

Jo March's Effort for Equality in The Little Women Film: A Utilitarianism Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the character Jo March in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) from the perspective of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, focusing on her actions to achieve equality, freedom, and collective happiness. The purpose of this study is to identify indicators of utilitarianism in *Little Women* from John Stuart Mill's perspective, analyze how Jo March's actions reflect the principles of utilitarianism, and investigate the underlying reasons and social implications of her utilitarian behavior, particularly in promoting meaningful happiness and social well-being. Using a qualitative analytical descriptive method, this study uses primary data from dialogues and film scenes, supplemented by secondary sources such as relevant literature and previous studies. The findings of this study reveal that Jo's actions, such as establishing a school, writing to support her family, and advocating for gender equality, demonstrate actions and commitments to achieving equality, freedom, and collective happiness. This is in line with Mill's principles of collective happiness, individual sacrifice, and freedom. Her decisions emphasize the importance of prioritizing the welfare of society while pursuing personal aspirations. This study contributes to literary and ethical discourse by offering a new perspective on Jo March as a moral agent who embodies utilitarian ideals, thereby expanding understanding of her character and the film's broader commentary on gender and social progress. **Keywords:** Utilitarianism, Gender Equality, Collective Happiness, Jo March, *Little Women*

1. Introduction

Literature and film serve as powerful tools to convey life stories and social issues, offering critical commentary on injustices such as discrimination and inequality. Literature, derived from the Sanskrit term *literature*, implies a means to direct and educate through language (Kustyarini, 2014). Literary works are cultural products created by humans. The function of literary works is not only as a medium of expression but can also be a tool for unifying the nation that can help increase awareness of national identity and shared culture. Literary works also play an important role in anticipating social changes in society, which must always adapt to the times. The content of literary works that are more relevant to the younger generation can convey moral messages more effectively to the wider community. Literary works are not only a medium of artistic expression, but also an educational instrument that is very useful for the development of individual and community character as a whole

(Slamet, 2018). As social beings, the development of the human soul is not determined from birth but is influenced by the surrounding environment. This environment is what we call culture. Culture is something dynamic, always developing and changing according to the needs of the times (Andini, 2018).

There is a relationship between film and literature as if there is an unwritten law that says that popular literary works must be made into films. Literature and film complement each other and not a few popular films have been inspired or adapted from literary works. (Ginting, 2024). Film adaptations and studies have long been considered interesting literary subgenres. Literary works can be an inspiration to expand and develop new ideas with deep stories and characters. (Tolibovna, 2022).

Likewise, films combine visual and auditory elements to create an engaging medium for storytelling and cultural exchange, making them significant instruments for studying societal dynamics. (Adiprabowo, 2018). Film is a form of literary work presented through the big screen, generally shown in cinemas. (Rizky, 2019). Various film themes and genres are available so that they can be adjusted to the age of the audience. This study focuses on *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig, a film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's novel, which explores themes of gender equality, individual ambition, and societal progress.

The concept of equality, central to the *Little Women* narrative, emphasizes fair treatment regardless of gender or background, ensuring access to opportunities and resources for all. Equality is a goal that must be achieved by all human beings in various parts of the world. This is important so that no individual feels superior to others, especially in terms of bias. (Afif et al., 2020). Despite societal advancements, the persistence of gender inequality continues to hinder progress. The struggles faced by Jo March, the protagonist, mirror broader societal issues, such as limited access to education and restrictive gender roles, that still resonate today. These recurring challenges necessitate an analytical exploration of Jo's character to better understand strategies for achieving equality.

Jo March's story is particularly relevant because it highlights her efforts to pursue independence and defy societal expectations. As a writer, she challenges the notion that women must prioritize marriage over ambition, asserting that women possess the same right to pursue their dreams. Her actions, including her resistance to traditional roles and her advocacy for education for all, reflect broader questions about equality, freedom, and societal obligations. (Hanafi, 2020). These themes make her an ideal subject for philosophical analysis.

Prior studies have extensively analyzed *Little Women* through feminist frameworks. For instance, research that applies Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory has highlighted Jo March's rejection of traditional gender roles and her pursuit of independence. (Angelia & Widyaningrum, 2024). Other studies have explored how the novel and its adaptations portray women's struggles, focusing on Jo's character and her defiance against societal expectations. However, these analyses often remain constrained within the boundaries of feminist critique, neglecting alternative philosophical perspectives.

Although *Little Women* has been widely studied, the application of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism to Jo March's character remains unexplored. Existing research has yet to address how Jo's actions align with utilitarian principles such as collective happiness, individual freedom, and

equality. This gap represents a missed opportunity to understand Jo's character as an ethical model who balances personal ambition with societal contributions, transcending the limitations of a purely feminist lens.

Utilitarianism, as developed by John Stuart Mill, provides a unique lens to analyze Jo March's actions. Mill emphasized that the right actions are those that maximize happiness for the greatest number while upholding individual freedoms and equality. (J. Van Mill, 1988). Utilitarianism is often considered a "success ethic," an ethic that assesses a person's goodness based on how much their actions impact good or bad behavior. (Saepullah, 2020). Welfarism emerged as a consequence of the fundamental axiom that emphasizes the importance of actions aimed at achieving the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. (Goodin & Zaki, 2021).

Consequentialism in every moral reasoning is that what is called good is beneficial, and conversely what is called evil is detrimental. (Hukmi, 2015). In any situation, the right action is the action that provides the greatest benefit or the least cost when all alternatives only impose net costs. (Taufik et al., 2024). John Stuart Mill defines rights as the freedom that every person has to do something according to his wishes, as long as it does not harm others. (Pramana, 2023). This framework enables a deeper understanding of Jo's decisions, such as her choice to prioritize education and resist traditional roles, as actions that promote both personal fulfillment and collective welfare.

Mill's principles of utilitarianism—such as collective happiness, the quality of happiness, and the principle of equality—are particularly applicable to Jo's narrative. In an action, the quality of happiness must also be considered because happiness has value with its higher and lower qualities, the value and meaning and benefits of the happiness it produces for society. (Budiono, 2019). In taking action at every opportunity, attention must be paid to ensuring that the action is by the principle of utilitarianism, namely increasing general happiness and avoiding harming others. (Lermatan, 2024).

An action is considered beneficial if the action results in a large increase in happiness for many people by taking into account all rights without discrimination. (Rizkiyah, 2022). Jo's decision to establish a school for boys and girls embodies the principle of collective happiness, while her rejection of marriage in favor of pursuing her ambition reflects the qualities of happiness that Mill advocates. By applying this framework, this research bridges the gap between philosophical ethics and literary analysis. (Renda, 2023).

Central to Mill's philosophy is the principle of equality, which rejects discrimination based on gender or other factors. Mill argued that the legal and social subordination of women is a major obstacle to progress (J. S. Mill, 2020). Equality is a condition characterized by the existence of equal rights and opportunities for everyone (Nabila et al., 2023). Utilitarianism rejects discrimination based on race, gender, social class, or other factors, assuming that every individual has universally equal moral values. It promotes fairness and justice towards all individuals, with actions judged based on the benefits to the greatest number of people (Wattimena, 2018). Jo March's actions, such as advocating for equal education and challenging societal norms, resonate strongly with Mill's views on equality. Analyzing her character through this lens provides a comprehensive understanding of her contributions to social justice.

This research aims to achieve three primary objectives: (1) to identify indicators of utilitarianism in *Little Women* from John Stuart Mill's perspective, (2) to analyze how Jo March's actions reflect utilitarian principles, and (3) to investigate the underlying reasons and social implications of her utilitarian behavior. These objectives guide the study in uncovering the ethical dimensions of Jo's character, emphasizing her role as both an individual and a societal figure.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering a novel perspective that integrates Mill's utilitarian ethics with feminist critiques of *Little Women*. Unlike prior research, which focuses on Jo's rejection of traditional roles, this study examines her actions as ethical decisions that balance personal and collective well-being. This approach highlights her character as a model for ethical agency in the face of societal constraints.

By analyzing Jo March through the lens of utilitarianism, this research not only enriches literary criticism but also contributes to broader discourses on gender equality and ethics. Jo's character serves as an example of how individual ambition and societal progress can coexist, offering valuable insights for addressing contemporary challenges in gender equity and social justice. The findings are relevant for both academic and practical applications, including education and advocacy.

In a world where gender inequality persists, examining narratives like *Little Women* becomes crucial for understanding the pathways to equality. Jo March's story is not merely historical; it is a timeless example of the struggle for rights and recognition. By applying Mill's utilitarianism, this study sheds light on ethical principles that can inform present-day efforts to promote equality, freedom, and collective happiness.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with an analytical descriptive method. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth examination of the actions and decisions of Jo March, the protagonist of *Little Women* (2019), within the philosophical framework of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. The analytical description is utilized to systematically describe and analyze the character's efforts to promote equality and achieve collective welfare, thereby linking these actions to Mill's ethical principles.

This study used a qualitative approach to examine the themes of gender equality and utilitarianism in the film *Little Women* (2019). Data for this analysis came from primary data sources, consisting of the film *Little Women* (2019), dialogues, visual scenes, and character actions, and secondary data sources, consisting of previous research, journal articles, and relevant literature exploring utilitarianism, which provided context, and additional support for the study's analysis. The data collection process involved several techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding. The first technique, film review, involved watching the film repeatedly, scenes that highlighted moments relevant to the principles of utilitarianism, were captured through screen captures. The second technique, textual review, involved carefully transcribing and reviewing dialogues and monologues, focusing on meaningful expressions that were central to the study. This transcription process ensured that the data aligned with the study's theoretical framework. The third technique, literature review, involved reviewing secondary sources to contextualize the study

within existing scholarship on gender equality and utilitarianism. For data analysis, this study followed a series of main steps: first, relevant scenes, dialogues, and actions were identified and categorized according to the principles of utilitarianism; next, the data were coded into thematic categories such as collective happiness, individual sacrifice, quality of happiness, and equality. The data were interpreted through the lens of Mill's utilitarianism, allowing for an exploration of how Jo March's actions reflect these principles. Finally, the analysis correlated Jo March's actions with broader social themes, exploring their implications for gender equality. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, this study used source triangulation, which involves collecting data from multiple sources to confirm findings. Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing findings from the film, journal articles, and previous studies, reducing bias and increasing accuracy. According to (Sugiyono, 2020 in Alfansyur & Mariyani, 2020), triangulation serves to verify data through different perspectives, aiming to minimize ambiguity and avoid misinterpretation. This approach strengthens the credibility of the research conclusions, as emphasized (Creswell and Poth in Tanujaya & Purnomo, 2023), which allows the data to be validated through triangulation of various documents to ensure credibility. The rationale behind the choice of this methodology lies in the ability of a qualitative approach, combined with Mill's utilitarianism, to provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the ethical and social dimensions of Jo March's actions. This methodology allows the study to move beyond surface-level feminist interpretations and delve deeper into ethical motivations and social impacts. However, there are limitations to this study, most notably its reliance on qualitative data, which can be subjective. The findings are interpretive, potentially influenced by the researcher's perspective, leading to possible biases such as selection bias, where certain data may be selected in a non-neutral manner, or the researcher's background and experiences shape the interpretation of the data. This subjectivity may result in the study not being fully representative of broader perspectives. Future research could complement this study by incorporating quantitative data to provide a more holistic understanding of the film's impact on audiences.

This study's methodology, grounded in a qualitative analytical descriptive approach, ensures a thorough exploration of Jo March's character and actions in *Little Women* (2019) through the lens of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. By integrating film analysis, textual examination, and a review of secondary literature, the research captures both the narrative intricacies of the film and its broader philosophical implications. The use of thematic coding and triangulation techniques enhances the validity and reliability of the findings, providing a nuanced understanding of how Jo March's decisions align with utilitarian principles. While qualitative, the methodology lays a robust foundation for analyzing ethical and societal dimensions, offering valuable insights into the intersection of literature, film, and philosophy.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Result

The findings from this research are structured based on the principles of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, as reflected in Jo March's actions in *Little Women* (2019). Key aspects of the

findings are presented through descriptive analysis, supported by selected scenes and corresponding dialogues from the film.

3.1.1. Utilitarianism Characteristics Reflected in Jo March's Actions

1) Collective Happiness

Jo's actions consistently prioritize collective welfare over personal gains. For example, her decision to open a school for boys and girls is a direct reflection of Mill's principle of collective happiness.



Figure 1: Jo March discussing plans for the school (Scene 01:55:14)

Jo March : "I'd like to open a school, we never had a proper school, and now there are women's colleges opening."

Jo March : "There Should be a school. For Daisy"

Amy : "And what will you do?"

Jo March : "I'll open a school for boys and girls both"

Jo March's determination to establish a school reflects her commitment to equality and collective happiness, as envisioned in John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. In this scene, Jo expresses her aspiration to transform their family home into a school, stating, "I want to open a school, we never had a proper school, and now there is a women's university." Her words underscore her belief in the importance of education as a transformative tool for societal progress. When Amy questions the practicality of the idea, Jo resolutely affirms, "This house must be a school for Daisy," and expands her vision by adding, "I will open a school for both boys and girls." This decision symbolizes Jo's broader effort to dismantle gender-based barriers in education, ensuring that future generations, regardless of gender, have equal access to opportunities for intellectual and personal growth. Her vision exemplifies the principle of collective happiness, emphasizing the societal benefits of providing equitable education to all.

2) Quality of Happiness

Jo values deep, meaningful happiness over superficial pleasures. Her rejection of societal norms that demand marriage over ambition and her passion for writing exemplify this principle.



Figure 2: Jo March expressing satisfaction over her published work (Scene 01:56:29)

"I read the chapters you sent, and I have to agree, they aren't very promising but, please send more stories of the scandalous variety, if you have any"

Mr Dashwood sent a letter to Jo March about his satisfaction with Jo March's work.

In this pivotal moment, Jo March receives a letter from the publisher, marking a significant achievement in her journey as a writer and symbolizing her intellectual and moral satisfaction. The letter not only acknowledges her talent but also serves as validation of her relentless pursuit of her dreams in a society that often dismisses women's creative contributions. The scene portrays Jo immersed in her craft, surrounded by the tools of her labor, reflecting her unwavering dedication to her work. The publisher's recognition highlights the deep joy and fulfillment that comes from intellectual achievements, aligning with John Stuart Mill's emphasis on the quality of happiness. For Jo, this happiness is rooted in the moral value of her work creating meaningful stories that resonate with others rather than material or superficial gains. This moment encapsulates her determination to achieve personal success while contributing to the broader literary landscape, challenging societal norms, and paving the way for greater opportunities for women in intellectual and artistic fields.

3) Individual Sacrifice

Jo demonstrates her willingness to sacrifice personal gains for the greater good. For instance, she sells her hair to finance her mother's trip to visit her ailing father on the battlefield.



Figure 3: Jo cutting her hair to raise funds for her family (Scene 01:12:27)

Jo March : "Will this be enough for the train?"
Marmee : "\$25? That's not like Aunt March to be so generous"
Jo March : "I didn't go to her, I couldn't bear to"
Marmee : "Where'd you get the money?"
Jo March : "I only sold what was my own."

In this poignant scene, Jo March exemplifies selflessness and familial devotion, embodying John Stuart Mill's concept of individual sacrifice for collective happiness. Confronted with the need to secure funds for her mother's journey to visit their ill father on the battlefield, Jo takes the drastic step of selling her cherished hair, saying, "I sell what I have." This decision underscores her willingness to prioritize her family's welfare over her personal pride and attachment to material possessions. Jo's actions reflect a deep empathy and understanding of her family's needs, sacrificing something valuable to her for their collective happiness. This moment highlights the moral depth of her character and aligns with Mill's utilitarian principle that actions are morally good if they maximize happiness for the greatest number. Jo's sacrifice not only provides immediate financial relief but also strengthens the familial bonds, illustrating her unwavering commitment to her loved ones and the greater good.

4) Equality

Jo's persistent advocacy for gender equality resonates with Mill's principle of equal rights. She challenges societal norms by refusing to conform to traditional roles and advocating for women's education and ambitions.



Figure 4: Jo defending women's intellectual capabilities (Scene 01:42:38)

Marmee : "But do you love him?"
Jo March : "I care more to be loved, I want to be loved"
Marmee : "That is not the same as loving"
Jo March : "I know, you know, I just...I just feel like, Women...they have mind, and they have soul, as well as just hearts, and they've got ambition and they've got talent as well as just beauty and I'm so sick of people saying that love is just all women is fit for, I'm so sick of it"

In this powerful scene, Jo March passionately advocates for women's equality by asserting that women possess "minds, souls, and ambitions," emphasizing their intellectual and emotional depth. Her statement challenges the traditional gender roles of her time, which often confined women to domestic spheres and disregarded their potential for independent thought and achievement. By declaring that women have ambitions, talents, and beauty, Jo underscores the multifaceted nature

of womanhood, rejecting the notion that women exist solely as objects of love or societal decoration. Her defiance embodies John Stuart Mill's principle of equality, which champions equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of gender. Jo's heartfelt argument not only reflects her struggle for recognition as a writer but also serves as a broader critique of the systemic oppression faced by women. This moment encapsulates her role as a trailblazer, fighting for a society where women can freely pursue their dreams and aspirations without being hindered by discriminatory norms.

5) Freedom

Jo values her freedom and rejects constraints imposed by societal expectations. Her decision to decline Laurie's marriage proposal highlights her determination to pursue her dreams rather than conform to traditional gender roles.



Figure 5: Jo rejecting Laurie's proposal (Scene 01:39:06)

Jo March : "I'm happy as I am"
Jo March : "And I love my liberty too well to be in any hurry to give it up"
Laurie : "I think you're wrong"
Jo March : "No"

In this heartfelt moment, Jo March asserts her love for personal freedom and her determination to follow her path, rejecting societal expectations of marriage and traditional roles for women. Faced with Laurie's proposal, Jo candidly explains, "I'm happy as I am; I love my freedom too much to give it up." Her words highlight her commitment to her ambitions as a writer and her refusal to conform to the pressures that dictate women's lives should revolve around relationships or dependency on men. Jo's decision reflects John Stuart Mill's principle of individual freedom, which emphasizes the right to self-determination and the pursuit of personal happiness. By prioritizing her aspirations over societal norms, Jo challenges the constraints imposed on women of her time and advocates for a future where individuals are free to shape their destinies. This choice underscores her strength and independence, inspiring others to value freedom and ambition as essential components of a fulfilling life.

3.1.2 Jo March's Utilitarian Actions

Jo March's character in *Little Women* (2019) reflects a series of actions that align with John Stuart Mill's principles of utilitarianism, particularly in the areas of equality, collective welfare, and individual freedom. Her decisions and efforts exemplify a commitment to maximizing happiness not only for herself but also for those around her, contributing to societal progress. These actions can be

categorized as follows:

1) Advocating for Equality

Jo demonstrates a profound commitment to equality by challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for educational opportunities for all. Her decision to establish a school that accepts both boys and girls is a bold statement against the gender segregation prevalent in her time. By transforming her inherited house into a school, Jo ensures equal access to education, reflecting Mill's belief in universal rights and the importance of equality in fostering collective happiness. Furthermore, Jo consistently rejects societal stereotypes that confine women to specific roles, such as marriage or domesticity. Through her advocacy for equal opportunities, Jo becomes a symbol of progress, inspiring others to embrace the principle of equality as a cornerstone of a just society.

2) Supporting Collective Welfare

Jo's efforts to support her family financially showcase her commitment to collective welfare. She takes on the responsibility of writing to provide for her family, even sacrificing her dreams and desires to ensure their well-being. Her decision to sell her hair to fund her mother's journey to visit their ailing father is a poignant example of her willingness to prioritize the needs of her family over her own pride or material possessions. These selfless actions align with Mill's utilitarian emphasis on maximizing collective happiness, as Jo continuously seeks to improve the quality of life for those around her, even at her own expense.

3) Promoting Freedom

Jo values personal freedom and intellectual pursuits above societal expectations, exemplifying Mill's principle of individual liberty. Her refusal of Laurie's marriage proposal is a clear assertion of her right to choose her path. These rights emerge with human existence and end with the end of human life. (Kusmaryanto, 2021). Prioritizing her aspirations as a writer over conforming to the traditional roles expected of women. Jo's actions underscore the importance of freedom in achieving true happiness and fulfillment. She rejects societal norms that dictate a woman's worth is tied to marriage, instead focusing on her intellectual growth and creative pursuits. By doing so, Jo not only asserts her autonomy but also sets an example for others to value their independence and personal ambitions.

Jo March's actions throughout the film embody the ethical ideals of utilitarianism, demonstrating how individual sacrifices, advocacy for equality, and the pursuit of freedom can contribute to greater collective happiness. Her character serves as a model for balancing personal ambition with social responsibility, emphasizing the importance of ethical decision-making in fostering a more equitable and progressive society.

3.1.3 Figures



Figure 6: Jo March discussing plans for the school (Scene 01:55:16).

- Jo March : "I'd like to open a school, we never had a proper school, and now there are women's colleges opening."
Jo March : "There Should be a school. For Daisy"
Amy : "And what will you do?"
Jo March : "I'll open a school for boys and girls both"

At this moment, Jo March passionately outlines her vision to transform the family home into a school that would accept both boys and girls, breaking traditional norms and symbolizing her commitment to equality. She reflects on how, in her upbringing, proper educational opportunities were limited, particularly for women, and contrasts this with the emergence of women's universities as a sign of progress. By declaring, "This house must be a school," Jo asserts her belief that education should be accessible to everyone, regardless of gender, aligning with Mill's principle of collective happiness. Her decision to prioritize education demonstrates her dedication to improving the welfare of society as a whole, showcasing her resolve to create a lasting impact on future generations.



Figure 7: Jo receives a letter from the publisher (Scene 02:05:46).

- Jo March : "You keep your \$500, and I'll keep the copyright, also, I want 10 percent of royalties."
Mr Dashwood : "Five point five percent, that's very generous"
Jo March : "nine percent"
Mr Dashwood : "Six percent, and that's it"
Jo March : "Mr Dashwood, if I'm going to sell my heroine into marriage for money. I might as well get some of it"
Mr Dashwood : "Six point six percent"

In this significant scene, Jo March demonstrates her confidence and business acumen by negotiating a 10% royalty for her published work. This moment highlights Jo's intellectual independence and her determination to be recognized and rewarded for her creative efforts. By asserting her value as a writer, Jo not only challenges the patriarchal norms of the publishing industry but also reinforces her commitment to achieving financial independence. This act reflects her belief in Mill's concept of meaningful happiness, where intellectual and moral achievements hold greater value than superficial gains. Through this negotiation, Jo secures her place as a professional writer, proving that women are equally capable of asserting their rights and thriving in traditionally male-dominated fields.

3.2. Discussion

The discussion section of this study delves into the intersection of literary analysis and philosophical ethics, focusing on how Jo March's actions in *Little Women* (2019) align with John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. This analysis goes beyond traditional feminist readings by framing Jo's decisions as not only acts of resistance against societal norms but also as ethical choices aimed at maximizing collective happiness and fostering equality. By examining her advocacy for educational reform, financial independence, and freedom from restrictive gender roles, the discussion highlights Jo's dual role as an individual pursuing personal fulfillment and a societal figure contributing to broader progress. This approach underscores the relevance of utilitarian ethics in understanding Jo's character and the film's commentary on gender and societal transformation.

1) Alignment with Previous Research

The findings of this study align with previous feminist analyses of *Little Women* that emphasize Jo March's resistance to traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Researchers using Simone de Beauvoir's feminist lens, for instance, have highlighted Jo's rejection of societal norms that define women solely in terms of marriage or domestic responsibilities. However, this study extends beyond feminist critique by framing Jo's actions within John Stuart Mill's utilitarian philosophy. This framework reveals how Jo's decisions such as advocating for education, financial independence, and equal rights transcend personal empowerment and contribute to the collective welfare of her family and broader society. By prioritizing societal progress alongside her ambitions, Jo becomes a figure of ethical agency, bridging personal happiness with social responsibility.

2) Contrasts with Previous Research

While earlier studies have largely focused on feminist theories, such as those of Simone de Beauvoir or Elaine Walter, this research introduces a novel perspective by applying Mill's utilitarian framework. Feminist readings often center on Jo's resistance to gender stereotypes and her pursuit of autonomy, but they do not fully explore the ethical dimensions of her actions in terms of their broader societal impact. By emphasizing Mill's principles of collective happiness and equality, this study shows that Jo's actions are not only acts of rebellion against patriarchy but also efforts to maximize societal welfare. This contrast highlights how utilitarian ethics can complement feminist critiques, offering a holistic understanding of Jo's character.

3) Strengths of the Research

This research bridges the gap between feminist critique and philosophical ethics, offering a

multidisciplinary approach to analyzing Jo March's character. By contextualizing Jo's decisions within Mill's utilitarianism, the study highlights her as an ethical role model who balances personal ambition with societal contributions. The analysis enriches literary discourse by demonstrating how individual actions can align with ethical principles to promote collective progress. Furthermore, this research underscores the relevance of utilitarianism in addressing contemporary issues of gender equality and social justice, showcasing its applicability beyond philosophical contexts.

4) Weaknesses and Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, its reliance on qualitative data introduces the possibility of interpretive bias, as the analysis is influenced by the researcher's perspective. Additionally, the focus on Jo's character, while central to the narrative, overlooks the contributions of other characters, such as Meg, Amy, or Beth, who also navigate societal expectations in meaningful ways. By centering on Jo, the study risks simplifying the film's broader commentary on gender and equality. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating quantitative data, such as audience reception studies, or by conducting comparative analyses of all the March sisters to provide a more comprehensive view of the film's themes.

5) Novelty of the Findings

This research is groundbreaking in its application of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism to the character of Jo March in *Little Women*. While previous studies have predominantly analyzed Jo's actions through feminist theories, this study reveals the ethical dimensions of her decisions, highlighting her commitment to collective happiness, the quality of happiness, and equality. By framing her resistance to societal norms as a utilitarian endeavor, this research provides a fresh perspective that emphasizes Jo's role not only as a feminist icon but also as a moral agent. This novel approach enriches discussions on the intersection of literature, philosophy, and gender, offering insights that are both theoretically robust and socially relevant. This research shows the utilitarian traits that exist in Jo March's character, how Jo March performs utilitarian actions and investigates the reasons and social implications of Jo March's utilitarian behavior. This research highlights her role as an individual who contributes to collective happiness and equality.

4. Conclusion

Utilitarianism is a normative ethics theory that states that good actions mean actions that maximize happiness and well-being for as many people as possible. Utilitarianism in John Stuart Mill's view, emphasizes quality happiness and the consequences of an action taken by a person. The actions that Jo March takes in the film *Little Women* reflect principles of utilitarianism developed by John Stuart Mill. Those are (1) Jo March shows quality deep and meaningful happiness, (2) Jo March does not only chase happiness in his personal but is also determined to give happiness and well-being to society, (3) Jo is determined to reach happiness with fight for dreams and prosperity. Lots of individuals who give deep happiness are good for themselves and the people around them, such as establishing a school, and living with his family, and (4) Jo shows awareness in-depth and fighting social rights that at the moment were still neglected. Sacrifice individuals also become an important part of utilitarianism principles which is seen when Jo sells her hair to help her family and rejects Laurie's proposal to maintain freedom and pursue her dream as a magnitude writer. In this matter, Jo

shows that freedom is right for every individual to determine his road in life without being bound by norms of social restrictions as seen in his refusal of traditional woman role. Jo also fought for her equality, good through access to equal education for all genders and through her efforts to give equal opportunity to women to achieve their dreams. Jo March's actions reflect principles of utilitarianism as viewed by John Stuart Mill's view with a focus on collective happiness as well as to struggle for freedom and equality rights that made Jo March an important symbol in the transformation of better a society.

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