fact that Firdaus is raped and sexually exploited by Bayoumi, he also allows his friends to abuse her sexually.

He took a locking me in the flat before going out. I now slept on the floor in the other room. He would come back in the middle of the night, pull the cover away from me, slap my face, and then bear down on me with all his weight. I kept my eyes closed and abandoned my body. It lay there under him without movement, emptied of all desire, or pleasure, or even pain, feeling nothing. A dead body with no life in it at all, likes a piece of wood, or an empty sock, or a shoe. Then one night his body seemed heavier than before, and his breath smelt different, so I opened my eyes. The face above me was not Bayoumi (WAPZ, p.50).

D. Discussion

The analysis of the main character, Firdaus, a give up of male subordination is a symbol of a harassed and powerless woman in a society in which women have limited options. Women's position in the society described in this novel is under man. As a child, Firdaus's uncle uses any opportunity he has to exploit. Her aunt and uncle view her as a useless burden after her graduation, and marry her off to the elderly Sheikh Mahmoud.

And then after Firdaus married with Sheikh Mahmoud, Firdaus to show that women's position still under man in advance. But Firdaus get oppression lives with Sheikh Mahmoud.

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E. CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing *Women at Point Zero* novel, the researcher describes the folowing conclusion. Based on feminist Approach, it shows that *Women at Point Zero* novel illustrates a Firadaus how a woman is able patriarchal culture, Firdaus as prostitution and get sexual harassment in the society. It is based on the reality in daily long-life story that women as Firdaus. In this reality this condition women

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