Male- Domination in Arab Community Based On *the Tent* Novel by Miral Al Tahawi

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Abstract:

The article aims to analyze the patriarchal system especially against the female characters, and how these women resist to this patriarchal oppression in *The Tent* novel by Al Tahawi. To analyze some quotations from the novel, the researcher used feminism theory because it goes deeply to analyze the women oppression. The researcher shed a light on the oppressive against the women by patriarchal authority and how this patriarchal system wants to subject the women to these oppressive criteria. In the result of this study, the researcher resulted that the women attempt to get rid of these restrictions although the domination of the patriarchal system through education, awareness, and to become an one voice against the patriarchal community system according to Al Tahawi novel *The Tent* .The researcher conclude that women do not feel free themselves to these strict restrictions and traditions in the society unless they insist with a high voices to show their oppression by education and so on. Although this study indicated the power of the patriarchal system society even the twenty-first century.

Key words: (patriarchal oppression, Arab women, feminism, male-domination).

1-Introduction

 The researcher in this research, examines how Miral Al Tahawi's female characters suffer to find their identities or status in the male domination community. In the novel The Tent, Al Tahawi gives us the different situations of the female characters whom stand against patriarchal oppression. In Europe, the women have a liberty and voice in the European community in contrary with women in Middle East countries, particularly Arab women whom have no rights and remain silent female other. There are traditional practices of Arabic community act as the rules of behavior of that community which built assumptions such society. The Arab women in many countries did not refuse male domination according to these cultural traditions, so, they feel as a subjugated to men (Malti- Douglas, 2018). According to these assumptions, the Arab women become as victims only to the sake of the men and subjugated to the men obeying these traditions. Arab women must respect all the behaviors coming from the masculine's in the society or fight for their rights as a fellow human being. The majority of Arab women have no rights and remain silent female against

the patriarchal. In contrary, Women in the Western world have a voice and much freedom in their society. Although the Arabs are searching for a new identity within the context of the modern world, they still keep their older traditions and values. Their behaviors give the impression that they are primitive and brutal although prosperous people. At the same time, Arab women are considered as the "other". They are not allowed to have a voice and stay as speechless and oppressed others with no identity (Issa, 1990). The society still has a masculine mentality, although the political development and women's participation in the social and political arenas are progressing. Living in a patriarchal society where violence against women is obvious in many ways, the image of a woman come to be a typical Arab woman, as represented by the veiled woman who is cut off from social life.

 Although many women have achieved significant positions in society, their participation remains low and most of them are deprived of many rights and still fighting for their liberation (Haddad, 1994). Oppression, according to Fonseca (2016) can be translated into many visible and obvious ways such as violence and marginalization. Acts of violence are an attack on a persons' physical and mental integrity. Despite decades of intervention, violence against women is still one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations in the Arab world. Violence by adults can be against children or boys, while women are oppressed sexually and physically by men, and in some countries, they are more likely to experience all forms of sexual violence and harmful traditional practices like early and forced marriage (Kulczycki, 2011). Oppression against women often happens because of the difference in the concept of gender. Society raises men in a higher position while women are in a lower position. Men used to settle conflicts with violence since they are taught to be superior and bold (Walby, 1990) As such, it is believed that men should have control over women, and they see violent acts against women as their right to do. The community gives boys and men an advantage to be dominating. Men's use of violence against women is classified as gender-based violence or domestic violence (Hooks, 2000). Violence can happen anywhere: at home, work, or on the street. Sometimes, women may be attacked by relatives or strangers, but most often they are hurt by those close to them, such as a brother, husband, or partner. In addition to that, wife-beating and rape are some of the violence against women perpetrated by their husbands (Walby, 1990). Domestic violence is a "softer" term that ignores the power and male dominance inherent in such violence, while patriarchy refers to the power structures that socialized men's and women's lives and rooted in power hierarchies related to gender. It refers to the greater sum of power by which men dominate women (Barker, 2016).

According to Campbell (1989), violence against women includes verbal, physical, and all kinds of sexual assaults that women suffer. Joachim (2000) states that oppression against women has been stated as the main public health and a big human rights issue. The research discusses such circumstances within the context of the Arab world, especially the Egyptians whom lived in countryside. Patriarchal violence against women has different forms depending on culture, background, history, and experience, but it brings suffering and misery for women, their families, and the communities in which they settle (Kulczycki, 2011).

Al-Tahawi elaborates that the term feminism induces unpleasant reactions, even among women who may adopt such postulates. Negative associations are presented when people hear the term feminism. Such negativity was found with the term feminism from the beginning of its foundation. In fact, in England, until the 1960s at least, the reaction to this term was usually pejorative (Walters, 2005).

2-Arab Women under the patriarchal domination

Arabs women in their communities, are an important topic of discussions, and discourse for the social, political, and economic position during the second half of the twentieth century. Oppression, sexuality, and liberation of Arab women are the main issues that have been discussed against the conventional background of the patriarchal Arab society. They used to face systematic patriarchal discrimination in both laws and social customs as well as cannot occupy positions in politics and the private sector, and they are completely absent from the judiciary. They continue to face and suffer discrimination, patriarchy, and huge barriers to reach their rights. The gap between the rights of men and women has been substantial. Social norms are deeply established, combined with strict interpretations of traditional laws; continue to relegate their positions in the community. (Zuhur, 2009). In one of the early groundbreaking works on this subject, Yetiv (1979) states that the general condition of women in North Africa and Arab world is so defective. Arabs Women in their societies, are economically dependent and intellectually circumscribed and have many problems and challenges. These challenges consequently affect women's security and stability and stand as an obstacle to the humanitarian role and contribution towards her freedom and development. They are deprived of personal and social rights and freedom. They are subjected successively to the authority of their male family members and society. Discrimination against women and gender-based violence is one of these challenges. In Arab countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq, women and girls suffer domestic abuse because the traditions and laws of these countries uphold male control over women.

In 1993, the United Nations declaration defined violence against women as including physical, sexual, and psychological violence, in the family and the general community, which is perpetrated or condoned by the state and includes traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (Zuhur, 2009). Specific types of domestic violence are considered common in the Middle East, including abuse by other family members, honor-related violence against both married and unmarried women, marriage by force, or temporary marriage. Violence includes abuse of women, female genital mutilation, wife-beating, snapping, kicking, or dragging by the hair. Female children also face all kinds of sexual abuse in the household, violence perpetrated against domestic workers, and all other forms of exploitation (Kulczycki, 2011). The violence that takes place outside families, including sexual harassment and violence against girls and women in work and healthcare places is extremely prevalent in the Middle East (Berman, 2010). In addition to that, there are other forms of humiliation such as preventing women from going to work or study at schools or colleges. They are not allowed to leave the house and prevented even to visit their families or relatives.

Another form of humiliation is ignoring women, using marital rape or forcing them to do sex, using expressions of extreme jealousy, and making threats against them or their children. Furthermore, betraying them with another woman, take another wife, and divorcing them without their knowledge. All these humiliations and oppressions are legal, culturally, and socially. This oppression is normalized to women and their communities. However, all these behaviors affect women and their children psychologically. The community establishes that the man or the husband is the head of the family, and gives him the power over his wife's rights to work, travel, or take any decision. Women also have to obey her husband; this is prevalent with domestic violence which remains a significant problem (Way, 2006). Women in Arab land feel threatened and insecure in their communities. Women are less active than men in traditional activities such as political interest, discussion, voting, party, and union membership, and other activities such as demonstration, protests, and boycotts.

Although recognizing the cases of violence against women, domestic violence remains hidden in Arab societies. Many people, including victims, police, health and justice professionals, believe that the mistreatment of a wife is a normal, private, and a family affair and is never a concern, and therefore there is no intervention from the social or health care to save the victim .This trend, which justifies the abuse of women in the house and rejects the legal approach toward women-abuse as a crime, is very acceptable because it is prevalent in the social-cultural context of Arab society; because it is considered something that belongs to the privacy and reputation of the family. This might lead to the fear of revealing women-abuse as a problem that will allow legal services to break through the boundaries of the

family, thereby, ruining the family's good reputation as well as the cultural, educational, political, social, economic status of all family members.

So, family unity are important parts in Arab families, even when violence affects the life of the women of the family. This acceptance of violence is relevant to the patriarchal socio-cultural context of Arab families that stand up for male- domination and women's subordination in private as well as in the public sphere of life, as it is assumed that such as wife-beating is a duty of the husband. It is also related to the economic state of the woman and traditional marriage in which women abuse is justified (Haj Yahia, 1998). The men's role in their families is thus authoritarian, and they assume responsibility for preserving the family structure by whatever means they feel are justified, including women's oppression such as violence. Therefore, oppression of women is justified by women's misbehavior, the conditions of man's daily life, and social traditions that indicate that women are also responsible for their oppression.

3-Problem statement

The researcher has used the feminist approach to employ the issues in The Tent novel. These issues such as images of women, t lack of women's identity, oppression that the researcher mostly dealt with. On the other hand, it acts a major point to distinguish the detail of oppression against Arab women from others, as it represents a traditional stereotype in Arab community. This study studies how the Arab women lack their prestige   under the shadow of patriarchal system. The researcher highlights deeply on feminist theory to analyze the domination concept carefully in the text of *The Tent* novel. Furthermore, the Arab women in whom live in countryside suffer patriarchal oppression supported by the social silence and they have a sense of awareness of that what they are face is patriarchal oppression and seek for their rights. These includes their rights related to the education, marriage and so on that have no decision can take.

This study focuses on how the researcher highlights to discover the suffering and fighting of the women in the Arab women in the countryside against oppression and discrimination of the patriarchal society according to   Al Tahawi' s *The Tent* novel which focuses on the rural women problems under the male-domination in   patriarchal society.

4-Literature Review

Arab Women's Movements and many women's organizations appeared in all over Arab countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia to call for the freedom of women. (Sarhan & Mahmoud, 2011). As well as, Egypt is one of these countries among the Arab countries that witnessed feminist movements, Egypt was the first country women's liberation associations. As in 1984, Nile Association of Egyptians women appeared to call on the rights of

Egyptians women.

In the study "The Oppressive Oppressed in Miral Al Tahawy's and Ahdaf Soueif's Aisha" discussed the term "oppressive oppressed". Ibrahim in (2010) studied Miral Al-Tahawi novel" *The Tent* " (1996) and a collection of stories "Aisha" (1983) by the Egyptian Ahdaf Soueif. Both of the works are written in Arabic and English and reflected different social backgrounds.
 In discussing many issues of feminism, particularly in Third World women, the writers state that some women (who extent that they have shifted to perpetuating the oppression of other women. Miral Al-Tahawi's novels usually deal with Bedouin's traditional habits. In her The Tent, she portrays the mother/daughter relationship, which is a much-analyzed subject in both feminist art and theory. The character of the mother appears as a problem maker. (Gamble, 2001). In conclusion, Both Al-Tahawy's *The Tent* and Soueif's Aisha portrayed the ills of patriarchy in their society. They reveal an awareness of their own exploration of social harms caused by patriarchy (Malak, 2000). It is recognized as contradictions within our society.

Andrew in his study (2020) showed that Fatima was just a little tomboy actually, discovering as far as she was permitted, going up trees until when she wasn't permitted, and listening to the servant's songs and stories. She was lucky with her Father's affection, but her grandmother hated her and her sisters because they weren't boys and also because that Fatima was so disturbed girl.

There are comparisons in El Miniawi's study (2012), she has compared between *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *The Tent* by Miral Al Tahawy because both of them share some of the common similarities although they are from totally different backgrounds. Both writers of the two novels are women, but Al Tahawi is an Egyptian Muslim, while Walker is an African-American Christian. Their novels reveal that there are undeniable common denominators that influence the way the novelists express their experiences. *The Color Purple* and *The Tent* deal with religion, sexuality, and social taboos. Both of the novels focused on the restrictions of religion to a more expanded, accepting life and spirituality (Dodds, 2009). These steps are characterized by the indulgence in every kind of taboos. In both works, women are presented as victims of sexual oppression and exploitation. The authors show the influence of the circumstances and the change of time and place, spiritual affairs, and religion on women's causes and gender issues.

Sheetrit (2013), in her thesis, "Reterritorialization of Belonging Between Home and the Uncomely in Miral al-Tahawy's The Tent and Salman Nature's She, the Autumn, and Me" (Hiya, ana, wa-l-kharif). Analyzed the doubts about the very stability of the concepts of "homeland" and "diaspora and the distinction between the indigene and migrates. She, the Autumn, and Me is a novel written by Palestinian Israeli writer Salman Natur (1949), and

The Tent is a novel by Egyptian Bedouin Miral al-Tahawy (1968), who is considered the first Egyptian Bedouin woman to publish modern literary works. The researcher examined the texts' depiction of the homeland concept as it is seen through shades of belonging and foreignness as well as how the diaspora is presented vis-à-vis a homeland. The concept was analyzed in layered diasporic terms, yet is also integrated with the idea of home and homeland.

Also, The study "Feminist Voices of the 1990s Generation a Quest for Identity in Miral al-Tahawy's Blue Aborigine" (2017). Anishchenkov is considered *The Tent* (1996) as a New Age feminist writing of twentieth century. The study indicated the search for a new Egyptian female identity. Egyptian feminism is understood as a philosophy of plurality and internal complexity. It is a network of dynamically concerning gender discourses affected by diverse socio-ideological dominators like the women's rights movement and anti-colonial conflict.

5-Theoretical framework

The researcher will highlight on radical feminist theory to be analyzed this study. It has attempts to get   a way of criticizing male's dominance and sharing in the development of an emphasing vision of the community and the case e of women (Mackinnon, 1982). The item patriarchy is the main item that radicalism looks for combating, this term has been modified from the original meaning of "Father's Rule" by Kate Millett to describe men's dominance and authority over women. It is the imbalance of gender power for the necessities required by society. According to Mellitt (1977), the patriarchal system is maintained and sustained because society has adapted to this policy. This system exists in all institutional ideologies such as religion, education, media, state, and literature. Moreover, radical feminism stands against the belief that the women's natural role is in the home, and humans are distinguished according to biological sex, which is determined by reproductive physiology (Millett, 1977). Millet believes that the ideological structure of the patriarchal system consists of a set of ideas, explaining the social world, and leads to corruption and abuse of power around us. The dominance of the patriarchal ideology of men spreads and increases its social power in this "world by gaining the minds and emotions of people, including the Church and the family "needs and values of the dominant group...Aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue, and ineffectuality in the female" (Millett, 1977).

patriarchy as a concept will be a way to understand the domination and oppression over countryside Arab women in their constant struggle to gain their freedom and rights stolen by men. This study will reveal the process of patriarchal oppression in the postulation of Radical feminism, which states that patriarchy is the main

cause of women's oppression and domination. According to Kate Millett (1977), patriarchal oppression is practiced directly or indirectly in public or domestic life to restrict women and limit their freedom.

Radical feminism aims to move beyond the critique of male domination and oppression. It makes close relationships between the essential premises; attacking gender and hierarchy, asserting that liberal legalism reinforced the hierarchy of women's point of view. Thus, women are allowed to reveal the inherent male nature of liberation and become able to expect methods of ending gender domination (Jaggar, 1983). Thus, according to the radical feminist perspective women's collective oppression, through socially constructed gender norms that make the male dominant in all life aspects is linked to the necessity for a new solution to domination. Although men are different in class and race, they are united by dominance over women through the patriarchal system. Hartmann (1997) states that social relations amongst men have a social base that enables them to control women. In comparison to men, women have a biological weakness. The main political oppression agreed upon by all branches of the radical movement is the oppression of women. The analysis is conducted on the concept of patriarchy is applied The Tent novel by Al-Tahawi to pursue the female characters' development and how they are affected by the patriarchal system within the family and in community. Also, it is conducted to pursue the ways of resistance the female characters follow to end patriarchal oppression.

6-Male-domination in the countryside Arab Society

According to Arab context, male-domination means giving males and elders whether men or women all the rights to control and oppress others which are usually justified by kinship values (Joseph 1993). Patriarchy has not any position, system, and form in all over Arab societies just just as the other societies. (Tucker, 1993). Differently, in Europe philosophers in 18th and 19th century replaced the father with the brother figure in order to create "fraternal' patriarchy. According to Western feminists, patriarchy is defined as the power and dominance of males over females (Eisenstein, 1994). Then, women regarded as subjugated to the authority of men whether the men were males and fathers.

In Arab world, patriarchy is covered all the Arab families and the authority will be in the hand of the men, so, domination in the family will be with men. Another point of view discuses that patriarchy is the universal form of traditional community. The traditional Arab fathers` have the authority, and responsibility who able to support his authority by control over resources, land, and income generation and also by expecting respect and unquestioning compliance,' and because of the family is main unit of society so patriarchy has dominated the Arab society (Barakat, 1993).

Women's struggle against patriarchal oppression has begun in the eighteenth century, when some women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mills, and Margaret Fuller start to feel aware of the oppression they were subjected to and their stolen rights. They started to recognize the discrimination they faced in their life and begin to seek the roots of patriarchal oppression. At the beginning of the twentieth century, feminist struggle subsequently expanded after the suffragette movement to include their demands for women's right to vote (Cuddon, 1999). The radical feminist Kate Millett views that women's emancipation will be achieved only after women recognize that they are being oppressed and discriminated against. She adds that many women still do not realize that what they are exposed to is discrimination by the masculine authority in society (Millet, 1977).

Furthermore, patriarchy is independently found throughout social life, because men and elders in Arab world always possess the privileges and then justified in terms that are not related to kinship. Thus, men and seniors are considered as superior to females and younger people as professionals, administrators, religious leader's politicians, and the like, without consideration of kinship. In the Arab world, being a male primary identity is determined throughout one's life. Therefore, patriarchy is responsible for the way, treatment, and behavior of family members. The patriarchal form is tied to the concept of relational, it is a sense of self-firmed in relationships. In contrast to a self-worth" individual" in the West, both women, and men are induced to place themselves in relationships to dominate others, particularly in their families. The patriarchal system is regarded as the basic item in Arab society. The leader of the family is father who is the dominant and control everybody in the family. Fathers in Arab societies have authorities of all the family members' sons, daughters and wives. So, the fathers have responsibility in all life issues such as marriage, education, and other everything in their life. (Al-Krenawi,2000). This patriarchal structure is not found only in the family but can be witnessed in all layers of society. In rural societies, the social system determines the youngsters and the females to various spheres of life, according to the traditional rules which every society and culture follows, whilst the elders of the family and tribe keep the authorities and the power for themselves by using all the means.

7-Rural women sound in *The Tent* novel

The parental funnel and discrimination which exposed women experience in the Arab society are taken from the men as having the right to practice their oppressive authority over women. In the same time, Arab women believe about their fate that men have the authority and power to control the women. In such a society, both sexes are responsible for entrenching patriarchal oppression. The women believe that this is their fate as women and show no resistance at all. In addition to that, there are those who practice these patriarchal restrictions on their daughters and other women around them, thus becoming a masculine tool to oppress women.

Nevertheless, many other women reject oppression and discrimination and consider it violates their personal rights and courageously struggles to liberate themselves from patriarchal slavery. Al-Tahawi in *The Tent* novel introduced the heroine Fatima and her desire to break free from the slavery of the patriarchal oppression. She explains that she lived in her early years in an almost isolated female environment. She speaks in her novels about oppressed women and men who have been established the concept of inferiority in their minds and have played the patriarchal masculine role in oppressing other women. She also discovered Fatima's feminist voice to get rid of the patriarchal l oppression and her voice against the policy of discrimination, marginalization, and violence that Al-Tahawi has taken from her real life and experience.

All the female characters portrayed by Al-Tahawi are taken from her real life and experience based on her patriarchal environment. In *The Tent*, Al-Tahawi described Fatima, the little girl of Miral-Al Tahawi, lived in an environment full of women, looking to see what is beyond this isolated world. The protagonist, Fatima, deals with her sense of isolation, confinement, alienation and helplessness by living in an imaginary world and by climbing trees and hiding in wells for seeing behind the fences of her father's house, and pays the price of such attempts eventually. *The Tent* is Al-Tahawi's first novel, was broadly praised when it was published in Arabic and English in 2000. Then, it has been translated to other different languages such as French and Spanish.

8-Finding and Results

In the researcher's point of view, education helps to raise women's awareness that they are exploited by masculine authority, as well as allow them to recognize their legal rights. Education has the goal of fighting gender discrimination and helps women fight against patriarchal oppression and discrimination. They also can, through education, challenge patriarchal systems that oppress their rights. According to the opinion of some critics and writers the women's solidarity has always been a taboo and forbidden in patriarchal systems, while men have the right to meet and share opinions and events and exchange opinions and decisions.

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So, education is very necessary for women to increase awareness standing against the oppression coming from the restrictions of society and members, such as discrimination, marginalization, violence, etc. Throughout education women find their rights as an equal with men, to study, to work, to show their opinions, and to choose their partner. In addition, women's willingness to exchange their experiences and problems raise the awareness of their rights and strengthen them to challenge patriarchal oppression. According to Feminism theory, the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression and discrimination comes through awareness-raising, women's solidarity, and education. Whenever women become aware that they are oppressed and that their rights are robbed under the institution of patriarchy, they will take a step towards liberation.

Conclusion

This current research has been showed the suffering of Arab women from patriarchal system related with The Tent novel (1996) by Miral Al- Tahawi. It portrays the basic issues of the Arab women particularly the social restrictions and pressures that they face in their society. The novelist depicted how the Arab women subjugated to the conventions of the society and seem as an obedient in respecting although she didn't agree with this patriarchal system. The researcher showed the violence and oppression against women in the Arab society. this study conducted on the where women who are regarded as the "other" in Arab society especially in countryside area according to the opinion of the novelist in The Tent novel. It mentioned the Radical Feminism theory for dealing with patriarchy as the main cause of women's oppression. This study refers to women education and awareness considering it as a main reason to free themselves of patriarchal restrictions. Also it proposes that women's independence and knowledge of patriarchal oppression and equality are the basis by which women can overcome patriarchy. The researcher introduces the female figures in *The Tent* in related the radical concept of Kate Millet of the patriarchal system and patriarchal oppression. Through female characters in the novel The Tent, Fatima is an example of the oppressed Bedouin girl who receives several types of persecution and oppression, starting with her mistreatment as a female, preventing her from going out, mixing with others, playing outside the house because this is an offense to the Bedouin family, and preventing her from her right to education. This comes from a patriarchal policy to exclude women from everything that makes them able to understand their rights and make them aware of the oppression and deprivation they are exposed to. In the same time, the researcher showed how the women in countryside areas all over the Arab world prevents to make her decision to marry such as Safia, Fatima's older sister. Furthermore, Fatima is the result of the strict patriarchal values that make her stupid and incomplete and worthless. She has no right to learn or education with her lack of identity and then she discovers its identity the other side of the world and recognizes the value and magnitude of the oppression and injustice she has suffered and that has stolen her freedom and dignity. In addition to that Nada begins to

search for her identity and despite the fact that she has repeatedly tried rebellion and disobedience as a form of rejection of the patriarchal oppression directed at her. It is worth noting that, woman possesses all the elements of strength and liberation if she has the opportunity to learn and take her correct role in society.

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