#WomanWorld Post-Feminism?
Textual Analysis: Comic Series #WomanWorld on Instagram Account @aminder_d

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ABSTRAK

#WomanWorld is an instagram comic series created by @aminder_d with the sci-fi comedy genre by presenting the lives of a group of women who struggle for their survival in the post-extinction world of men. The #WomanWorld comic presents a series of characters who represent freedom of expression by carrying the feminist concept from the first wave to the post-feminist phase. With technology and social media networks, as well as the fourth wave feminism movement has been started, this study examines the extent of the content of feminism and post-feminism in this comic. Netnography and Textual Analysis are a method to know which one Feminism and Post-feminism is contained in this comic. This article shows how the storyline and characters in comics represent the concept of first to third wave feminism. By using post-feminism conceptual dialogue, this comic reverses its axis by creating an understanding that the desired world of women has been created, women are no longer struggling to get choices of life.

Keywords: Instagram Comic, #WomanWorld, Feminism Wave, Post-Feminism

INTRODUCTION

In terms of ideational content, images containing faces appear to generate the most likes and comments (Bakhshi et al., 2014). With these limitations, Instagram accounts compete to get the most likes and comments. As a social networking service, Instagram has the advantage of distributing photos and images, as in the media concept from Jenkins et al. (2013), which is media shared by audiences for their own purposes in cultural participation. One interesting comic to study in its involvement in cultural participation is the #WomanWorld comic. This comic has both feminist and post-feminist nuances, where the development of technology and social media has become a means of online activism, as mentioned by Prudence Chamberlain (2017) in The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality, where feminist advocates use social media as a means of their fight. In line with its title, this article will present facts related to the feminist and post-feminist content brought up in the #WomanWorld comic. To understand how this comic has become an interesting study, a brief description of the #WomanWorld comic will be presented below.

#WomanWorld is a comic created by the Instagram user @aminder_d, with a sci-fi comedy genre that presents the lives of a group of women struggling for their survival in a world after the extinction of men. The comic is set in the future, after economic collapse and natural disasters that have left the world in ruins. Accelerated genetic mutations have led to an increase in the birth of women, with the last generation of children born only female. The world in the comic has changed and developed into a simple life among female tribes when humanity finds a way to prevent extinction. The comic was chosen as a research object because it is the only comic that presents a new nuance where all the characters are female, and it is quite popular on Instagram and Webtoon. With simple stories, this comic presents a strong feminist nuance with the struggle for survival of women and how the meaning of feminism is intentionally deconstructed. To understand how popular this comic is, the details of #WomanWorld will be explained below.

Image 1: A glimpse of #WomanWorld comic by @aminder_d
Source: Instagram @aminder_d

This comic was created by Aminder Dhaliwal, a graduate of the Animation program at Sheridan College. She is a Director at Disney TV Animation, having previously worked as a Storyboard Director at Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. She started the #WomanWorld comic series on Instagram in March 2017 and has amassed more than 149,000 followers. On August 14, 2017, the official comic was released on Webtoon with 142,000 subscribers. According to the Drawnandquarterly.com website, #WomanWorld was also nominated for an Ignatz Award for Outstanding Online Comic. The comic follows the rebuilding process, featuring a group of women united under the banner of "Beyonce's Thighs," with only the grandmother character remembering the past. With its humorous style, it's no wonder that each of its comic posts gets an average of 25,000 likes. #WomanWorld is a spirited and insightful comic, which has led to a print edition being published. According to Burns, one of the leading authors, Dhaliwal smoothly integrates feminist philosophical concerns into a series of fast-paced strips that grasp felt ideas about femininity and contemporary cultural icons.

Speaking of the meaning of @aminder_d's comic, it cannot be separated from how the concept of feminism is somewhat mentioned in the comic. But is it true that the content of the comic is purely related to the concept of feminism, or this comic presents the concept of post-

feminism, by featuring a story about the extinction of men. In the next discussion, we will present a discussion on feminism and post-feminism.

Feminism, First to Fourth Wave

Initially, in the first wave, the feminist movement campaigned for women's rights, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to receive fair wages, to own property, to receive education, and equal rights in marriage (Hawkesworth, 2006), (Beasley, 1999). Most Western feminist historians argue that all movements that work to gain women's rights should be considered feminist movements, even when they do not apply the term to themselves (Spender, 1983), (Lerner, 1993), (Freedman, 2003), (Walter, 2005). Starting in England in the mid-19th century until the early 20th century, the first wave of feminism succeeded in gaining government response, and this success was eventually followed by other countries such as New South Wales and several other states in Australia (Freedman, 2003). The term first wave was created retroactively to categorize western movements after the term second wave feminism began to be used to describe newer feminist movements that focused on combating social and cultural inequality, as well as political inequality (Steven & O'Hare, 1995), (Wheeler, 1995), (Flecner, 1996), DuBois (1997), (Freedman, 2003).

Entering the second and third waves of the feminist movement in the 1960s, these two waves have been interlinked to this day (Dooling, 2005). Feminists worked to ensure access to legal abortion and social integration, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence (Echol, 1989). Simone Veil (1927-2017) was a French Minister of Health who made changes to the regulations allowing women to use contraception freely and legalizing abortion, and this achievement reaffirmed the second wave of feminism. In the third wave, the Riot grrrl feminist punk subculture emerged in Olympia, Washington, in the early 1990s. Riot grrrl bands often addressed issues such as rape, domestic violence, sexuality, racism, patriarchy, and women's empowerment. The third wave of feminism was further emphasized by Rebecca Walker in her essay "Becoming the Third Wave" (1992) in a magazine that discussed sexual harassment (Baumgardner & Richards, Amy, 2000). At this phase, there emerged subjective feminist movements: radical feminism, Islamic feminism, white feminism, and other subjective movements (Smith, 2000).

The fourth wave phase can be seen in the rising interest in feminism using social media starting in 2012. Prudence Chamberlain (2017) in her book The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality states that the focus of the fourth wave is on justice for women and opposition to sexual harassment and violence against women. The characteristics of this wave use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Tumblr, and blogs that showcase feminist studies. #YesAllWomen, Free the Nipple, #MeToo are some examples of movements promoted by activists on social media. Until December 2017, Time magazine chose several women activists involved in the #MeToo movement, "the silence breakers," as Person of the Year (Redden, 2017).

Doing Feminism in The Network

The internet with all its characteristics has successfully brought about changes in our lives. Keller (2011) in her research on how women use the internet to engage in feminist projects on social networking sites such as FBomb, Seventeen Magazine Project, Experimentations of a

Teenage Feminist, Grrrlbeat, and Star of Davida, gives many examples of how women use the internet to address women's issues and reach millions of other women with just a browser and a social network. For example, Janet Mock, a trans activist, used the hashtag #girlslikeus to bring transgender issues to social media, quickly dominating the conversation and becoming a trending topic on social media (Riera, 2015). Wendy Davis and Todd Akin also used social media to block the passage of anti-abortion laws and make offensive comments about pregnancy resulting from rape.

The networked and interconnected nature of the internet allows our experiences of feminism to cross over from platform to public and private spaces. With the internet, many young women have become critical thinkers about issues of gender, sexuality, and race. Rentschler and Thrift's research (2015) titled "Doing feminism in the network: Networked laughter and the 'Binders Full of Women' meme" states that the feminist movement on the internet using memes not only represents an innovative form of feminist content, but also reveals the construction of the meaning of the meme, which can touch the audience with laughter. Memes can also attract the attention of conventional media, indirectly expanding the audience to spread their feminist movements. Feminist memes on the internet are similar to spreading feminism in the midst of the current boom in popular culture and the digital era (Trakilovic, 2013).

Observing the development of the fourth wave of feminism, the author considers how the fluctuating feminist movement led Aminder Dhaliwal to create the comic #WomanWorld, even though from the beginning of the comic series, Dhaliwal had asserted that it was only a hobby and not a serious matter. However, much can be gleaned from how the meaning of the comic is constructed. With no men in the story, there is no gender role happening in the comic, which actually raises speculation about the post-Feminism movement. Below is an explanation of post-Feminism.

Some articles state that post-Feminism is a moment when feminism has died or suffered an "identity crisis" and framing the issue of "feminist fear" (Ebeling, 1990) (Hogeland, 1994). "Post" emphasizes pluralistic and anti-foundational tendencies, post-Feminism is a challenge and rejection of "women" as a universal category, meaning women are not just a word but encompass subjectivity such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age, seen from different positions of power relations other than gender (Genz & Brabon, 2009), (Gunnarsson, 2011). Post-feminism can be understood as another step in the ongoing feminist movement. The term post-Feminism (alternatively given as post-feminism) is used to describe reactions to the contradictions and absence in feminism, especially second and third wave feminism, by questioning their thinking and vision of sexuality, and complicating the idea that absolute gender equality is necessary or realistic to achieve. McRobbie (2009) mentions that post-feminism is an effort by women to create their own lives in the same way as their male counterparts but still maintain a foothold in the domestic realm. This is often understood as post-feminism aiming for the next stage in gender-related progress, and as supporting a society no longer determined by gender roles. In her writing, Rosalind Gill (2007) "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility," discusses post-feminism as more of a sensibility or ethos than a critical movement. Gill notes that the term "post-feminist" can be used as an accusation against feminist scholars whose work is seen as inadequate feminism.

Hall and Rodriguez (2003) argued in their article that the ethos of post-feminism is based on four things. First, support for feminism among women decreased in the 1980s and 1990s.

Second, while support for feminism declined, anti-feminist sentiment increased. Third, many women felt that feminism had achieved its main goals, such as the right to vote, reproductive choice for women, and increased representation of women in positions of power, and thus it can be concluded that the feminist movement has succeeded and is no longer necessary. Fourth, where women do not want to be labeled as feminists but still support feminist goals such as equal pay for equal work and economic independence. From the above explanation, does the comic #WomanWorld really contain meaning about the concept of post-feminism?

METHOD

This research uses textual analysis method. Textual analysis helps researchers to understand the meaning and representation of feminism and post-feminism that are contained in the #WomanWorld comic. Larsen (2003) in the book A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research states that the content of the text should be understood as a meaningful whole, therefore, this research needs to involve interpretive actions like reading and is based on specific assumptions to be made explicit in the analysis. Larsen (2003) also adds that the text should not be considered as a closed object with clear meaning, but rather as uncertain meaning where hidden meanings are condensed and how the text is interpreted. By using textual analysis, we can discover the possible hidden meanings in a text. From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the textual analysis method is appropriate in examining the #WomanWorld comic by @aminder_d to see to what extent the comic contains the concepts of feminism and post-feminism. Since the Instagram account @aminder_d has a lot of posts and various #WomanWorld series, this research uses the first series of #WomanWorld comic that consists of 102 episodes and focuses on important subjects related to feminism such as survival after the extinction of men, self-love (related to accepting each woman's weaknesses), and others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#WomanWorld and Its Uniqueness

As mentioned earlier, #WomanWorld is a comic that portrays the lives of a group of women living in a district symbolized by "Beyonce's Tight" and struggling for survival in a world without men. Set in the future, economic collapse and natural disasters have left the world devastated. Along with accelerated genetic mutations, the increase in female births has resulted in the last generation of children being all female. The changing world has developed into a simple life among female tribes when humankind found a way to prevent human extinction. This comic was first uploaded in 2017, coinciding with International Women's Day on March 8 with the hashtag #internationalwomensday. With 102 episodes, the comic features several characters with their own roles. Below is the data and description of the characters and how the #WomanWorld comic is narrated.

Tabel 1. Characters in the #WomanWorld Comic

No.	Characters	Description

1.		Grandma is a character who remembers the past and what men looked like.
2.		Emiko is a character who is very curious about everything.
3.		Mayor Gaia is the leader of the district "Beyonce's Tight". Depicted naked with a pubic hair shaped like an inverted triangle and thick armpit hair.
4.		Uma is the secretary of Mayor Gaia and also depicted as Emiko's mother.
5.		Doctor is a character who comes from the Capital and helps with health in the district. She wears a long skirt and a Karen tribe necklace (long neck). Depicted as without breasts (like post-breast cancer surgery).
6.		Layla and Lara are a lesbian couple who have been depicted as such since the beginning of the comic. Layla is a character with a disability, using a prosthetic leg on her right side, while Lara is a black woman with an afro hairstyle. Layla (left) and Lara (right).

7.		Ina is a character who wears swimsuit-like clothing, has black skin and long hair. In the comic, Ina is falling in love with Layla. Yumi is Ina's friend and is depicted with shaggy hair like a rock singer. Ina (right) and Yumi (left)
8.		Only Emiko's friend, who is not named, appeared in the final episode 102. She appeared a few times alongside Emiko and is depicted as someone who enjoys collecting relics from the past.

Source: Instagram @aminder_d and processed data, 2021

#WomanWorld embodies the concept of feminism in a meaningful way and can be seen as a breath of fresh air for the feminist movement. The word "Woman" itself, which is interpreted as a singular woman, represents the unique character of each female character and their respective worlds. The first post in this comic series shows a group of women creating a district and choosing a leader. The character of Mayor Gaia at the beginning of the comic represents the start of the first wave of feminism, where women demanded the right to vote and a place in politics. Based on the character's portrayal, this comic also represents several subjective feminist movements within the second wave of feminism, such as the character of the Doctor who represents breast cancer fighters, portrayed in the comic as having undergone a mastectomy and wearing the traditional Karen Tribe long-necked necklace in Thailand. This character shows the importance of minority groups where in the Karen Tribe, a beautiful woman is one with the longest neck in the tribe. #WomanWorld sets its own standards of beauty for each character it portrays. The character of Mayor Gaia also shows that beauty does not come from what one wears, but rather from being naked. This character demonstrates how being naked is a right for all women, echoing the 'My Body My Authority' movement that has been resonating in campaigns for several years. #WomanWorld also features LGBT feminism as a part of the feminist movement.

Image 2: Ina questions people's attitudes towards Mayor Gaia being naked

LGBT Feminism is a feminist movement that demands respect for the sexual orientation of LGBT individuals. This comic strongly portrays Layla and Lara, who are a lesbian couple, and how the residents in the district struggle to conceive by injecting sperm cells without having sexual intercourse with men. Some of the comic's posts contain elements of radical feminism, which holds stereotypes that are hostile towards men. The connotations of separatism, extremism, man-hating, and the emergence of lesbian feminism (Scharff, 2010), (Walby, 2011) are also found in some episodes of this comic, as well as the absence of male characters in the storyline. As a participatory form in the fourth wave of feminism, #WomanWorld provides a unique perspective to conceptualize several political and cultural thoughts from digital feminism. The storyline of each character in the comic is a new area in the digital feminist movement. Although #WomanWorld is regarded as humorous, it connects comic enthusiasts to different meanings. The use of hashtags is a characteristic of social media where everyone can use and search for them.

Does #WomanWorld really contain the concept of post-feminism?

Image 3: Discovery of a former sex toy factory

"The men are extinct!" is the first call in the #WomanWorld comic. The comic shows how the remaining women in their world try to survive. After discussing how the concept of feminism is present in the comic #WomanWorld, the author assesses that the comic actually tries to replace gender roles and eliminate its main functions. Borrowing McRobbie's statement (2009) that post-feminism is women's efforts to create their own lives in the same way as their male counterparts but still maintaining a foothold in the domestic realm. This is often understood that post-feminism aims for the next stage in gender-related progress and as a supporter of a society that is no longer determined by gender roles. This comic has clearly eliminated men, and women have replaced men's roles such as building hospitals, and the process of reproduction to produce offspring is done by injecting sperm cells, and all activities and needs are fulfilled by women. The argument about post-feminism can be concluded by looking at how women have moved away from the shadows of misogyny and sexism.

Ebeling (1990) and Hogeland (1994) stated that post-feminism is a moment where feminism is dead or suffering from an "identity crisis" and framing issues where "fear of feminism" occurs. The crisis of identity can be felt in this comic, where in episode 46 of the comic, it seems to mock feminism with a focus on skin color orientation. In episode 46, Emiko and her

friends are learning history with Grandma. They are given a task to reenact an event that happened in the past and choose an event about how in the past, the concept of color wars was highlighted, and unfortunately, this still happens in the world today.

Image 4: Battle, the 46th series of #WomanWorld comic

Postfeminism can be understood as another step in the ongoing feminist movement. The term postfeminism (alternatively given as post-feminism) is used to describe a reaction to the contradictions and absences in feminism, especially second-wave and third-wave feminism, by questioning their thinking and vision of sexuality, and complicating the idea that absolute gender equality is necessary or realistic to achieve. This comic seems to depict the false thoughts of all feminist groups that are actually inconsistent with what is desired. Like white feminism, which focuses on the struggle of white women without addressing different forms of oppression faced by minority ethnic women and women without other privileges (Frankenberg, 1993). The term postfeminism (alternatively given as post-feminism) is used to describe a reaction to the contradictions and absences in feminism, especially second-wave and third-wave feminism, by questioning their thinking and vision of sexuality, and complicating the idea that absolute gender equality is necessary or realistic to achieve. From episode 46 of the #WomanWorld comic, it mocks how subjective feminisms like white feminism and other feminisms that do not align with how the concept of feminism was put forward in the early days of the movement.

Borrowing the third and fourth concepts of Hall and Rodriguez (2003) of the ethos of post-feminism, the author defines #WomanWorld as post-feminism with the criteria that feminism has achieved its main goals, such as women's right to vote, reproductive choice, and increased representation of women in positions of power, and thus, it can be concluded that the feminist movement has succeeded and is no longer necessary. In the comic, the absence of men proves that misogynistic and sexist actions do not occur because women have achieved peace in their lives. Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on gender that is related to stereotypes and gender roles, where women are the targets of such discrimination and the belief that one gender is inherently superior to the other. (Matsumoto, 2001, p.197), (Nakdimen, 1984).

Picture 5: #WomanWorld, depiction of various feminist concepts.

Of course, this comic has depicted how some characters have gained ownership rights, reproductive choices for women, and increased positions of power. They have also avoided misogynistic and sexist treatment. Even at the beginning of the #WomanWorld comic, it contained sexist content with the extinction of men, which means the superiority of women in this comic is highly upheld. The concept of sexism has been deconstructed and given a new meaning. For example, in episode 59 of the comic, the reproductive choices of women are shown, and in the story, Ina wants to have a baby, but after Mayor Gaia explains what Ina needs to do, Ina chooses to reconsider her intention to have a baby. Fourthly, where women do not want to be labeled as feminists but still support feminist goals such as equal pay for equal work and economic independence. With the absence of men, the characters in this comic have tried to adapt and maintain the economic cooperation and independence they have. This includes the infrastructure they built themselves at the beginning of the comic series.

The research article by Van Zoonen (2002) entitled "Gendering the Internet: Claims, Controversies, and Cultures" discusses assumptions about gender codes on the Internet that indicate that the interpretation of the Internet as masculine, feminine, or even transgender is based on limited conceptualizations of gender and technology. The results of the research data, using interviews, show that the internet does not automatically produce a masculine domain in households. This opens up space for shared and feminine allocation as well. The initial assumption that the internet is a male domain is supported by the fact that the majority of actors in design and production are men. This fact then leads to arguments about gender in social dimensions, that texts, representations, and communicative practices are masculine.

Gender as an identity does not appear in the picture here, which leads to the famous dilemma in research on women working in the communication industry, namely that their participation and positive experience can only be explained by assuming a masculine identity within it (van Zoonen, 1998, 1994). This means that when women are involved in the communication industry and the internet world, their identity as women begins to blur and is labeled as masculine women. However, not with the #WomanWorld comic. According to Burns, the publisher who offered Dhaliwal (the creator of the #WomanWorld comic), the comic dispels all feminist philosophical concerns that are woven into contemporary cultural icons. Dhaliwal smoothly integrates feminist concerns into a series of fast-paced strips that grip perceived ideas about femininity and contemporary cultural icons. According to Burns, Dhaliwal harnesses feminist thinking and introduces a humorous style in every comic.

According to Sadie Plant in Beyond the Screens (1997, p.508), the virtual world opens up new possibilities for the creation of dominant women's cultures. In cyberfeminism, it is said that the internet is a post-human rebellion against patriarchy that has dominated technology, and it is marked primarily by the alliance between women and machines. The assumption is that the internet is feminine, built on limited gender conceptualizations, particularly on gender as identity. With an understanding that the internet can blur gender conceptualization as identity, it avoids the social fact of male dominance as actors in the network and as symbols in the reconstruction of traditional gender concepts that include the level of representation and text (media).

Several theories consider post-feminism as a phase after feminism, which results in a social condition where gender equality is perceived to have been achieved or where gender equality is no longer considered a significant issue. In this context, #WomanWorld comic may not be fully considered as post-feminism as it still addresses feminist issues and presents female characters with diverse personalities and leadership. Some post-feminist theories view the term as a reflection of changes and shifts in feminist politics and culture, with more focus on individual experiences and pluralities of identities. In this context, #WomanWorld comic can be seen as an example of post-feminism, as it presents diverse female characters with different identities, including LGBT characters. However, it is important to note that the definition of post-feminism is still debated among feminist academics and activists. Therefore, the final conclusion on whether #WomanWorld contains the concept of post-feminism depends on the perspective used.

CONCLUSION

Initially, when reading the comic #WomanWorld, readers are presented with various storylines that connect to the concept of feminism. For example, the character Major Gaia, a woman who leads a district and dresses in "nudes" to show her love for her own body, or the character Doctor, a breast cancer survivor who wears a traditional Karen tribe necklace in Thailand to represent that beauty standards come in various forms, not just one standard. The character Lara, who has a disability, also represents that beauty is personal. Basically, all the characters play the same function: that everything can be arranged personally, there is no single standard for living and beauty. This is depicted through characters with different skin colours and different types of disabilities. Additionally, the women in the district are shown to be able to survive without men.

The absence of men or the extinction of men in this comic emphasizes that women no longer need to fight for their gender equality. This is related to the concept of post-feminism, where once women have gained all their rights, feminism is no longer needed. McRobbie's statement (2009) that post-feminism is women's efforts to create their own lives in the same way as their male counterparts, while still maintaining a foothold in the domestic realm, can be included in the argument that this comic has elements of post-feminism.

At first, the author thought that the comic was too complicated and leaned towards post-feminism by showing criticism of subjective feminism, second-wave feminism like white feminism, and displaying the ethos of post-feminism that has been mentioned by Hall and Rodriguez (2003) in previous discussions. However, another interpretation can be obtained when analysing the textual message using other methods such as using semiotics to analyse signs that

appear in the comic and are related to certain cultures or using reception analysis to see how the message content can be conveyed to the audience.

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