

**Research Article**

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Resistance Toward Subordination of Women in  
*The Breadwinner* Novel by Deborah Ellis: A Feminist Study

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**Abstract**

This research aimed to discover the resistance and the subordination forms. The method used is a descriptive qualitative research method and feminism approach applied specifically Simone de Beauvoir's notions of The Otherness in The Second Sex book. The data was gathered through attentive reading and observation of the narration, mono-dialogue, and characters' actions in *The Breadwinner* novel by Deborah Ellis. Furthermore, the writers determined that women have a difficult access to work as a result of discrimination and exploitation, married women are required to be completely subservient to their husbands, unequal education opportunities, parents expect a son over a daughter, and women unable to participate in social-political activities. Also, on Beauvoir ideas of resistance toward The Otherness such as women can work, become intellectuals, contribute to a socialist revolution, and women can transcend their limitations by refusing to internalize their otherness or to identify themselves through the dominant group's eyes. Yet, this finding can be concluded that women still faced severe discrimination, oppression, exploitation, and inequality to gain their freedom, yet women still resisted the oppression in society. Moreover, suggestion for further research the researchers can use this research to collect related information for further study, also expected able to develop feminist analysis.

**Keywords:** Resistance; subordination, feminism

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**1. Introduction**

Modern division of labour has weakened some freedoms, notably for women. In patriarchal culture, women face discrimination by male domination, known as female inferiority. Women are working hard in today's world to break out from the shell of their submissive status. They tried to break stereotypes, speak up for themselves, and strive for equal rights. They have achieved their position via centuries of struggle and numerous waves of feminism. Still, sexual orientation and place of residence inequality and injustice must be seen as extending beyond gender if women are to oppose male subordination. Not just boasting, the Taliban agreed to the prior statement.

The Taliban, who has ruled Afghanistan since the 1970s, have succeeded in subduing women there. In Afghanistan, significant problems emerged after they dictated to the state, including gender inequality, lack of educational opportunities for girls, insufficient independence and mobility for girls, unwanted sexual attention in the workplace, lack of inheritance or property rights for women, and male ownership of a female body proven by (Roshan, 2019) Social

injustice—socioeconomic reliance on men, illiteracy, poverty, and being stoned to death—disempowered Afghan women during this time. Women were barred from working, educated, and required to wear hijab also banned from using cosmetics, laughing out loud in public, wearing high heels, and many more.

Afghanistan and Indonesia showed differences in the manner they treat their people. Afghanistan with Taliban regime rules, while Indonesia has Pancasila and Undang - Undang Dasar 1955, which guarantees equal rights by doing democracy for the Indonesian people. Haken et al (2022) in the Fund for Peace (FFP) Fragile States Index 2022 – Annual Report stating that Afghanistan, South Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria are the most fragile and racist countries in danger of collapsing said that the country's massive protests were one factor that made the country collapse. According to (Hayeri, 2022) in Amnesty International news, five out of 12 women who objected after the Taliban took over were illegally arrested, detained, disappeared, tortured, and poorly treated. Although the movement for women's rights, Feminism has developed, inequality still exists and is accurate.

Yet there are still some discriminations that only change the form of the discrimination. For example, working women are labelled as people who avoid their obligations as housewives. One of

the best voices regarding the inequality of rights in Afghanistan is voicing it through writing and disseminating it to the general public. Deborah Ellis believes spreading information should be done in a literary work that anyone can read. Therefore, Ellis wrote the events in Afghanistan through the novel *The Breadwinner* and labelled it for all ages. She also seeks the best background to the story then she goes to the best conflict Afghanistan had, when the Taliban interfered with Afghanistan's political agenda.

The government's capture by the Taliban regime precipitated the outbreak of war and continues to haunt Afghanistan persistently. The war's death toll can also be measured as who fought back in response to what transpired. The story is wrapped around problems between women and the Taliban, where Nurullah (Parvana's father), the family's breadwinner, is suddenly detained by the Taliban. The family life becomes difficult because there is no male figure in the family, which means there is no supply to support their lives. After all, only men can leave the house to work or buy men's

necessities. Even if women leave their homes, they must be escorted by men. In light of this, the writers entitled, *Resistance Toward Subordination of Women in The Breadwinner Novel by Deborah*

Ellis: A Feminist Study, in order to assist other women in obtaining their own independence or learning about a “new” society.

## **2. Methods**

This research aimed at identifying subordination and women's resistance towards men in Afghanistan, which is shown in *The Breadwinner* novel by Deborah Ellis. The research used qualitative methodology refers to research techniques that generate descriptive information, such as people's own spoken or written expressions and observable behavior (Taylor et al., 2015). Furthermore, Creswell's (2014) research procedure involves three steps: preparation, implementation, and finishing. The first step involves choosing a novel and understanding the topic, finding relevant theories, and creating a title. Once approved, the writers begin writing the paper with the help of an appointed advisor. The second step involves reading references to examine theoretical data collection, focusing on the central issue, scope, and research objective. The writers develop theories based on the

storyline, examining issues like feminism and subordination. The study is guided by advisors, and the final step involves applying relevant theories to examine data and presenting the research results.

Data analysis is a crucial aspect of qualitative research, as emphasized by (Creswell, 2014). It involves setting boundaries, collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations, interviews, documents, and visual materials, and establishing a protocol for recording information. In this study, the data collection technique involves thoroughly reading *The Breadwinner* novel, focusing on the subject matter of inferiorities and resistances of women. The writers then gather all relevant data, using Simone de Beauvoir's idea of Otherness in *The Second Sex Book* and references from other sources. The collected data is then sorted and reframed according to the required categories for the study.

The data analysis technique involves carefully reading the text, word by word and paragraph by paragraph, and segregating the data into two categories: forms of subordination and resistances that women exhibit due to injustices. The writers analyze each data using feminist principles of subordination and resistance, referencing other books that align with these concepts. The writers then provide a summary of the findings in the paragraph.

### **3. Results**

This section discussed *The Breadwinner's* women's resistance and obedience. Information was taken from the novel's narrator and dialogue. After a thorough reading of the text, the writers must use the previously outlined themes to show that women's rights to live in the community have been brutally violated. Thus, the writers must determine if the analysis may address Afghan women's difficulties in the novel. In other words, it will affect research credibility. The writers had collected data for the study and found many talks, narrations, monologues, and dialogues within a datum to analyze.

The data compiled supported by Simone de Beauvoir's theories regarding existentialism and women's subordination identifies the most prevalent problems women encountered with subordination forms in the narrative and the manner, in which women resisted it.

#### *3.1. Subordination Forms*

Subordination itself adopted form the word of 'subordinate' as cited in Longman Dictionary and Merriam Webster, highlights the concept of subordination as a less important position than someone else. Furthermore, (Simons, 2013) Beauvoir echoes this view, arguing that women's existence is accidental and fortunate, despite the oppression they face. Both sources emphasize the complex series of oppression, including sexism, racism, slavery, and class oppression, which contribute to the subordination of women in society.

##### **3.1.1. Women were unable to labour due to discrimination and exploitation**

Throughout the course of human history, women have faced a variety of obstacles, including discrimination and exploitation, that have made it more difficult for them to engage in the labour. As time went on, women found themselves increasingly limited to the traditional responsibilities that were expected of them within the house. As cited by (Beauvoir, 1989) which critique this discrimination, prejudice and exploitation included males forcing women to perform obligations at home, seeing women as weak, paying them less for equal labour, and monopolizing them inside workplaces. In addition, men forced women to perform domestic duties, and lack of provision women worker got

##### **3.1.2. Married women must be completely subservient to their husbands**

Women were seen as servants in work and motherhood rather than associates with objects, values, and beings this can be proven in the book which several times criticize by (Beauvoir, 1989) regarding further quotation “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Married women were once considered subservient to their husbands, a sign of respect and powerlessness. This belief, based on Beauvoir (1989) ideas, denied women access to masculine positions and stripped them of civil rights. Beauvoir (1989) expresses concern about the rise of the wronged maternity concept in society, arguing that it enslaves women to men and the home. It forces them back into the interior of this system that feminists want to destroy. Unmarried women were placed under their fathers' guardianship, and their property and offspring were subject to their husband's authority. The spouse was entrusted with his wife's debts and behaviour, and she rarely interacted with public authorities or individuals outside her closest circle of relatives. In both work and maternity, women were frequently relegated to subservient roles, with the objects, values, and beings they created belonging to the family and ultimately to the male who ruled it.

### 3.1.3. Women were unable to get involved in any social-political activities

Women have historically been denied domestic liberties due to their lack of political influence, leading to a subordination form where they have no rights, whether public or private. These subordination forms have muddled distinctions between sovereignty, property, public and private rights, and have resulted in women's limited participation in political-social activities this type of characteristic is that women have no rights, whether public or private rights; women can get involved in a political movement, women can only play a social role when their husbands dead, and they had good positions in the past; women can replace him, and also, women have no right to vote.

### 3.1.4. Women did not receive an education on par with men

Anti-feminist create a distance between men and women in which females are prohibited from participating in sports such as scuffles and mountaineering and must rely on passive exercise. Women are subjected to harsh slavery, are denied equal educational chances, are frequently restricted women who are unable to gain an education in order to preserve their elegance, and women can have a small amount of education for the only goal of assisting their spouse; nevertheless; women did not have an education for the purpose of protecting themselves.

### 3.1.5. Patriarchy caused both parents to favour a son over a daughter

Women have faced significant subjugation and discrimination due to patriarchal control, which favors men over girls. Either individual parents or society as a whole has a preference towards having men rather than daughters in terms of the number of children they have. The obvious signs of social hierarchy, which enable boys to express their authority more than girls, and one other reason that boys are able to overcome patriarchal oppression with the assistance of society than girls.

Hence, the ‘other’ criticizes and concerns the potential of living as a woman in this patriarchy society where women are treated very inhumanely. This refers to women's rights lost due to oppression toward women in education, participation in politics and expressing opinions, the concept of maternity, work, and homework, as well as violence which is not the least in demanding their freedom. Indeed, the ideologies which soar across society and culture which places took a massive part in subordinating women and women's rights.

## 3.2. Resistances toward the subordination of women

A woman can construct her identity, according to Beauvoir, because there is no essence of enduring femininity that prescribes a predetermined identity (Tong, 2014). Nevertheless, (Beauvoir, 1989) society's waning patriarchy is the only thing preventing women from self-creation. A woman, like a man, is a subject and not an object; she, like a man, is not a being-in-itself. It is time for both women and men to recognize that a woman, like a man, is an independent being. There are no easy ways for a woman to escape what Beauvoir referred to repeatedly as woman's immanence — the limitations, definitions, and roles that society, etiquette, and men have imposed on themselves. To stop being the second sex, the other, a woman must overcome the forces of circumstance; woman must have the same amount of influence and control as a male.

### 3.2.1. Women can labour

Women who work on the patriarchal period was repressed and exploited, especially in women who worked in two places in one day, half a day in an office or factory and half at home. Like other men, women can regain their identity. Tong (2014) Beauvoir stated that women could get over the patriarchal rules in an unequal society by resisting them gallantly though there is no easy way for women to escape. Women must overcome the force of circumstances by going out publicly for work.

### 3.2.2. Women can become intellectuals, the vanguard of women's progress

Intellectual activity is an activity in someone who thinks, sees, and states as an active person. Thus is another way for women to resist the patriarchal values surrounding them: by educating themselves as much as possible. According to (Tong, 2014), intellectual activity involves thinking, observing, and defining rather than passively observing, thinking about, and defining. Beauvoir advocated that women read the works of female authors and philosophers, such as other female authors and intellectuals, who took their art seriously and investigated intricate topics to convey their ideas via their writing.

### 3.2.3. Women can contribute to a socialist revolution in society

Becoming revolutionary is one way that women may fight back against the inequality that is inherent in patriarchal societies (Tong, 2014). Women strive to break free from patriarchal societies, recognizing the unavoidable constraints on their identity. Economic autonomy is crucial for gender equality, and women must create a society that provides emotional and financial support to help them reach their full potential.

### 3.2.4. Women can transcend their limitations by refusing to internalize their otherness or to identify themselves through the dominant group's eyes

Beauvoir's final resistance against subordination involves rejecting the notion of being seen as the "Other." Women can resist these oppressive forces by actively participating as a subject in society. As cited in (Tong, 2014), Beauvoir suggests that for women to truly become a person in our society, they must break free from societal expectations surrounding their physical appearance, show people women can be leaders, take responsibility, and instead focus on engaging in creative or service-oriented projects rather than wasting time at the beauty salon.

The road to women's liberation is a convoluted one. Freedom is also a factor in the emergence of value justification. It is not justified for humans to have so much freedom that nothing is left for other people. Therefore, the act that must accomplish to spare other freedoms that to make sure every choice and consideration is divided equally and based on mindful review. According to Beauvoir's strategy to reject subordination above, freedom is the absence of physical coercion, lack of

deprivation of rights, mental or psychological pressure, moral strength, and non-authenticity and alienation.

#### 4. Discussion

The writers come to the end of their analyses in terms of analyzing subordination form and the resistance approach which should be done by women themselves. The writers discovered 17 data on subordination forms and 15 data on women's resistances toward subordination in the novel. Further details can be seen, below:

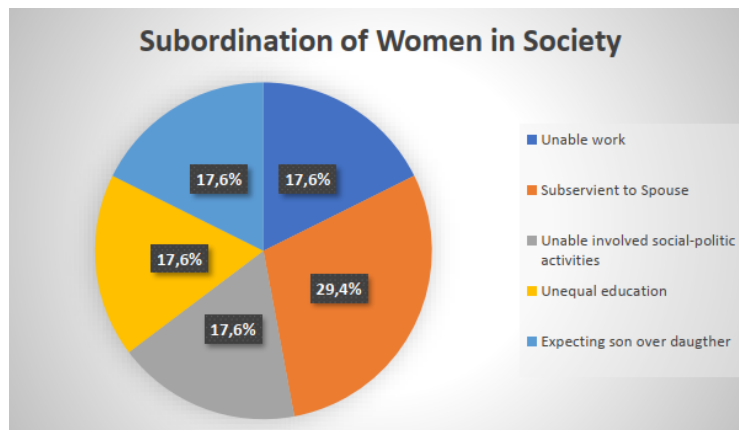


Figure 1. Pie Chart of Subordination Form of Women in Society

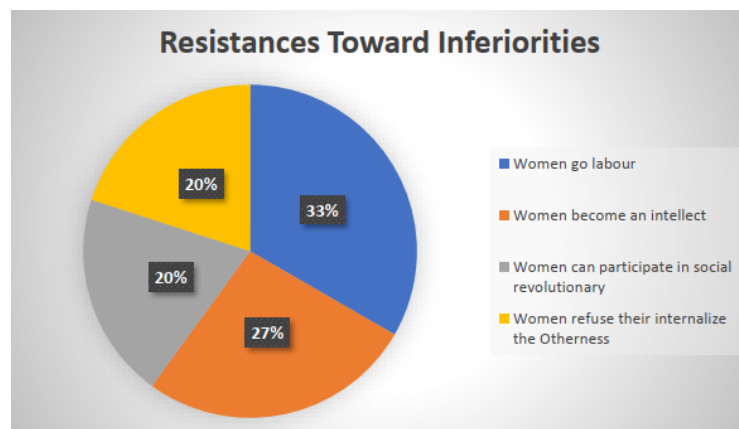


Figure 2. Pie Chart of Resistances Movement toward Subordination

Starting with all of the data analysis, the writers discovered 17 data regarding subordination forms. Women must be subservient to their husbands became the most data in this study with 5 (29,4%) data, followed by the same of total data with 3 (17,6%) of women were unable to work, patriarchy caused both parents to favor a son over a daughter, women did not receive an education on par with men, and women were unable to get involved in any social-political activities. The subordination form that occurs most frequently in *The Breadwinner* is that women must be subservient to their spouses. In addition, women's participation in social activities ranked among the lowest frequencies.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the writers discovered 15 data of women's resistance toward inferiorities in the novel. The highest data with 5 (33%) data were found on women going into labour, 4 (27%) data on women becoming intellectual, and the lowest data found in same total data with 3 (20%) data discovered in women can participate in social revolutionary in society and women can refuse their internalization as the otherness. It can indicate that women in the Breadwinner novel are resist to patriarch ideology of making women as part of nothing or the Other.

## **5. Conclusions**

The writers discovered 17 data regarding subordination forms. Women must be subservient to their husbands became the most data in this study with 5 (29,4%) data, followed by the same of total data with 3 (17,6%) of women were unable to work, patriarchy caused both parents to favour a son over a daughter, women did not receive an education on par with men, and women were unable to get involved in any social-political activities. As a result, women characters in the novel are depicted as having been subjected still integrated with men dictation over their right, extreme violence, biases, oppression, and mistreatment at the hands of men or Taliban in the community proven with data prior.

The oppression and other types of subordination demonstrated that women frequently have to overcome substantial difficulties or their inferiorities. Women put up a resistance based on Beauvoir's Ideas, namely: women able to work, women can be an intellectual, women able to contribute as socialist revolution, and women able to transcend their limitations which can be identified themselves as subject or not as an object anymore for obtaining the freedom. The writers discovered 15 data of women's resistance toward inferiorities in the novel. The highest data with 5 (33%) data were found on women going into labour, 4 (27%) data on women becoming intellectual, and the lowest data found in the same total data with 3 (20%) data discovered in women can participate in social revolutionary in society and women can refuse their internalization as the otherness. By this fact, women who went guerilla warfare, which can be regarded as a kind of resistance in their effort to reclaim the rights that have been taken away from them and to resist the acceptance of their ideals, which are believed to be inferior to those of males in society.

Thus, based on the findings the writers' provided suggestion for the research based on the analysis that will be valuable in the future for other researcher and readers to gain enlightenment and ideas, which can be used as support and to collect related information for further research, and gain widen understanding about subordination and the resistances for women in a patriarchal society and surrounding

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This paper is to accomplish one of the requirements for taking an undergraduate program (S1) of The English Department of the School of Foreign Language JIA. The writers of this study provide further insight into Resistance Toward the Subordination of Women in The Breadwinner Novel by Deborah Ellis: A Feminist Study within the context of this work. Throughout the research, the writers went through a great deal of difficulty in determining the data and organizing it into a format acceptable for a scientific paper. As a result, the writers would like to take advantage of this opportunity to show their gratitude to persons who have contributed guidance and assistance as well as the data and information that was necessary to finish this study.

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