

## **2. WOMEN'S ISSUES IN THE NOVEL *LITTLE WOMEN* (1868) AND ITS KOREAN SERIES ADAPTATION (2022)**

In this chapter, the writer provides the analysis on the adaptation of the novel to a Korean series with the same title, *Little Women* (2022). The writer provides what are the issues of second and third wave feminism in both works, and how the issues are being portrayed in both works. The analysis is in one part. The explanation will be about the issues of the second and third wave of feminism, such as choice, behavior, and role of women that are portrayed in both the novel and the Korean series adaptation. In addition, I also provide explanations of the context surrounding each issue that occurred during the respective time periods depicted in both works.

### **2.1 Issues of Choice in the Novel and Korean Series**

Within the fluid terrain of the second and third wave of feminism, choices become a focus for reshaping social norms as well as a potent motivator for personal empowerment. Women are advocated to have autonomy and agency over their decisions. This section delves into the empowerment of women to make choices in their lives. In this section, I intend to delve into the themes of job and marital affairs in the novel, as well as the job affairs portrayed in the Korean series adaptation. The choices the female characters take are against their socio-cultural contexts: Victorian Britain and present-day South Korea.

#### **2.1.1 Issues of Choices in the Novel: Job/Marital Affairs**

This subchapter elaborates into the portrayal of women in the novel *Little Women* concerning the issue of choices. It explicates how the narrative depicts women as capable of making decisions and choices in their own lives. Jo, the second child and main character, is portrayed as the family's breadwinner while their father is away at war and their mother tends to the household. When Mrs. March receives news of Mr. March's illness and is invited to visit him, Jo is presented as a woman with agency, able to navigate her own path in terms of both career and marriage.

In the novel, Jo is portrayed as an independent woman. By that, Jo is the kind of woman who wants to choose her own path. She wants to be herself and does not want to change her personality to please others such as men. In this section, the writer would show how Jo could have freedom in terms of choice of job in the novel. It can be seen from quotation below:

*I do think THE WITCHES CURSE, an Operatic Tragedy is rather a nice thing, but I'd like to try McBETH, if we only had a trapdoor for Banquo. I always wanted to do the killing part. 'Is that a dagger that I see before me?' muttered Jo, rolling her eyes and clutching at the air, as she had seen a famous tragedian do" (Alcott, 1868, p.12)*

It was always Jo's dream to be a writer. From the quotation above, Jo stated that "Operatic Tragedy is rather a nice thing, but I'd like to try McBETH". Jo's statement here refers to a tragedy opera that is quite common in the Victorian era. Operatic tragedy, characterized by themes of doomed love and intense emotions, was indeed popular during the Victorian era (1837-1901). Famous works like Verdi's "La Traviata," Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor," and Gounod's "Faust" exemplify this genre's appeal to audiences fascinated by passion and drama. Victorian audiences were especially drawn to operas with themes of passion, romance, and tragedy because these genres captivated them. Operatic tragedies' emotional depth and spectacle afforded audiences a haven from the everyday grind and an opportunity to feel strong emotions under supervision. Consequently, operatic tragedy was a major force in the Victorian cultural environment. According to Jo, she stated that tragedy is also good, but she wanted to break it by saying that she wants to try another. She also stated about what she wants, "I always wanted to do the killing part" and refers to a famous tragedy at that time. Instead of following the stereotypes, Jo chooses to break the stereotype and do what the others do not do.

*...And he said it was good, and I shall write more, and he's going to get the next paid for, and I am so happy, for in time I may be able to support myself and help the girls.' Jo's breath gave out here, and wrapping her head in the paper, she bedewed her little story with a few natural tears, for to be independent and earn the praise of those she loved were the dearest wishes of her heart, and this seemed to be the first step toward that happy end (Alcott, 1868, p.277-278).*

From the example above, Jo's career choice as a writer serves as a prominent example of her freedom to forge her own path. Being a writer has also been Jo's dream for a long time and she achieved it. For Jo, "that happy end" refers to being self-sufficient and independent, which she can accomplish via her writing. This insignificant publication will help her accomplish her aim, in fact. Nonetheless, Jo's story is characterized as pitiful and impassioned. Indeed, Jo's stories are highly sentimental, frequently culminating in several deaths, and bear similarities to the writings Louisa May Alcott penned and published under false pretenses (Santi & Rahmi, 2019). Jo appears to have found complete happiness in writing. As a result, she chooses to be a writer to find her own happiness.

In the next example, Jo stated truly about what she wants. Not only her job as a writer, but also what kind of genre that she wants to choose in her writing. It can be seen below:

*Do you say she makes a good living out of stories like this?' And Jo looked more respectfully at the agitated group and thickly sprinkled exclamation points that adorned the page. 'Guess she does! She knows just what folks like, and gets paid well for writing it (Alcott, 1868, p.468 – 469).*

In this section, Jo makes the bold decision to try her hand at this form of writing by recognizing her "mild romances" for what they truly are. Jo does, in fact, realize that she has finally learned to do something well when her story, "full of desperation and despair," is published and paid for with a \$100 bill. She also gets to experience the taste of true independence. Moreover, the narrator also stated that "Jo enjoyed a taste of this satisfaction, and ceased to envy richer girls, taking great comfort in the knowledge that she could supply her own wants, and need ask no one for a penny" (Alcott, 1868, p.472). Therefore, it could be concluded that she has finally overcome one of her trials. First, as shown, if we are to read the narrative of the March girls as Jo's tale, sentimental narratives are undoubtedly present. Jo experiences financial ruin and is thereby harmed by her class and gender in the end. Sharing her narrative and making money enables her to advance financial self-sufficiency and the resilience not to get envious of wealthy girls.

In terms of job, being a writer, itself is quite a common job in the Victorian era, which is the socio-cultural context of the novel. There were several women writers in the Victorian era, such as

Judith Sargent Murray, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Emily Dickinson (Victorian Era, 2020). However, most women writers come from the middle to upper class. For example, Judith Sargent Murray. Murray was the eldest of Winthrop Sargent and Judith Saunders Sargent's eight children, born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on May 1, 1751. The Sargent family was a prosperous merchant family (Michals, 2015). Not only Murray, but Stowe also comes from a remarkable family. One of the most notable families of the 19th century included Harriet Beecher. Raised in an environment of education and moral sincerity, she was the sister of Edward, Henry Ward, and Catharine and the daughter of well-known Congregationalist clergyman Lyman Beecher. She taught in her sister Catharine's school in Hartford, Connecticut, after attending it from 1824 to 1827 (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). While education for women at that time was quite difficult to access.

If we see Jo in *Little Women* (1868), she comes from different situations than most Victorian female authors. She was born and raised in a low-class family. In Victorian England, most working-class women were forced to work to support their families. They were employed in family enterprises, factories, or as domestic help for wealthier homes. A lot of women also worked from home, doing tasks like laundromats, snack preparation for the market or streets, and finishing clothes and shoes for factories. This was on top of the unpaid labor they did at home, where they also cleaned, cooked, looked after the kids, and frequently raised small animals and produced fruit and vegetables to support their families (*19th and Early 20th Century: Striking Women*, n.d.). In the past, women and the impoverished were not allowed to attend formal schools, which hindered their ability to write professionally in general and, for women specifically, made it impossible for them to pursue careers in the home (Dias, 2010). In the novel, it was told that Jo only went to school for low-class people. As she sarcastically said in the novel: "But now, thanks to my good old aunt, who loved me better than I ever deserved, I'm rich, at least I feel so, and we can live at Plumfield perfectly well, if we have a flourishing school" (Alcott, 1868, p. 846 – 847). Plumfield is not an ideal place to live as Jo said herself: "Plumfield is about as gay as a churchyard, you know, and I'd rather be excused" (Alcott, 1868, p.192). She was also treated badly in school. If we investigate the context of being a writer in the Victorian era, education is one important aspect for a writer. Still and all, Jo did not give up on her dream. She still tries to fight for her dreams to come true. Her writings are being appreciated, "And he said it was good, and I shall write more" (Alcott, 1868, p.277). This indicates

that at that time, her choice to be a writer even though she comes from a low-class family is being appreciated.

Not only in terms of job, Jo and Beth are also being portrayed as characters who enjoy freedom of choice in terms of marriage. It can be seen in the example below:

*I only mean to say that I have a feeling that it never was intended I should live long. I'm not like the rest of you. I never made any plans about what I'd do when I grew up. I never thought of being married, as you all did" (Alcott, 1868, p.657).*

As we know, in the Victorian era, it became like a must to get married and have her own family. However, Beth stated her choice that she does not want to get married, like her other siblings. As we know, the other sibling, such as Meg, sees that marriage is a must in her life, "People don't have fortunes left in that style nowadays, men must work, and women marry for money. It's a dreadfully unjust world,' said Meg" (Alcott, 1868, p.280).

Besides that, Jo also stated hardly that when she wants to marry, Jo wants to marry the one she really loves in her life. It can be seen from the quotation below:

*Now Aunt March possessed in perfection the art of rousing the spirit of opposition in the gentlest people, and enjoyed doing it. The best of us have a spice of perversity in us, especially when we are young and in love. If Aunt March had begged Meg to accept John Brooke, she would probably have declared she couldn't think of it, but as she was preemptorily ordered not to like him, she immediately made up her mind that she would. Inclination as well as perversity made the decision easy, and being already much excited, Meg opposed the old lady with unusual spirit. 'I shall marry whom I please, Aunt March, and you can leave your money to anyone you like,' she said, nodding her head with a resolute air (Alcott, 1868, p.402 – 403).*

From her quotation above, Jo clearly stated that "I shall marry whom I please, Aunt March, and you can leave your money to anyone you like". The context of the quotation above is when Jo spoke to Aunt March. Aunt March is a person that thinks money is everything. Aunt March asked Jo to get married because of money. Since Jo's family background is quite poor, Aunt March pushed Jo to get

married as soon as possible to make her family's economic situation more stable. Then, Jo stated that if she wants to get married, she has to marry the one who she really loves, not because of the money.

In the novel *Little Women*, there is one character that believes in love and marriage. Despite her siblings that keep rejecting the idea, Meg, the first child, is the one who thinks that love is real. At the end of the story, Meg marries John, and she truly loves him even though he is poor. It can be seen from the line below:

*'I couldn't do better if I waited half my life! John is good and wise, he's got heaps of talent, he's willing to work and sure to get on, he's so energetic and brave. Everyone likes and respects him, and I'm proud to think he cares for me, though I'm so poor and young and silly,' said Meg, looking prettier than ever in her earnestness. 'Aunt March, how dare you say such a thing? John is above such meanness, and I won't listen to you a minute if you talk so,' cried Meg indignantly, forgetting everything but the injustice of the old lady's suspicions. 'My John wouldn't marry for money, any more than I would. We are willing to work and we mean to wait. I'm not afraid of being poor, for I've been happy so far, and I know I shall be with him because he loves me, and I..'* Meg stopped there, remembering all of a sudden that she hadn't made up her mind, that she had told 'her John' to go away, and that he might be overhearing her inconsistent remarks. (Alcott, 1868, p. 404 – 405).

The conversation above happened between Meg and Aunt March. Aunt March thought that if Meg marries John, her life would be awful because John is poor. Meg was so mad at Aunt March's word about John. She stated clearly that John would not marry her for the money. She is willing to work and wait, as long as she is with John. Meg is also happy with what she chooses, it can be seen from her words above "I've been happy so far, and I know I shall be with him because he loves me...". In terms of choices, Meg also shows that she chooses what she wants. Her siblings, especially Jo, judge her choices because Jo does not believe that marriage is a good idea. It can be seen from her words to Meg: "He's showing you how your John will go on by-and by. Touchin, isn't it?" answered Jo scornfully" (Alcott, 1868, p. 395). Jo's words to Meg look like she doubts Meg's choices to marry. However, Meg still chooses what she wants to do, which is marry John.

In the Victorian era, women were expected to do a lot of things, such as marriage and taking care of their children and husband. Marriage itself in the Victorian era is seen as something that women must do in their life. In Victorian society, a woman's primary responsibility was to marry and support her husband's interests and business (Apell, 2018). Not only for upper class, but for all classes. In this era, when marriage became increasingly important for middle and upper-class families, it was typically arranged by the mother of the family. As Perkin (1989, as cited in McDonnell, 2018) puts it, marriage became the "means by which families were consolidated, strong bonds of friendship, patronage and career advancement were forged, and the family's reputation was made" (McDonnell, 2018). In other words, marriage for the middle and upper-class becomes an action to uniting two families in terms of friendship, career, and family's reputation. Different from middle and upper class, for lower class, they could have more choices in terms of marriage or choose their spouse. For the middle and upper class, divorce is an easy thing. While for lower class, divorce is quite expensive. Only the wealthy could afford to file for divorce in the first place due to the high cost of divorce (McDonnell, 2018). Due to that reason, the lower class could choose their spouse more "cautious" because divorce is too expensive for them to afford. This case is also shown in the *Little Women* novel. Meg, as stated above, has her own choice in terms of choosing her partner. Meg stated in the novel, "My John wouldn't marry for money, any more than I would. We are willing to work, and we mean to wait. I'm not afraid of being poor, for I've been happy so far, and I know I shall be with him because he loves me" (Alcott, 1868, p.405). She wants to have a partner that is her choice, so she could live happily with him, even though maybe they could find it difficult in terms of money.

Choices are integral to the second and third waves of feminism. In the second wave, choices revolved primarily around crucial issues like reproductive rights, equal opportunities in education and employment, and challenging traditional gender roles within relationships. This wave focused on women's autonomy in making decisions about their bodies, careers, and personal lives, advocating for greater freedom from societal constraints. Building upon this foundation, the third wave expands the notion of choice to include a more intersectional and diverse understanding, considering factors such as race, class, sexuality, and ability. It broadens the scope of choice to encompass decisions about body autonomy, self-expression, and sexuality, promoting a more inclusive and empowering approach to women's agency (Bruley, 2019). Unlike previous waves, the

third wave respects the variety of ways in which women manage their lives while acknowledging the complex intersectionality of identities. It emphasizes the value of individual agency as a fundamental right, advocating for the ability to make decisions about one's profession, relationships, reproductive health, and personal expression. By breaking down inflexible dichotomies and allowing women to choose their own paths, third wave feminism seeks to empower women and dismantle societal systems that historically limited them (Mclyntre, 2021).

In the novel *Little Women*, choices can be seen in both waves. Jo, described as a woman that must fight hard for her own choices. For example, in terms of Jo, as a woman who does not want to get married. Since the novel was taking time during the Victorian era, Jo's choice is seen as something that is not common and weird. Women must get married at that time was the stereotype of women, and Jo did not want to do that. This indicates that Jo could choose what she wants to do in her life. However, Jo tried so hard so she could keep her choices. During the emergence of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a significant focus on challenging traditional gender norms and advocating for women's self-sufficiency and freedom. In the *Little Women* novel, the marriage decisions made by the March sisters reflect this ideology. Despite the prevalent belief in the Victorian era that marriage was the aim for women, the sisters chart their own courses in matters of love. Jo March, notably, wrestles with societal pressures but ultimately opts for a path aligned with her personal convictions and dreams, underscoring her individuality and pursuit of literary ambitions.

In the context of the *Little Women* novel, the third wave feminism is shown through Meg. Meg shows boldly that she has her own choice, which is getting married to John. Even though her other siblings judge her choices, she does not care. She still makes her own choices, and she is happy with it. The decision to be married then symbolizes a celebration of several routes to happiness and satisfaction in the third wave of feminism. The third wave of feminism acknowledges that marriage may be a decision made by certain people. Marriage may provide a sense of fulfillment and empowerment for certain people. Put differently, third wave feminism highlights the significance of personal agency when it comes to making decisions, especially those regarding marriage. It also supports the notion that people ought to be free to decide for themselves if, when, and with whom to get married, free from expectations or social pressure.

### 2.1.2 Issues of Choice in the Korean Series: Job Affairs

In the Korean series, the three siblings: Oh In-joo, Oh In-kyung, and Oh In-hye are depicted as women empowered to make their own life choices, particularly concerning their careers and educational journey. The examples of how these characters have the freedom to do what they wanted can be seen below:



**Figure 2.1** *Little Women* Korean series episode 2: Oh In-joo with her choice

**Source: Won, 2022**

Korean women face ongoing challenges in attaining autonomy and equitable treatment in contemporary society, impacting their choices and roles in various domains like the workplace. In this scene, Oh In-joo decides to be involved in the case of missing 70 billion won and hidden bank account by Jin Hwa-young. Jin Hwa-young is Oh In-joo's friend in the office and she was found dead in her rented house. Jin Hwa-young was found dead hanging in her wardrobe. However, after her death, her company found out that she embezzled money and has a hidden bank account to hide money she has in several countries. Jin Hwa-young is known as someone who does not really have a lot of friends or colleagues. The only person that is known as Jin Hwa-young's only friend is Oh In-joo. Therefore, Oh In-joo was urged to get involved in the case. Since Oh In-joo is the only person that is close to Jin Hwa-young, Oh In-joo was expected to know something about this case or at

least, could help the team to find out about the case. Oh In-joo was offered a lot of money at first but she always refused. At the end, Oh In-joo felt that she must reveal the case. She chooses to be involved and gives a requirement to them. It can be seen from the quotation of the Korean series below:

*Oh In-joo: I think I might be able to do a good job. But I have a few requests. First, I don't want to return to the office. I'll work somewhere else. The International Orchid Society? You said our CEO is the chairman there, right?*

*Choi Do-il: I'll take what you'll need there.*

*Oh In-joo: Second. Please don't call the deceased a thieving bitch.*

*Shin Hyun-min: What else would I call her?*

*Oh In-joo: If Hwa-young really committed the crime, of course it would leave you feeling awful. But if you keep calling her a thieving bitch, I feel like you'll tell people I'm a thieving bitch's friend. From where I stand, I still can't believe Hwa-young did something like that. I'll start to find the evidence of her embezzlement and slowly try to believe it.*

(Won, 2022)

From the dialogue above, Oh In-joo clearly stated that before doing the task, she must get what she deserves. Oh In-joo clearly shows her choice here. She chooses to get involved, but she also gives requirements to those who asked for her help. Oh In-joo is an employee that did not come from a wealthy family background. She also did not have a good educational background either. In South Korea itself, since 1990, the percentage of Koreans who feel they have "freedom of choice and control over their lives" has been falling, and this happened both to men and women (Rieger, 2022). Moreover, women themselves also experience inequality, which affects Korean women today on a social, cultural, and economic level. Historically speaking, since the Korean economy began to flourish in the 1970s, there has been a significant improvement in the issue of gender disparity. Korean women still face numerous obstacles in their quest for fair treatment from all societal segments (Jin-young et al., 2016). Women also could not get to participate a lot to make a choice during the work time. According to Jin-young et al., (2016), in 2011, only 23.4% women could contribute to make a choice in their workplace.

However, there is a contrast between the stereotypes of women in the workplace in South Korea and in the Korean series *Little Women*. In the Korean series, even though she did not

come from a wealthy family or good educational background, Oh In-joo has courage to choose. Even so, she also has the courage to give an option to Shin Hyun-min and Choi Do-il, who are men, and have higher status than her. In addition, in the scene above, Oh In-joo's eyes looked firm. Besides that, she has no expression when saying her requirements. It indicates that she is serious, and she does not want to be debated due to her choices. The background is also blurred, which makes the viewers focus on Oh In-joo and her choice.

Not only Oh In-joo, Oh In-kyung, the second child also portrayed women as an individual that can have freedom to choose in terms of job. It can be seen from the example below:



**Figure 2.2** *Little Women* Korean series episode 1: Oh In-kyung with her choice

**Source: Won, 2022**

Oh In-kyung shows that she could make a choice in her job, to be more specific, to state her opinion about any topics and to touch/challenge those in power. In this scene, it happened when Oh In-kyung was having a meeting with another reporter regarding the news of Park Jae-sang. In this context, Park Jae-sang, as a politician who wants to be a mayor in Seoul, saying his apologies to

what his father-in-law, Won Ki-seon, did to the ex-Korean soldier in the Vietnam War and vilified by Defense Security Command. Defense Security Command itself makes the ex-Korean soldier get an injustice and live for 19 years in prison. Park Jae-sang lay on his knee and apologized for what his father-in-law and team had done to him. Oh In-kyung, Choi Ma-ri, her colleague, and her supervisor, Jo Wan-gyu discussed the news. There was a different opinion from Oh In-kyung and Choi Ma-ri. According to Choi Ma-ri, it was good because Park Jae-sang wants to increase his popularity and get the attention from citizens during the voting. While Oh In-kyung has different opinion and she clearly stated it, as can be seen in the transcript below:

*Choi Ma-ri: People love this story.*

*Jo Wan-gyu: What a sight. High society's elite attorney, Park Jae-sang, lowering his head to a poor, long-term prisoner. He wants to run for mayor of Seoul, right?*

*Choi Ma-ri: It was wise to become a candidate for the Civil Party, not the Korean Party. His father-in-law was a big name in the government. To forfeit such a huge political asset without any hesitation shows conviction. He realized the trend was to drop your ideologies.*

*Oh In-kyung: I question his sincerity. He represented Bobae Savings Bank as their lawyer a few years ago.*

*Choi Ma-ri: He was in charge of large corporations at his firm. That's not shocking.*

*Oh In-kyung: Bobae Savings Bank got its capital from the military regime as special treatment. People may lie, but money is honest.*

*Choi Ma-ri: Based on big data, Park Jae-sang will be the mayor of Seoul. We should prepare for it.*

*Oh In-kyung: I'll find out what role he played in the trial. We should look into that much.*

*Jo Wan-gyu: Ma-ri, In-kyung, look into it separately. This man is intriguing.*

(Won, 2022).

From their conversation above, it is evident that Oh In-kyung is a woman who approaches situations with a critical lens, challenging norms and conventions. While Choi Ma-ri sees nothing wrong about Park Jae-sang's action, Oh In-kyung sees something deeply troubling. During the scene where Park Jae-sang apologizes to the ex-Korean soldiers, the only one apologizing is Park Jae-sang. While her wife and the daughter of Won Ki-seon, Won Sang-a, only stands there. Supposedly, if Won

Sang-a really feels bad for the ex-Korean soldiers, she should lay down on her knees too. But then, Won Sang-a only stands and this one indicates that she does not really feel sorry. She only follows her husband and stays there so that her husband's image will be raised during the voting. Oh In-kyung, sees this as something that is strange. At the end, she stated clearly that they must investigate the case deeper. Oh In-kyung's choice here is quite interesting. By investigating Park Jae-sang's case, that also means that she contributes to politics as well, since Park Jae-sang is a politician.

The third child, Oh In-hye, is portrayed as a child who could have her own freedom in terms of choices of life as well. It can be seen from the example below:



**Figure 2.3 – Little Women Korean series episode 4: Oh In-hye with her choice**

**Source: Won, 2022**

As the youngest sibling among the Oh siblings, Oh In-hye demonstrates her ability to exercise autonomy in determining her educational path. This scene happened at Oh sister's house. Oh In-hye says to the oldest, Oh In-joo that tomorrow, she will go with Park Hyo-rin, Park Jae-sang's daughter and her friend, to Boston to study abroad. They were having a fight. According to Oh In-joo, Oh In-hye does not have to act like a maid to Hyo-rin's family. Then, Oh In-hye stated that it will be better if she becomes a maid in Park Hyo-rin's house rather than see her two siblings fight hard just to make her study abroad. In addition, in episode 1, it was said that Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung had some money as a gift for Oh In-hye's birthday so she can go on a field trip to Europe. Then, their

mother takes the money and runs away. However, in the episode 3, Oh In-hye then stated her choice hardly that can be seen from their conversation below:

*Oh In-hye: Hyo-rin is going to Boston Arts High School next semester. Her mom was supposed to go with her, but she can't because of the election. The problem is Hyo-rin can't sleep or eat alone. That's why I'm going with her.*

*Oh In-joo: Why would you? Are you her maid? Tell them you're not going. I'll be the one sending you to study abroad.*

*Oh In-hye: How? By doing back-breaking work? Through another crazy marriage? How would that make me feel?*

*Oh In-joo: Whether I break my back or get married, I'll take care of it! Nothing in this world is free. If you owe someone beyond what you can pay off, God knows that you'll have to give in return later.*

*Oh In-hye: I'd much rather live as a maid in Hyo-rin's house than live like you two in this house.*

*Oh In-joo: What?*

*Oh In-hye: I made up my mind when Mom took off with my field trip money. That I'll do anything to get out of here. Nothing in this world is free, In-joo. If you break your back to send me abroad, how am I supposed to pay you back? You'd already be crippled by then. Mom already submitted her consent to the school. After all, you're not my mom.*

(Won, 2022).

Oh In-hye's assertion of individual choice and autonomy, despite traditional expectations of deference to elders and familial authority, calls into question long-standing conventions within Korean family systems. From their conversation above, Oh In-joo and Oh In-hye were having a fight regarding Oh In-hye's choice. Oh In-joo, as Oh In-hye's older sister, feels that she has the right to determine what kind of choice that Oh In-hye takes in her life. However, Oh In-hye stated clearly that she wants to do it after all. She does not listen to what others say, even if it is her own sister. This one seems interesting because usually, the younger one must follow what the oldest said. Respect for elders and filial piety are fundamental to the Korean family structure. Elders are respected for their knowledge and experience, and family disputes are resolved by consulting them (Lee & Holm, 2011). However, Oh In-hye stated clearly in a firm voice that she wanted to choose what she wanted to do. She also reverses Oh In-joo's words, Oh In-joo said that nothing is free. Or in that context, if Oh In-hye studied abroad paid by Park Hyo-rin's family, one day she must pay it

back as well. Oh In-hye, reverses it by saying that it will be just the same if Oh In-joo is the one who pays for her study. Especially if Oh In-joo takes an “unique” way to Oh In-hye, such as contract marriage again, for Oh In-hye, she cannot pay it back. Therefore, she stated clearly that she wanted to go with Park Hyo-rin. It will be much better instead of watching the other siblings work hard only for her. Oh In-hye as her own individual had her own choice and she wanted to do it no matter what. Oh In-hye’s position is standing, while Oh In-joo sits down. Her position indicates that her choice cannot be debated with anything. It also shows that Oh In-joo, even though she is her oldest sister, cannot change her choice this time.

The choices made by the Oh sisters in the Korean series "Little Women" reflect aspects of the second and third waves of feminism. Oh In-joo's quest for financial independence and career fulfillment mirrors the second wave's focus on women's rights and workplace equality. Even though the Korean series is taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it still portrays the second wave of feminism, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. There was a strong emphasis on challenging traditional gender roles and promoting women's independence and autonomy. Women sought to break free from societal expectations that limited their opportunities and choices, including in matters of education, careers, and personal aspirations. During this time, it saw significant advancements in women's rights, including access to education and employment opportunities, as well as the recognition of women's agency in determining their own paths in life. To strike a balance between equality and desire, women make a wide range of decisions, and third-wave feminism aims to be inclusive and tolerant of these choices. Third-wave feminism is pluralistic and starts from the presumption that women frequently interpret comparable events differently and do not have a single gender identity or set of experiences. It aims to prevent exclusions based on gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity, and other factors (Synder-Hall, 2010). In other words, choices are one of key aspects in the third wave of feminism. Women that make her choice strongly indicates the third wave of feminism. For example, in Oh In-joo’s example, she could make a choice in terms of her job. She could even offer, regarding her choices, someone that has a better background than her. Oh In-kyung is also portrayed as an individual that could have a strong choice. Oh In-kyung could choose to be involved in Park Jae-sang’s case. Despite her older siblings' objections, Oh In-hye chose to study abroad with Park Hyo-rin, illustrating her insistence on making

her own decisions and highlighting the third wave's emphasis on individual agency and personal autonomy.

In terms of choices, the significant difference between the novel and the series lies in the aspect of their respective 'choices'. In the novel, it is more about marriage and jobs. While in the Korean series, like what I explained in this section, it is into jobs and their path of life. In the novel and Korean series, choices can be seen in both waves. The choices the March sisters make regarding marriage illustrate this mindset. Despite the prevailing belief in the Victorian era that marriage was the primary goal for women, the sisters forge their own paths in matters of love. Jo March, in particular, grapples with societal expectations but ultimately chooses a direction that resonates with her personal beliefs and aspirations, highlighting her unique identity and commitment to her literary ambitions. Similarly, within the context of third wave feminism, opting not to marry is seen as an affirmation of diverse routes to happiness and satisfaction, challenging conventional societal norms that elevate marriage as the ultimate objective for women. In the Korean series, in the realm of third wave feminism, the concept of women choosing their own jobs and lifestyles embodies principles of autonomy, empowerment, and inclusivity. This ideology celebrates the diversity of women's experiences and recognizes the importance of agency in pursuing paths that align with individual interests, passions, and values and it acknowledges the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds and advocating for the amplification of marginalized voices.

## **2.2 Issues of Behavior in the Novel & Korean Series Adaptation**

In this section, I would like to discuss how women in the novel and the Korean series adaptation behave in relation to the second and third wave of feminisms. According to Oxford Dictionary, behavior itself is "the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others". It also can be said as "the way in which an animal or person acts in response to a particular situation or stimulus". Behavior itself has many aspects, such as physical actions (body movement or gestures), verbal communication (how they speak, their voice's tone, and choice of words), emotional expressions (how they react to a problem and their emotion), also social and cognitive (how they interact each other and internal mental activities) (Team, 2023).

### 2.2.1 Issues of Behavior in the Novel: Language, Manner, and Appearance

This subchapter elaborates the portrayal of women in the novel *Little Women* related to the issue of behavior. In this section, the writer would explain how the novel portrays a woman who has different behaviors than other women, and she could be judged in the society.

The setting of time in the novel was the Victorian era. Women were considered to be physically and emotionally fragile, yet morally superior. In other words, during the Victorian era, women were expected to be kind in terms of morals. Women are expected to have children in the future; therefore, they must have a “good moral” so they could raise their children well. This kind of “good moral” that women teach to their children should be reflected in their language, manner, and appearance. Therefore, at that time, if women are “different” in the context of everything, women are being judged. The example can be seen in the quotation below:

*‘Jo does use such slang words!’ observed Amy, with a reproving look at the long figure stretched on the rug. Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle. ‘Don’t, Jo. It’s so boyish!’ ‘That’s why I do it.’ ‘I detest rude, unladylike girls!’ ‘I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!’”(Alcott, 1868, p.5).*

From the quotation above, Jo exhibits a style akin to that of men and refuses to accept the stereotypes of women. Jo was rebuffed in comparison to a woman who appeared prestigious and possessed graceful demeanor. The remark, "Jo does use such slang words!" implies that during the Victorian era, women were expected to exhibit a certain demeanor and gracefulness. When Jo uses slang typically associated with men, it challenges societal norms regarding women's behavior and language. Similar to the aforementioned point, Jo's use of slang suggests her desire to blur the distinctions between genders. This is evident in her statement, "That's why I do it," indicating her refusal to conform to gendered expectations. Furthermore, her use of the phrase "...niminy piminy chits!" serves as evidence of her departure from the typical feminine character expected during that period. Jo strives to emulate men's freedom to engage in activities based on their own desires rather than conforming to societal norms imposed upon women.

In the Victorian era, women's language was intricately intertwined with the societal expectations and norms surrounding femininity. Women were expected to communicate with a

degree of formality and politeness, adhering to established conventions of proper conduct. This often meant employing honorifics and respectful language, even in casual conversations, to convey deference and respect towards others, particularly those of higher social status. Furthermore, Victorian society placed a strong emphasis on female modesty and reserve, dictating that women should avoid discussing topics deemed inappropriate or controversial and instead speak in a manner that was modest and demure (Cote, 2020). Despite these constraints, many Victorian women were well-educated and possessed eloquent speaking abilities, albeit within the boundaries set by societal expectations. Their expression was often refined and restrained, reflecting both their education and their adherence to societal norms. Additionally, women's wording style in the Victorian era was shaped by prevailing gender norms, which dictated that women should be nurturing, supportive, and deferential to men. This could manifest in language that was deferential or submissive in tone, particularly in interactions with male counterparts, as women were expected to conform to traditional gender roles. Overall, women's wording style in the Victorian era was a complex interplay of societal expectations, gender norms, and individual expression, reflecting the broader cultural and social landscape of the time (Marsh, 2023). In *Little Women*, Jo's slang and boyish behavior go against the Victorian era's rules for how women should act and speak. Back then, women were expected to be formal, polite, modest, and reserved. Jo's actions, like whistling and using slang, show her resistance to these strict rules. She wants to be independent and doesn't want to follow the expectations that women should be submissive and ladylike. Through Jo, Alcott highlights the struggle between being true to oneself and following society's expectations.

Not only in terms of language, but Jo is also portrayed as a woman who has different manners, such as does not like to wear long gown and prefer play boy's game, not like the others. For example, Jo has tomboyish manners, different than her siblings, and it can be seen below:

*I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty,' cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down a chestnut mane. 'I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China Aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy. And it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!' And Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room (Alcott, 1868, p.5-6).*

From her statement above, Jo is quite tomboyish. She stated that she does not like to be a girl. In her statement above, Jo outspokenly expresses her dislike for conventional femininity and makes it apparent that she would much rather have an unusual life. She publicly states, "It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners!" in defiance of the expectations society places on her as a girl. This idea is reinforced throughout the story by Jo's constant participation in male-dominated hobbies like tree-climbing and forgoing needlework in favor of following her passion for writing. Her contempt for feminine conduct and clothes, as well as her desire for the freedom to partake in more daring activities usually associated with boys, serve as more examples of her defiance of traditional gender norms.

The demands of traditional feminine roles, like household maintenance and caregiving, can be particularly draining for individuals striving for personal fulfillment, and this happens to Jo. It can be seen from her statement below:

*'I'll try and be what he loves to call me, 'a little woman' and not be rough and wild, but do my duty here instead of wanting to be somewhere else,' said Jo, thinking that keeping her temper at home was a much harder task than facing a rebel or two down South (Alcott, 1868, p.15).*

Jo admits in her statement that she is expected to live up to traditional ideas of what it is to be a lady, but she also shares how hard it is for her to control her tomboyish impulses. Her usage of terms like "rough and wild" alludes to her innate propensity for more daring and nonconformist conduct in contrast to the stereotype of women as subdued and refined. Jo's tomboyish attitude is reflected in her internal battle as she tries to be true to herself while battling the demands of society standards. The contradicting signals Jo hears from her friends and family members, among others, exacerbate her internal conflict. She may be commended for displaying more stereotypically feminine traits, but her tomboyish inclinations are also criticized or made fun of, leaving her conflicted between wanting to win over people's approval and wanting to be herself.

Furthermore, Jo also differs in her physical appearance, showing her tomboyish outlook. It can be seen from the quotation below:

*'You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady.' 'I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty,' cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down*

*a chestnut mane. 'I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China Aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy. And it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!' And Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room. 'Poor Jo! It's too bad, but it can't be helped. So you must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls,' said Beth (Alcott, 1868, p. 5 – 6).*

The context above is when the March siblings were kids. From the quotation above, it showed that since her childhood, Jo already showed that she is slightly different than her siblings. Not only that, but it also showed that as a woman, they are expected to have a look like other girls in the Victorian era. Jo does not like that idea. It shows that to be like what she wants; she must face society's stereotype of women. Women's attire during the Victorian era was rife with stereotypes that upheld social norms and traditional gender roles. Due to the prevalent idea that women should wear clothing that embodies femininity and modesty, elaborate dresses with billowing skirts, tight corsets, and exquisite embellishments became popular. In addition to emphasizing a slim waist, these clothes also covered up the female form, which was indicative of the popular belief in the virtue and virginity of women. Women were also required to follow stringent proprietary laws, and they used their clothes to indicate to others how well-off they were and how closely they adhered to social conventions. In addition, it caused discomfort and limited movement, signifying the restrictions Victorian society put on women's initiative and autonomy (*Victorian Fashion and Clothing*, 2017).

In the novel, it was shown that women need to fulfill the society's stereotypes. For instance, they need to fulfill their family needs. Women of the Victorian era embodied the values of selflessness and dedication that were required of them within the social framework of the time, making great sacrifices for the benefit of their families. The idea of domesticity, according to which a woman's main responsibility was to provide a loving and peaceful home environment, was fundamental to the concept of womanhood during this time. To perform their household responsibilities, women frequently forfeited their personal liberty and ambitions, including the chance to pursue higher education and careers. Their life revolved around the wants and welfare of their family members, and they devoted their whole selves to the care of their husbands, kids, and household (Gökçek, 2020). However, in Jo's context, it was different since Jo was not married at that

time. Jo sacrificed what she had for her family, in this context, her hair, so that her family could survive with their financial situation.

Despite her non-traditional behaviors as discussed above, Jo shows that she also still has good morals. In the novel, Jo always expresses the idea that she wants to be herself without thinking about others. However, it goes differently when it comes to her family. Jo could have selfless nature, as can be seen in the example below:

*'Tell me all about it, Jo. I am not quite satisfied, but I can't blame you, for I know how willingly you sacrificed your vanity, as you call it, to your love. But, my dear, it was not necessary, and I'm afraid you will regret it one of these days,' said Mrs. March. 'No, I won't!' returned Jo stoutly, feeling much relieved that her prank was not entirely condemned. 'What made you do it?' asked Amy, who would as soon have thought of cutting off her head as her pretty hair. 'Well, I was wild to something for Father,' replied Jo, as they gathered about the table, for healthy young people can eat even in the midst of trouble. 'I hate to borrow as much as Mother does, and I knew Aunt March would croak, she always does, if you ask for a ninepence. Meg gave all her quarterly salary toward the rent, and I only got some clothes with mine, so I felt wicked, and was bound to have some money, if I sold the nose off my face to get it'. (Alcott, 1868, p.288 – 289).*

In this context, Jo wants to help her family economically. This emerges when the March family is going through financial hardship. The family is informed that their father, Mr. March, is unwell and requires their mother's support. Nevertheless, the family finds it difficult to pay for Mrs. March's vacation because money is already scarce. Jo decides to find a solution after seeing how upset her mother is and how urgent the situation is. Jo takes the unselfish choice to chop off her long hair and sell it to Aunt March, even though she has a deep relationship with it and sees it as a representation of her identity and independence. This action shows Jo's creativity, readiness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others, and abiding love and commitment to her family, particularly her mother. In addition, Jo felt that she could not contribute much to her family, since she had nothing to do with her things, such as clothes like Meg had. Therefore, she sells something that might be priceless from herself, which is her hair.

Jo's sacrifices for her family in "*Little Women*" might be interpreted as a challenge to and a reflection of conventional gender roles. On the one hand, Jo's readiness to put her family's needs ahead of her own is consistent with the stereotype of women as nurturers and caregivers. Her altruism and commitment to her family exemplify the virtues of sacrifice and obligation that are typically linked with femininity. Jo's sacrifices, meanwhile, might also be seen as a rebellion of conventional gender roles. Jo deliberately decides to give up things for her family out of love and

dedication, as opposed to taking on her job as caregiver inertly. Her agency and liberty in deciding to make these sacrifices show that she rejects the notion that women are made for serving other people. Moreover, Jo's goals of self-actualization and independence via her writing contradict the idea that women's lives should only focus on their roles in the home.

The analysis above reveals that Jo is judged by society for her different behaviors, such as her dislike for long gowns, and her preference for boyish activities, setting her apart from her siblings. Jo does not fulfill the stereotypes of women who always are polite in terms of language or dress politely. Stereotypes were contested by second-wave feminism, which also provided voice to women who felt underrepresented in traditional gender roles. During this period, feminism took many different forms. Some claimed that women could not be freed until the breakdown of the family, private property, and the state. While some activists supported fewer radical views, they were all very interested in examining the ways in which gender norms hindered women. Feminists fiercely opposed traditional gender roles and stereotypes during the second wave of feminism movement, which began in the 1960s and lasted until the 1980s. They claimed that these norms restricted women to domestic roles and decreased their chances for both personal fulfillment and social participation. A deliberate attempt was made to give voice and representation to women who felt marginalized or underrepresented because of their gender, color, class, sexual orientation, or other intersecting identities during this period of feminism. All second-wave feminists were dedicated to analyzing and confronting the ways that gender norms impeded women's autonomy and equality, even though their viewpoints and methods varied widely, from radical criticisms of social structures to more moderate calls for reform. The movement's main objective was to liberate women by destroying oppressive structures and establishing more inclusive and egalitarian societies. To that end, it critically analyzed how cultural representations and societal institutions enforce and maintain gender norms (Soken-Huberty, 2023).

The second wave of feminism's central themes of feminist empowerment are embodied by Jo's tomboyish behavior in "*Little Women*", which poses a potent challenge to the traditional gender roles that are imposed upon women. Jo's defiance of conventional notions of femininity is evident in her preference for boyish pastimes like writing, reading, and going on outdoor excursions over conventional diversions like needlework and manners classes. Her rejection of these social expectations is consistent with the second wave feminist criticism of the restrictive and inflexible roles that are placed on women, which advocates for gender equality and the deconstruction of

conventional gender stereotypes. Jo's tomboyishness also reflects a strong yearning for freedom and independence, as she challenges social pressure to conform and stands up for her right to self-determination and her own route in life. By way of her persona, "*Little Women*" challenges readers to reevaluate and reinterpret popular ideas about women and gender roles in literature and society. She also offers a gripping story of feminist resistance and empowerment.

Jo's tomboyish actions in the novel can be seen as a spark for greater social change and feminist awareness-raising within the framework of the second wave of feminism. Jo's defiance of gender norms and her quest for freedom and autonomy are in line with the second wave feminist movement's emphasis on the emancipation and empowerment of women. Her persona acts as a symbol of defiance against the constrictive expectations and standards that society imposes on women. Readers are inspired to question patriarchal systems and imagine a more just and inclusive society by following Jo's journey. Furthermore, Jo's tomboyishness encourages readers to reevaluate their own gender stereotypes and preconceptions, which promotes a deeper comprehension of the complexity of gender identity and expression. In this sense, Jo's character in "*Little Women*" acts as a catalyst for critical thought and social change in addition to embodying the principles of the second wave feminist movement.

### **2.2.2 Issues of Behavior in The Korean Series: Emotional Expressions**

In the Korean series adaptation, the Oh sisters exhibit non-traditional behaviors aligned with feminist movements, challenging conventional gender roles and societal norms. To begin with, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung behave like a mother's figure. The examples can be seen below:



**Figure 2.4 – Little Women Korean series episode 1: Oh In-joo ‘s emotional expressions to her mother**

**Source: Won, 2022**

The context is when the Oh siblings and their mother were having dinner. While they were having their dinner, their mother counted the money from Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung’s savings for Oh In-hye. That money should be for Oh In-hye’s birthday present, so she could go on a study tour to Europe. Their mother, who really likes money, thinks that Oh In-hye should not go. Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung heard that, and they got so mad, as can be seen in the transcript below:

- Mother: (take the money) What is wrong with you? What the.. When I wanted to visit your dad in the Philippines after his accident, you said you had no money and that your cards were maxed out.*
- Oh In-joo: Of course, we didn’t. Five years ago, Dad accrued debts of 40 million won from a pyramid scheme and 25 million won from gambling. Plus, 38 million won from investing in a sauna and 70 million won from stocks. We’ve been paying them off for four years. On top of the eight thousand won for rent and two million won for expenses. Our debt grows every time we take a breath. So no, you can’t go to the Philippines because he broke a leg.*
- Mother: Nine, ten. This is 2.5 million won. Still, it’s ridiculous for a high schooler to go on a field trip to Europe.*
- Oh In-hye: Should I not go? I wasn’t planning to go anyway.*
- Oh In-kyung: Mom, In-hye goes to the best arts high school in the country. Did we help her get there? She took the test on her own and got a full scholarship.*
- Mother: But, that.. I thought she got in as a charity case for underprivileged kids.*

*Oh In-joo: When In-hye started school, In-kyung and I made a pact. That even if she can't be like the other kids, we'd make sure that she never feels embarrassed.*

*Mother: In-joo, have you ever gone on a field trip? How about you, In-kyung? I couldn't send either of you on a field trip. Not to Gyeongju, Busan, or Jeju. So as a mother, how can I only let her travel abroad?*

*Oh In-kyung: If In-hye was getting her parents' support like other kids, we could be jealous of our baby sister like ordinary people. But even though In-joo and I have so much debt we need to pay off, we're so happy we can send our sister on a field trip to Europe.*

*Oh In-joo: (take the money from her mother) Stop counting that".*  
(Won, 2022).

Mothers who challenge traditional caregiving roles can disrupt familial expectations, leading to complex family dynamics and conflicts. In the quotation above, it showed that their mother only thinks about herself, not with her family. In South Korea's family context, mothers have a stereotype of self-sacrificing caregivers (Kim, 2001). That means, usually in the South Korea context, a mother always puts the needs of her family above her own. This stereotype places a strong emphasis on a mother's capacity to persevere through adversity and give her whole attention to her husband and children's prosperity. However, this stereotype of mother does not reflect in Oh sibling's mother in *Little Women*. From the quotation above, there was a debate between the Oh siblings and their mother. Their mother felt that it was unfair to her. When she asked their children to give her money to visit their father, the Oh siblings always refused to give it, saying that they did not have any money. However, the first child, Oh In-joo stated that she did that because over the years, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung had to pay the debt and how to survive. Therefore, both always think that Oh In-hye, their older sister, must live a better life than them. Her mother thinks that it is not fair to Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung, because they never experienced field trips in their life, but their sister, Oh In-hye, did. Even though in the next scene, it proved that their mother only wanted to take the money. When the Oh siblings fall asleep, she takes the money and runs away. Oh In-joo really meant what she said, and she was serious about what she said in that scene. In this scene, her eyes look firm, and her facial expression shows that she is disappointed with what her mother said. The background, also blurred, shows that in this scene, the audience should focus on her expression and her words.

Oh In-hye, the third child, also showcased her courage in standing up for her opinion to her other siblings, as can be seen below:



**Figure 2.5 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 3: Oh In-hye’s emotional expressions to Oh In-kyung**

**Source: Won, 2022**

This scene happened in the first two minutes of episode three. In this scene, the second child, Oh In-kyung secretly followed her sister, Oh In-hye. Oh In-kyung finds out that Oh In-hye always followed Park Hyo-rin, and even painted a big painting for her. Later, it showed that Oh In-hye’s painting that she painted for Park Hyo-rin, her family claimed it as Park Hyo-rin’s painting, instead of Oh In-hye’s painting. As a big sister, Oh In-kyung seems to be worried about her, as can be seen in the transcript below:

*Oh In-kyung: This girl, Park Hyo-rin. Is she your friend? Is she harassing you? Are you being bullied? Did you get paid for that painting? Is that it?*

*Oh In-hye: I’m going to use that to study abroad. Hyo-rin’s mom promised to send me to Boston Arts High School with Hyo-rin in return for painting a few pieces for her portfolio.*

*Oh In-kyung: In-hye. That’s a crime.*

*Oh In-hye: Da Vinci, Rembrandt, Velazquez. They all made a living by painting portraits of kings, nobles, and even their dogs. I don’t feel ashamed. You saw my painting. I put my heart and soul into it. I imagined that it was Hyo-rin who was painting it. The girl who took her first steps in galleries around Europe.*

*The girl who's been to the French village where Van Gogh once lived. The girl who had ice cream in front of a fountain at a cathedral in Italy. That made things so easy. I think that's why I won the prize. I was Park Hyo-rin, not Oh In-hye, when I painted it.*

*Oh In-kyung: That's wrong. You're selling your soul.*

*Oh In-hye: In-kyung. What is a soul made of? If I had a soul and Hyo-rin's mom bought it for a high price, I'd be flattered. Do you know any other way I could study abroad?*

(Won, 2022).

Typically, younger children in families may not have the opportunity to express their desires freely. However, this is not the case for Oh In-hye, who actively voices her opinions and asserts herself. In the scene above, Oh In-kyung seems to not like the idea of Oh In-hye selling her painting to Park Hyo-rin, but then Park Hyo-rin's family claimed that it was her painting. Oh In-kyung feels bad for her sister and thinks that it was not the right thing to do. It can be seen from her words to Oh In-hye, that if she did that, it was a crime. In South Korea, usually, the younger should follow what the elders said (Lee & Holm, 2021). However, this stereotype is not being portrayed in this scene. Oh In-kyung already told Oh In-hye that it was not a good thing to do. Instead of following what her sister said, Oh In-hye still did not listen but instead sold her painting to Park Hyo-rin. Oh In-hye's expression in this scene looks so serious (figure 2.6). It indicates that she does not want her sister, Oh In-kyung to feel pity for her. In contrast, Oh In-kyung's face, especially her eyes, shows that she feels bad for her. From her expression and her eyes that look directly into Oh In-hye's eyes, it shows that she expects Oh In-hye to follow what she said.

Still in the family context, Oh In-kyung portrayed her aggressive side, which is to argue with her other siblings about the money that Oh In-joo gets. It can be seen on the examples below:



**Figure 2.6 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 3: Oh In-kyung’s emotional expressions to Oh In-joo**

**Source: Won, 2022**

In this scene, Oh In-kyung finds some money in the kimchi box that they have in their home. After that, Oh In-joo comes home and Oh In-kyung asks her what money is that and how would Oh In-joo get that huge amount of money. Oh In-joo said that she gets that money from her co-worker who has already passed away, Jin Hwa-young. Oh In-kyung, who knows that money is not coming from the right person, tells Oh In-joo that it is a crime to keep that money. It can be seen on the transcript below:

*Oh In-kyung: What’s this? Your dead colleague. Does this money have anything to do with her?*

*Oh In-joo: Yes.*

*Oh In-kyung: I can’t allow this. This is stealing.*

*Oh In-joo: What is stealing? Is taking dirty money that belongs to no one stealing as well?*

*Oh In-kyung: Isn’t that obvious? She killed herself. You could end up dead.*

*Oh In-joo: When we were little, when Dad’s print shop went under, we packed up in the middle of the night and ran away from our apartment, remember?*

*Oh In-kyung: How we drove to a polytunnel in a truck together?*

*Oh In-joo: We had a younger sibling back then.*

*Oh In-kyung: You mean In-hye?*

*Oh In-joo: No, not In-hye. It was a girl, two or three years old.*

*Oh In-kyung: What?*

*Oh In-joo: She had been in and out of consciousness for days. Then she suddenly didn't wake up. The doctor said it was too late. Because we didn't have money. Because we were on the run, she died without receiving any treatment.*

*Oh In-kyung: I don't know any of this. I don't remember anything.*

(Won, 2022).

In South Korea, while the cultural emphasis on ethical values and social harmony is strong, the reality of socioeconomic disparities can sometimes lead to instances of theft, especially among individuals from lower socioeconomic classes. Economic inequality and poverty create significant challenges for many people, leading some to resort to stealing as a means of survival (Yang, 2024). Despite the societal condemnation of theft and the high value placed on respecting others' possessions, the pressures of daily life in a highly competitive economy can drive desperate actions. Those who struggle to make ends meet may find themselves in situations where stealing appears to be the only option to provide for their basic needs. This reality highlights a gap between cultural ideals and the lived experiences of the economically disadvantaged, illustrating that while ethical standards are deeply ingrained, the harshness of economic hardships can sometimes force individuals to act against these principles.

Oh In Kyung's actions challenge any stereotypes that women might be less strict or morally loose, showcasing that women, too, can firmly adhere to ethical standards. The series portrays her firmly upholding moral principles despite poverty. Her expression is resolute, and she looks directly into Oh In-joo's eyes, demonstrating her strict adherence to life's values. Social harmony, morals, and ethics are highly valued in South Korean society, and stealing is often seen as a serious violation of these principles. Although crimes and theft can occur in any community, cultural norms in South Korea place a high value on respect for others and their possessions. People generally uphold these values and abstain from thievery, regardless of their socioeconomic class. Even though living in poverty might create challenging situations and increase the temptation to steal, it does not make

stealing a common or acceptable practice in South Korean society (Choi et al., 2023). Oh In-kyung embodies this societal value by proving that she upholds moral principles, even coming from a poor family background.

Not only in terms of family, but there is some characters in the *Little Women* Korean series adaptation portrayed non-traditional behavior in terms of their job. In this context, it is about the characters who dare to argue with their seniors when they know that their seniors are wrong. It can be seen in the examples below:



**Figure 2.7 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 1: Oh In-joo’s behavior in terms of job**

**Source: Won, 2022**

In this scene, Oh In-joo is mad at her senior in the office. She felt that her senior, Hwang Bo-yeon, contributed to her best friend and also colleague, Jin Hwa-young’s death. Jin Hwa-young did a suicide, by hanging herself in her wardrobe. Oh In-joo feels so mad because during her life, Jin Hwa-young often gets “bullied” by other co-worker in the office. She even works on a different floor than her co-worker. As a result, Oh In-joo reveals Hwang Bo-yeon’s affair scandals with other colleagues in the office. It can be seen on the transcript below:

*Oh In-joo: Four years ago, when I first started working here, the only person who took time out to help me was Hwa-young. When I asked her to lunch to thank her, she told me I’d become an outcast too if I ate with her. Ms. Hwang. Why did you make her an outcast? Because she was having an affair? (Ms. Hwang laughs) These are details of*

*the expenses on Ms. Hwang Bo-yeon's company credit card. You watched the musical La Vita on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the movie Like a Love Story. July 5<sup>th</sup>, you went to La La Land. August 1<sup>st</sup>, Jarasum Jazz Festival. You must've stayed the night. (look into Ms. Hwang, and look back to the paper) Here are the details for your business trip expenses. Suncheon Resto Hotel. A double room. Mr. Shin Dong-hun. You also went to watch La Vita on January 2<sup>nd</sup> and Like a Love Story on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. You went to La La Land on July 5<sup>th</sup> too. Oh, my. You also went to Jarasum? But there's no request for reimbursement for lodging.*

*Hwang Bo-yeon: Ms. Oh. Are you out of your mind? How dare you make things up?*

*Oh In-joo: I uploaded what I just read to you onto our intranet. You can confirm what I just said there. And you're the one who always makes things up. Did you see Hwa-young and Director Shin have an affair? Weren't you just jealous because she was good at her job?*

(Won, 2022).

In South Korean workplaces, stereotypes about women with lower education levels often limit their perceived competence and confine them to traditional gender roles. Before, Oh In-joo was a quiet person, because she had a lower education level than her senior in the office. However, in this scene, Oh In-joo shows her different behavior to her senior. Before Jin Hwa-young commit suicide, Oh In-joo was a calm person and always follow what her senior said. Even when what her senior told her, maybe it was hurt or out of her job description, she always follows it as well. However, after Jin Hwa-young commit suicide, she shows her different behavior. Before Jin Hwa-young was found dead, Oh In-joo was the one who always followed what her seniors said and was scared of them, even though they scolded her. After Jin Hwa-young's death, Oh In-joo has the kind of bravery to fight and argue with her seniors. As mentioned in the transcript above, she even revealed the affair scandal that her senior had. While in the South Korean context, the stereotypes of women who have low education in the office are the one who has low competence and must do traditional gender roles in the office. There may be presumptions that women who have received less schooling than their more educated colleagues are less qualified or competent for their positions. There may be preconceived notions or assumptions that women with lesser levels of

education are more likely to choose roles typical of the gender, such as supporting or administrative jobs rather than leadership responsibilities (Jae-hee, 2011).

Besides Oh In-joo, in terms of job, the second child, Oh In-kyung also portrayed her bravery to argue with someone who has more power than her. It can be seen on the example below:



**Figure 2.8 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 1: Oh In-kyung’s behavior in terms of job**

**Source: Won, 2022**

Oh In-kyung demonstrates courage by standing up for what she believes is right. This scene above happened during Park Jae Sang’s press conference. He held a press conference for the launch of his foundation, Park Jae Sang foundation. Like other press conferences, he lets some journalists ask him in the press conference. Oh In-kyung, who’s also a journalist, came to the press conference. The other journalist asked him regarding his foundation. However, Oh In-kyung asked a different question. Instead of asking about his foundation, she asked him about his contribution in the Bobae bank’s case, as can be seen in the transcript below:

*Oh In-kyung: You represented Bobae in the Bobae Savings Bank Case. Among the 32 people arrested, four of the people you defended committed suicide. Do you have anything to say about that?*

*Park Jae-sang: Well, I'm not sure. I was one of thirteen attorneys working for the law firm Hwang and Moon, who had taken on the case. That is my answer.*

*Oh In-kyung: It's true that 13 attorneys defended those 4 defendants, but you were the only one who worked with all four of them. Is that a coincidence?*

*Park Jae-sang: What was your name again?*

*Oh In-kyung: I'm Oh In-kyung from OBN.*

(Won, 2022).

In this context, Oh In-kyung shows her courage to ask Park Jae Sang. Not only asking him about general questions, she asked him questions that might be dangerous for her career. She is serious about what she asked, as can be seen in her eyes in the figure 2.8. Besides that, after she asked this question, it seems that Park Jae-sang has more curiosity about her. The camera moves slightly into Park Jae-sang's face, and then goes back to Oh In-kyung again. That is the end of this scene. Given the strong emphasis on respecting authority and seniority in traditional or hierarchical work environments, it may be less common in South Korea for women with lower educational backgrounds to approach someone with a higher educational background directly about a risky situation (Jae-hee, 2011). In another word, what Oh In-kyung did here to Park Jae-sang is not quite common in South Korea. Especially due to the fact that Oh In-kyung has a low education background.

The behavior that Oh siblings did in the *Little Women* Korean series adaptation somehow portrayed the behavior of second wave's feminism. In the second wave's feminism, women openly challenged established gender norms by seeking education and occupations outside the home and claiming their right to autonomy and financial independence (Soken-Huberty, 2023). What Oh siblings did, can be said as the one who challenged the gender norms in the context of South Korea. In the context of family, the daughters of the family, they have some stereotypes. Stereotypes about girls being expected to be obedient and submissive, especially towards authority figures like parents or teachers, may arise from traditional gender standards in South Korea. According to South Korea's stereotypes, as daughters, they have demands to be a "good daughter". Good daughters who always follow what their parents or teachers say and they cannot be against it (S. Kim et al., 2023). However, here, the Oh siblings show a different thing. When their mother asked them for the money to prepare for Oh In-hye's field trip, they did not give it. When their mother already takes the money, they even take the money back and claim that it does not belong to their mother, but to Oh In-hye.

The same case also happened to Oh In-hye. Even though in South Korea, usually the younger should follow what the elder said (Lee & Holm, 2011), Oh In-hye does not want to do it. She wants to do what she thinks is right for herself.

Not only in the family context, the Oh siblings, especially Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung, also portrayed behavior of second wave feminism. During the second wave of feminism, women did some behavior in activism. In order to bring attention to issues including gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and reproductive rights, many women took part in activism and protests. To demand equal rights and opportunities for women, they planned marches, demonstrations, and rallies (Soken-Huberty, 2023). It is true that Oh In-kyung and Oh In-joo did not literally take part in activism, but they have the courage to do some protests. For instance, Oh In-joo has the courage to reveal the affair scandal of Hwang Bo-yeon, who she thinks takes part in her colleague's death, Jin Hwa-young. Before Jin Hwa-young's death, Oh In-joo was the one who always followed what her seniors said. However, she takes part in a protest to show that it was not fair for her and Jin Hwa-young. Another example of behavior in the second wave of feminism is portrayed by Oh In-kyung. She has the courage to ask risky questions to Park Jae-sang even though maybe it could risk her career and also her family.

Women who bravely face those who chastise or condemn them in South Korea are defying deeply embedded cultural norms and societal expectations surrounding gender roles and behavior. Like many other societies, South Korean society has historically supported patriarchal beliefs that place a high priority on deference, obedience, and conformity—especially for women. In this cultural setting, women who speak up or defy authority—in their communities, jobs, or families—frequently encounter negative feedback and negative social consequences. Despite these obstacles, women who are unwilling to tolerate the current state of discrimination and gender inequality have been the driving force behind a rising surge of feminist activity and consciousness in South Korea in recent years. With courage, these women speak out against sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence, demanding equality, autonomy, and respect. In South Korea itself, their women are defying long-standing cultural conventions that aim to quiet and marginalize them by confronting people who chastise or condemn them. They are also claiming their agency and dignity. They embrace their voices and push for change, refusing to be silenced by antiquated ideas of femininity and subservience.

In the context of the second wave of feminism, women who courageously speak up for themselves play a crucial role in the ongoing fight for empowerment and gender equality, and these actions show through the Korean series *Little Women*. These women actively challenge societal conventions and institutional oppressions that support gender inequity, rather than being passive receivers of injustice. They challenge ingrained gender preconceptions that force them into constricting positions and seek equitable treatment in the social, professional, and familial realms, among other kinds of resistance. Through their bravery in speaking up against discriminatory practices, such as unequal pay, restricted possibilities for career progression, or sexual harassment and assault, these women take on the very institutions of power that aim to defeat and silence them. Additionally, they take part in action and lobbying, pushing for legislative reforms that support women's rights and advance gender equality more broadly. Together, these brave women are changing attitudes in society and tearing down patriarchal structures to create a more equal and welcoming future for people of all genders.

Nevertheless, the concept of the Oh siblings becoming the “mother” for her sibling, can be seen in the scope of the third wave of feminism as well. In the third wave of feminism, the concept of choice became central in understanding how women interacted with gender stereotypes. While the movement highlighted individual freedom and self-determination, it also acknowledged the complex interplay between personal decisions and societal pressures. Women were allowed to adhere to traditional gender roles if they wished, but it was crucial that these choices stemmed from genuine autonomy rather than external influences. The aim of third-wave feminism was to challenge and dismantle rigid gender norms, urging individuals to critically assess the factors shaping their choices. Thus, while women could still embrace behaviors that reinforced stereotypes, the movement aimed to foster introspection and empowerment, enabling individuals to make choices that truly reflected their beliefs and preferences, rather than conforming to societal expectations. In another word, in the third wave of feminism, women can still do things that are still related to gender stereotypes, if it was their choice. In the context of the Korean series, it was Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung’s decision to become a “mother” for her sibling, Oh In-hye. This statement can be proved by what Oh In-joo stated in the first episode: “When In-hye started school, In-kyung and I made a pact. That even if she can’t be like the other kids, we’d make sure that she never feels embarrassed (Won, 2022)”. Her statement indicates that if their mother cannot be a mother figure

for Oh In-hye, then they will. In conclusion, it can be said that Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung's actions also can be seen in the scope of the third wave of feminism as well.

In the novel *Little Women*, it portrays second wave feminism through the March sisters' pursuit of independence and personal fulfillment, challenging traditional gender roles of 19th-century in the Victorian era. The focus is on individualism, education, and economic independence. On the other hand, the Korean series *Little Women* adapts these themes within a modern South Korean context, highlighting societal pressures unique to Korean culture. The series emphasizes women's resilience and empowerment in a male-dominated society, showcasing characters who assert their agency in both personal and professional spheres. Despite cultural differences, both adaptations share a commitment to portraying women's struggles for autonomy and equality.

## **2.3 Issues of Women's Role in The Novel and Korean Series Adaptation**

During the second and third waves of feminism, the scope of women's roles expanded significantly both within the family unit and in broader society. These movements challenged traditional gender norms, advocating for greater equality and opportunities for women in various spheres of life, from domestic responsibilities to professional achievements. In this context, the writer aims to delve into the depiction of women's roles as portrayed in both the novel "*Little Women*" and its Korean series adaptation. This section will explore how the characters navigate their multifaceted roles, highlighting the evolution and complexity of women's experiences as influenced by the feminist waves. Through a detailed analysis, the writer will examine the nuanced representation of women's roles and how they reflect broader societal changes and feminist ideals.

### **2.3.1 Issues of Women's Role in the Novel: The Family's Provider**

This subchapter explores how the *Little Women* novel portrays women and their evolving roles. It examines how the novel challenges societal norms by showing women who go beyond traditional expectations. In the novel *Little Women*, it explains that it depicts women as active,

dynamic individuals, not just passive participants in stereotypes. The women in the novel take on roles as providers in their families, reshaping conventional ideas of gender roles and responsibilities.

In the novel, Jo has a role as the family provider that can be seen from her sacrifice for her family. The example can be seen below:

*I hadn't the least idea of selling my hair at first, but as I went along I kept thinking what I could do, and feeling as if I'd like to dive into some of the rich stores and help myself. In a barber's window I saw tails of hair with the prices marked, and one black tail, not so thick as mine, was forty dollars. It came to me all of a sudden that I had one thing to make money out of, and without stopping to think, I walked in, asked if they bought hair, and what they would give for mine (Alcott, 1868, p.289).*

From the quotation above, the context is when The March family is experiencing financial difficulties, especially since Mr. March, or March sibling's father is away serving in the Civil War, and they receive a telegram that Mr. March is seriously ill. The family needs money to send Mrs. March (Marmee) to Washington, D.C., to care for him. Jo, being resourceful and keen to help support the family, chooses to cut and sell her long, gorgeous hair. At the time, a woman's hair was regarded as an important aspect of her beauty, therefore this act represented a tremendous personal sacrifice for Jo. Jo had not before considered selling her hair. However, as she walked down the street, she began to consider different ways she could make money to support her family. The sight of hair for sale in a barbershop display triggered the idea. Without hesitation, driven by a sense of urgency and practicality, Jo walked into the barber shop to sell her hair. The impulsiveness of her decision underscores her selflessness and determination to help her family, putting their needs above her own. The mention of the prices of hair and her comparison to her own hair shows Jo's quick assessment of her situation and her willingness to take drastic measures to solve the problem.

Here, Jo's action to sell her hair represents her sacrifice for her family. The quotation exemplifies Jo's prompt, resolute answer to an urgent financial need when the family learns that Mr. March is ill and requires Mrs. March to travel to him. Jo's first thought is on how she can help, demonstrating her proactive commitment to providing for her family. Jo sells her hair, a valuable personal asset, demonstrating her readiness to make personal sacrifices for the sake of her family. This gesture symbolizes her dedication to her family's needs over her personal desires. The quotation also demonstrates Jo's ability to examine her circumstances practically. She notices the

rates for hair in the barber's window and instantly realizes that her own hair may bring a good price. This moment exemplifies her resourcefulness and realistic approach to providing for her family. Furthermore, Jo's decision to cut her hair, which is an important aspect of her identity and beauty, demonstrates her emotional strength and endurance. These characteristics are essential for a family provider, who frequently must make difficult decisions and sacrifices. Jo makes a direct financial contribution to her family by selling her hair. This behavior reaffirms her role as a provider, someone who helps the family financially in times of need.

In the Victorian era, there were rigid expectations regarding gender roles. Women were primarily expected to be domestic and reliant on men for financial support. Jo's decision to sell her hair challenges these norms by actively contributing to her family's financial needs instead of relying solely on male relatives. Opportunities for women to work outside the home were limited, especially in respectable professions. Jo's willingness to take on unconventional roles, such as selling her hair, reflects the limited options available to women for earning money during this time. Many families, like the Marches, experienced economic uncertainty during the Victorian era. Mr. March's absence due to the Civil War worsens their financial situation. Jo's decision to sell her hair is a response to an immediate financial necessity, mirroring the economic hardships that families are facing at the time. While women were frequently restricted to household tasks, economic necessity occasionally pushed them to pursue jobs or other sources of money. Jo's decision to sell her hair demonstrates her understanding of the family's financial necessities and her desire to help financially, regardless of societal expectations. While about Jo's hair, it is more personal. In the Victorian era, a woman's hair was typically regarded as her crowning feature, representing femininity and morality. Jo's decision to cut and sell her hair represents her readiness to forego femininity and traditional beauty standards for the benefit of her family's well-being. It also serves as a statement on the importance of material requirements over outward looks. Through Jo's activities, Alcott criticizes Victorian gender conventions and the limited options for women. Jo's determination to violate traditional expectations and take on the position of family provider calls into question the stereotype of women as docile and dependent, pushing for greater independence and agency for women. Jo's decision to sell her hair demonstrates her personal agency and independence. Despite societal pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, Jo asserts her autonomy by taking direct action to support her family. This portrayal of female agency is both progressive and reflective of the changing social

dynamics of the Victorian era. In the backdrop of the Victorian age, Jo March's function as a family provider is especially significant since it contradicts cultural standards and highlights the economic problems and limited prospects that women experienced at the time. Her decision to sell her hair represents her rejection of traditional gender norms, her readiness to make sacrifices for her family, and her assertion of personal agency in a society that frequently limits women's independence. Louisa May Alcott uses Jo's actions to paint a nuanced picture of gender, economics, and social expectations in Victorian society.

The writer already explained before that Jo also has a role as one of the family's breadwinners (Alcott, 1868). This is demonstrated not only by Jo's words and actions in the novel, but also through the narrative voice as shown below:

*Jo's ambition was to do something very splendid. What it was, she had no idea as yet, but left it for time to tell her, and meanwhile, found her greatest affliction in the fact that she couldn't read, run, and ride as much as she liked. A quick temper, sharp tongue, and restless spirit were always getting her into scrapes, and her life was a series of ups and downs, which were both comic and pathetic (Alcott, 1868, p.65 – 66).*

This quotation is quite complex because it explained a lot of Jo in the novel. From the first and second sentence, it tells that Jo is driven by a strong desire to achieve something remarkable, but at this point in the story, she doesn't know exactly what that will be. This reflects a common experience during youth—a sense of potential and dreams without a clear path yet defined. Jo's openness to discovering her path over time shows her patience and hope. It also tells Jo loves reading, running, and riding, which are activities that symbolize freedom and intellectual growth for her. Her frustration at not being able to indulge in these activities as much as she desires highlights her restless nature and her craving for independence and adventure. Alcott also said that Jo is characterized by her fiery temperament, outspoken nature, and boundless energy. These traits often lead her into trouble or "scrapes," suggesting that she frequently finds herself in difficult or embarrassing situations due to her impulsiveness. In addition, Jo's life is described as a rollercoaster of highs and lows, filled with moments that are both humorous and sad. This duality captures the essence of Jo's experiences and personality—her adventures and mishaps are often entertaining but can also be deeply poignant. In conclusion, Jo's personality is a mix of high goals and teenage uncertainty, a love for freedom, a tendency to get into trouble, and a blend of humor and sadness

in her journey. These traits make Jo a lively and relatable character, showing both the challenges and joys of growing up.

When the writer tried to find a relation between this quotation to Jo's role as the family provider, the writer found several things. Jo's ambitions start as vague and driven by a desire for personal success. However, as she matures, they develop into a sense of responsibility for her family. Jo's desire to accomplish great things finally reveals itself in her efforts to support her family financially and emotionally, particularly during difficult times. About her frustration, Jo's frustrations with not being able to read, run, and ride as much as she likes can be seen as early indicators of the sacrifices she will have to make. As she takes on the role of a provider, she often must put her personal desires and ambitions on hold to her family's needs. This self-sacrifice is a recurring theme in Jo's journey. Regarding Jo's attitude, Jo's fiery temperament and restless spirit, while sometimes leading her into trouble, also equip her with the resilience and determination needed to support her family. Her quick temper and sharp tongue can be seen as assets in her role as a provider, helping her navigate the challenges and assert herself when necessary. Finally, Jo also experiences her life fluctuations and adaptability. Jo's life, marked by its ups and downs, prepares her for the unpredictable nature of her role as a provider. Her ability to find humor and endure pathos in various situations reflects her adaptability and strength. These qualities are essential as she steps up to help her family through financial and emotional crises. To sum up, Jo's transformation from a girl with no clear goals to a determined family caregiver exemplifies her development and maturity. Her initial frustrations and restless spirit are transformed into a strong feeling of duty and capability. Jo's ability to combine her personal goals with the demands of her family demonstrates her as a dynamic and unselfish heroine who embodies the novel's major themes of sacrifice, resilience, and love.

During the Victorian era, women's roles were predominantly domestic. Ambition in women, particularly for occupations or accomplishments outside the house, was frequently discouraged. Jo's ambiguous aim mirrors the limitations placed on women's aspirations during this time. Her determination to reach greatness represents a defiance of traditional expectations of women to focus primarily on marriage and homemaking. Not only that, but Victorian society also imposed strict limitations on women's activities and behaviors. Jo's frustration at not being able to read, run, and ride as much as she likes reflects the broader societal restrictions on women's freedom and

mobility. These activities symbolize intellectual and physical freedom, which were often curtailed for women due to societal norms that valued modesty and domesticity. Jo's quick temper and sharp tongue contrast with the Victorian ideal of women as calm, gentle, and submissive. Her restless spirit and tendency to get into trouble highlight her struggle against the repressive expectations of how women should behave. Jo's character challenges the era's ideal of the "angel in the house," a woman who is selflessly devoted to her family and exhibits quiet, passive virtues. The Victorian era was a time of significant social and economic change, which affected women's lives profoundly. Jo's life, with its series of ups and downs, reflects the instability and challenges faced by many women during this period. The comic and pathetic elements of her experiences illustrate the limited opportunities and frequent struggles women encountered while navigating a society that offered them little autonomy or recognition outside of their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. In the context of the Victorian era, Jo's evolution into a family provider is particularly significant. Women were not typically seen as breadwinners; their primary roles were to manage the household and care for the family. However, economic necessity often forced women to take on work, sometimes in informal or underpaid capacities. Jo's determination to support her family financially is a direct challenge to the era's gender norms.

Jo, as the family's provider, not only support the family economically, but also with dedication and time. It also can be seen in the example below:

*Jo never left her for an hour since Beth had been ill, and all her efforts seemed to make no impression. Night after night she stayed, sleeping on the floor, ready to help with the feverish fancies that assailed the poor little head (Alcott, 1868, p.290).*

In this context, Beth's health condition got worse. The atmosphere within the March household becomes charged with anxiety and fear, casting a shadow over their once cheerful home. During this crisis, Jo emerges as a pillar of strength and resilience, embodying the steadfast devotion and selflessness that define her character. Her unwavering commitment to her sister is palpable as she assumes the role of primary caregiver, never leaving Beth's side and sacrificing her own comfort and well-being in the process. The quoted passage vividly illustrates Jo's tireless efforts to comfort and care for her sister, depicting her as a constant presence by Beth's bedside, offering comfort and support through the long, difficult nights. Jo's actions speak volumes about the depth of her love for Beth and the profound bond that exists between the March sisters. Moreover, this scene serves as

a touching reflection of the broader themes of familial solidarity and resilience that permeate throughout the novel. It underscores the importance of unity and mutual support in the face of adversity, highlighting the enduring power of love and sacrifice to sustain and uplift the human spirit. Additionally, this episode represents a significant moment of growth and maturity for Jo, as she transitions from a spirited and independent young woman to a compassionate and nurturing caregiver. Through Jo's unwavering devotion to her sister, Louisa May Alcott masterfully captures the essence of sisterhood and the profound impact of familial bonds on shaping one's character and identity.

In the Victorian era, family was considered the cornerstone of society, and women were often expected to prioritize their roles within the family above all else. This included caring for sick family members, a duty typically assigned to women. During this time period, there was also a prevailing belief in the importance of self-sacrifice and duty, especially within the family unit. Women were often praised for their nurturing and caregiving roles, and it was considered virtuous for them to prioritize the needs of their family members over their own desires or comforts. Jo's decision to stay by Beth's side, sacrificing her own rest and comfort to care for her sister, reflects these Victorian ideals of selflessness and duty. Furthermore, the portrayal of Jo's caregiving role in the novel highlights the importance of sisterhood and familial bonds, values that were highly regarded in Victorian society. The novel emphasizes the strong emotional connections between the March sisters and their unwavering support for one another during times of hardship. This portrayal resonated with Victorian readers, who valued familial relationships and the virtues of loyalty and devotion within the family. Overall, Jo's actions in caring for Beth in *Little Women* reflect both the societal expectations placed on women during the Victorian era and the enduring importance of family and sisterhood within Victorian society.

Jo's action here to sacrifice for her family can be seen in both the second and third waves of feminism. Jo's decision to sell her hair goes against traditional gender norms by actively contributing to her family's earnings. This is consistent with the second-wave feminist movement's goal of deconstructing gender stereotypes and encouraging women's agency in both the household and public arenas. Second-wave feminism challenged the notion that women's primary roles should be limited to the home realm. Jo's willingness to engage in unorthodox activities, such as selling her hair for cash, demonstrates a rejection of her limiting role and a yearning for greater freedom and

self-determination. Jo's decision to sell her hair represents a statement of personal agency and autonomy. Second-wave feminism highlighted the significance of women making their own decisions about their lives and bodies, free of societal restraints and expectations. Jo's activities reflect the pursuit of autonomy. Jo's readiness to forego her own comfort and society expectations for the sake of her family's well-being can be interpreted as both a selfless deed and a reflection of the contradictions between personal fulfillment and societal obligations that dominated second-wave feminist debate. Jo March's role as a family provider can be regarded as representing the movement's core values and ambitions. Her acts question established gender roles, express her economic independence, and promote her personal agency and autonomy, all of which are important to second-wave feminism. Through Jo's character, Louisa May Alcott portrays female assertiveness and resistance to patriarchal constraints that is consistent with feminist ideas.

Jo's action also can be seen in the lens of the third wave of feminism. Third-wave feminism emphasizes independence and the importance of women making their own decisions about their lives and bodies. Jo's decision to sell her hair and pursue her own writing goals demonstrates the emphasis on individual autonomy and self-determination. Jo's actions demonstrate her autonomy and independence, as she takes control of her own destiny and refuses to comply with traditional gender norms. Her desire to reject cultural standards and forge her own path exemplifies the spirit of self-determination that underpins third-wave feminism. Although Jo's experiences as a white, middle-class woman do not cover all women's lives, her character shows a spirit of perseverance and rebellion that connects with women everywhere. Third-wave feminism also emphasizes individuality and personal agency, recognizing that each woman's experience is different.

Third-wave feminism values variety and the range of women's experiences. While "*Little Women*" is primarily about the lives of white, middle-class women, Jo's character symbolizes a range of goals and challenges within that environment. Her search for personal fulfillment and autonomy exemplifies the broad range of women's wants and aspirations celebrated by third-wave feminism. Third-wave feminism questions established gender standards while celebrating gender flexibility and nonconformity. While Jo's actions do not explicitly challenge gender identity in the same way that some aspects of third-wave feminism do, her rejection of traditional gender roles and pursuit of personal fulfillment outside of the domestic sphere are consistent with the larger goal of challenging gender stereotypes and expectations. To summarize, Jo March's actions in the novel are

consistent with major ideas of third-wave feminism, such as independence, autonomy, variety, and the challenge to old gender standards. While the novel predates the rise of third-wave feminism, Jo's character exemplifies a spirit of resilience, defiance, and self-determination that continues to inspire modern readers and is consistent with the ideas of third-wave feminism. Jo March's acts serve as a timeless symbol of female empowerment and autonomy, highlighting the continual evolution of feminist philosophy and movement.

### **2.3.2 Issues of Women's Role in the Korean Series Adaptation: The Family's Leaders**

This section closely examines how women are portrayed in the Korean adaptation of *Little Women*, highlighting their evolving roles. It shows how the adaptation challenges societal norms by presenting women who defy traditional expectations. By analyzing the characters' complexities, the aim is to demonstrate how *Little Women* portrays women as vibrant individuals, capable of being leaders within their families. This reshapes conventional ideas of gender roles, celebrating women's agency and resilience.

In many families, the eldest daughter often assumes a protective role, feeling a deep sense of responsibility for her younger siblings (Wu et al., 2018). On the Korean series adaptation *Little Women*, Oh In-joo is the first daughter of the family. As the first daughter of the family, Oh In-joo feels that she has a responsibility to protect her family, or in this case, her sisters. This example below shows one example of how Oh In-joo takes her role as the family's leader, as can be seen below:



**Figure 2.9 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 1: Oh In-joo’s role as a leader with her words**

**Source: Won, 2022**

In this scene, Oh In-joo discovered that her youngest sister, Oh In-hye, had gone to Park Hyo-rin’s house. Oh In-joo became furious upon seeing that Oh In-hye had accepted money from Park Hyo-rin’s mother, despite previously refusing to take any money from her. To shield her sister from humiliation, Oh In-joo steps in to protect her, as illustrated in the transcript below:

*Oh In-joo: In-hye. What’s this? It’s money.*

*Won Sang-a: I hope you don’t misunderstand. I happened to see her paintings and I loved them. So I asked her if she could paint with my daughter, Hyo-rin. I thought they’d be a good influence on each other. The money was for cab fare.*

*Oh In-joo: I won’t misunderstand. And we don’t need cab fare (give the money back). Hyo-rin, come over to our place next time (Hyo-rin smiles).*

*Won Sang-a: In-hye has such a dependable sister. I heard she didn’t have a mother. It must be hard for you. If I were you, I would’ve been scared since In-hye is so talented. Come over for some tea next time. We can share notes (gives the money back to In-joo).*

*Oh In-joo: (refuses the money) It’s okay.*

(Won, 2022).

From the conversation above, it becomes evident that Oh In-joo assumes a leadership role for her sister, even though this is not explicitly stated. Her protective instincts are clearly showcased through both her words and her actions. When Oh In-joo refuses to accept the money from Park Hyo-rin's mother, it is not merely a verbal rejection but a firm stance against any form of perceived charity or pity that might undermine her sister's dignity. This refusal is a bold declaration of their self-reliance and pride. Furthermore, the way Oh In-joo holds Oh In-hye's hands during the conversation with Won Sang-a is particularly telling. This physical gesture is not just a sign of affection but a powerful act of solidarity and support. It symbolizes her commitment to stand by her sister and protect her from any form of humiliation or exploitation. By holding her sister's hands, Oh In-joo reassures Oh In-hye that she is not alone and that they will face any challenges together. Moreover, when Won Sang-a brings up the fact that Oh In-hye does not have a mother and sarcastically suggests that Oh In-joo should protect her more, Oh In-joo's protective nature becomes even more pronounced. She responds to Won Sang-a's condescension by once again refusing the money, reinforcing her stance and further demonstrating her determination to safeguard her sister's pride and well-being. Through these combined actions—both verbal and non-verbal—Oh In-joo's role as a protector and leader is unmistakably highlighted. Her deep sense of responsibility, unwavering support, and the lengths she is willing to go to shield her sister from harm vividly illustrate the strong bond between them and underscore Oh In-joo's dedication to her sibling's dignity and welfare. In addition, the camera also focuses on Oh In-hye's facial expression, who investigates Oh In-joo's face. Oh In-hye's facial expression looks like smiling even though it is not clearly seen on her face. It also showed Oh In-joo's facial expression, but it was blurred. That one indicates that actually Oh In-hye is also grateful for Oh In-joo's existence there.

However, Oh In-joo shows that she not only protects her sister by words, but also by her actions. It can be seen on the example below:



**Figure 2.10 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 1: Oh In-joo's role as a leader with her actions**

**Source: Won, 2022**

The scene below happened when Go Su-im, Park Jae-sang's accomplices, that also works on Park Jae-sang foundation, found out that Oh In-joo has the money that Jin Hwa-young had been stealing. Later, Go Su-im brought Oh In-joo to an empty room and took all the money. However, since Oh In-hye got a serious disease, she begged Go Su-im to lend some money to her. Go Su-im agreed, but with one condition, that she wants to hit and punch Oh In-joo ten times. Even though she did not sure at first, but she still does it to protect her sister and to pay the hospital bill for her sister, as can be seen in the transcript below:

*Oh In-joo:*        *But it's different when it comes to my sister. If there's a price tag for people, In-hye is worth far more than two billion. I'll get her treated first, then pay*

*you back. My life and soul together should be worth at least 100 million, right?*

*Go Su-im: She's funny. Are you a comedian or do you have a screw loose somewhere? This intrigues me. Now I'm curious about how far you would go for money.*

*Oh In-joo: Why don't you find out?*

*Go Su-im: We run our mouths for the small things that are right before our eyes. That's why I like violence. Everyone is honest when they're in the face of violence. (punch Oh In-joo on the face) How's that? I'll hit you nine more times. After all 10 hits, I'll lend you 100 million won. Shout "go" after I hit you if you think you can continue. Then I'll hit you again. But if you stop in the middle, you'll get nothing, no matter how many hits you take. So?*

*Oh In-joo: Go.*

Source: Won, 2022.

Oh In-joo exemplifies feminist traits through her courageous defiance of physical aggression to protect her sister, demonstrating resilience and a strong sense of agency in challenging traditional gender roles. Her actions underscore her commitment to autonomy and the empowerment of women in familial settings. From the conversation above, Oh In-joo not only protects her sister with her words but also through her actions. This protective instinct is vividly demonstrated by her willingness to endure significant physical harm to ensure her sister's safety. The severity of the situation becomes apparent as Oh In-joo faces extreme physical aggression, highlighting the extent of her sacrifice. It is not easy to withstand being hit repeatedly, especially to the point where her life is in danger. In the second screenshot, the intensity of the encounter is shown when Oh In-joo is knocked down by a single blow. This moment underscores the force of the violence she is subjected to. By the third screenshot, the brutality escalates further as she is hit a fourth time by Go Su-im, causing her to nearly lose consciousness. This sequence of events underscores her extraordinary resilience and the profound depth of her commitment to protecting her family. Despite the severe physical pain and imminent danger she faces, Oh In-joo's resolve to shield her sister remains steadfast. Her actions are not merely impulsive reactions, but calculated risks taken to ensure her sister's well-being. The physical toll on her body, as she withstands these brutal attacks, showcases her unwavering dedication and the extreme lengths she is willing to go to defend her loved ones. This blend of verbal assertiveness and physical bravery highlights Oh In-joo's role as

a true guardian. Her willingness to sacrifice her own well-being for her sister's safety and dignity is a testament to her selflessness and strength. Through her courageous actions, Oh In-joo exemplifies the qualities of a devoted protector, demonstrating that her commitment to her sister goes far beyond mere words. Her bravery and selflessness in the face of danger paint a powerful picture of her character and the deep bond she shares with her sister. From the conversation above, it is clear that Oh In-joo not only protects her sister with her words but also through her actions. This protective instinct is vividly demonstrated by her willingness to endure physical harm. It is not easy to withstand being hit, especially to the point of almost dying. In the second screenshot, Oh In-joo is seen falling from a single blow. By the third screenshot, she is nearly unconscious after being struck a fourth time by Go Su-im. These scenes underscore her determination and the lengths she is willing to go to shield her sister from harm. Oh In-joo's actions speak volumes about her bravery and selflessness, highlighting the profound depth of her commitment to protecting her family. Despite the severe physical pain and danger she faces, her resolve to stand up for her sister remains unwavering. This combination of verbal and physical defense showcases Oh In-joo's role as a true guardian, willing to sacrifice her own well-being for the sake of her sister's safety and dignity.

Not only Oh In-joo, the second daughter, Oh In-kyung also shows her attitude to protect her family, especially her sister, in the Korean series adaptation. It can be seen on the example below:



**Figure 2.11 – *Little Women* Korean series episode 3: Oh In-kyung's role as a leader**

**Source: Won, 2022**

In the screenshot above, Oh In-kyung attempts to persuade Oh In-hye to return home. However, Oh In-hye refuses, believing that staying with Park Hyo-rin's family is better, especially since they have offered to pay for her to study abroad. Park Hyo-rin's family holds significant status in the country, and their house is heavily guarded. Consequently, Oh In-kyung, who is seen as an outsider, is forced to leave the premises. Aware of the unsavory background of Park Hyo-rin's family, Oh In-kyung is determined to rescue her sister. Since she is not allowed inside the house, she resorts to an alternative approach: climbing a power pole and shouting to get Oh In-hye's attention. It can be seen in the transcript below:

*Oh In-kyung: In-hye! Your painting was absolutely beautiful! You must've been devastated to sell it off! I'm sorry for failing to protect you! When I was in high school, I hated to going home too! Do you know why I still came home every day? It was because you were waiting for me!*

*Oh In-hye go out without any words.*

*Oh In-kyung bring Oh In-hye go, and she goes back again.*

*Oh In-kyung: Mr. Park Jae-sang. Hyo-rin's father. You have everything. So why are you eyeing the youngest girl of a poor family?*

*Oh In-hye: Be quiet. Let's just go.*

*Oh In-kyung: Let me tell you. She is the person I love the most in the world. If you ruin her, I won't sit back. I'll chase you to the ends of the earth and make you pay.*

Source: Won, 2022

From the transcript above, it is evident that Oh In-kyung is deeply committed to protecting her sister, a role that casts her as the family's guardian. Her determination to safeguard her sibling is palpable, and she steps into the role of protector with unwavering resolve. This protective instinct is not limited to her sister; it extends to challenging those who pose a threat to her family. Oh In-kyung indirectly intimidates Park Jae-sang by warning that if he does not cease his harmful actions, she will pursue him relentlessly, no matter where he goes. This declaration underscores her fierce dedication and willingness to confront powerful adversaries to ensure her family's safety. It is true that in this scene, Oh In-kyung is drunk, which is evident when she tries to descend from the power

pole and a soju bottle falls from her bag. Nevertheless, this only further highlights her deep care and concern for her sister. Despite her inebriation, Oh In-kyung's protective instincts remain strong. Her determination to rescue her sister from what she perceives as a dangerous situation drives her to climb the power pole and call out for her. This action, even in her compromised state, exemplifies the lengths she is willing to go to protect her family. Her words and actions are a testament to her courage and unyielding spirit, highlighting her role as the stalwart defender of her loved ones. Through her actions and declarations, Oh In-kyung exemplifies the qualities of a true protector, unafraid to stand up against formidable opponents to uphold her family's honor and security. This combination of bravery, care, and persistence paints a vivid picture of Oh In-kyung's character and her unwavering commitment to her family's well-being.

In South Korean culture, the importance placed on family ties and filial piety influences societal norms, traditionally highlighting the significant role of elder male siblings in safeguarding and supporting their younger family members. However, in the context of the series, it is the female siblings, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung, who embody these responsibilities, challenging the traditional gender expectations. In South Korea, the family is considered the fundamental unit of society, and the well-being of family members is often prioritized above individual desires. This cultural emphasis on the family unit manifests in various aspects of daily life and social interactions. The concept of "jeong," a deep emotional bond that ties people together, is prevalent in Korean relationships and is central to the dynamics within families. This sense of "jeong" fosters a strong sense of duty and loyalty among family members, compelling them to support and protect each other under any circumstances (Chin et al., 2011). Oh In-joo's willingness to endure physical harm and Oh In-kyung's relentless efforts to save her sister, even when intoxicated, are reflections of this cultural emphasis on familial duty and loyalty. Traditionally, these roles of protectors and caretakers have been expected of male siblings. However, the fierce protectiveness displayed by Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung aligns with these cultural norms but subverts the gender expectations, showcasing their deep commitment to their family's integrity and honor.

In Korean society, the actions of both sisters reflect a deep-seated cultural value of prioritizing family bonds and responsibilities, illustrating their commitment to each other's well-being despite personal sacrifices. Traditionally, these roles of protectors and caretakers have been expected of male siblings, who are seen as the primary figures responsible for the family's safety

and success. However, in the series, it is Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung who take on these roles, challenging and subverting the traditional gender expectations. Moreover, their actions can be seen as embodying the Confucian value of filial piety, which emphasizes respect and duty towards one's family. Filial piety, or "hyo," is a fundamental principle in Confucianism that has greatly influenced Korean society. It involves a range of behaviors, including respecting one's parents, caring for them in their old age, and ensuring the family's lineage and reputation. While traditionally focused on the relationship between children and parents, the essence of filial piety extends to siblings, particularly in the absence or inability of parents to fulfill their protective roles (Chin et al., 2011).

This cultural backdrop highlights the significance of their sacrifices and the profound sense of responsibility they feel towards each other. The sisters' determination to protect one another, even at great personal cost, not only reflects a personal commitment but also challenges the traditional expectation that such roles are reserved for males. The fierce protectiveness displayed by Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung exemplifies the responsibilities traditionally placed on men, showcasing their deep commitment to their family's integrity and honor. Their actions illustrate the lengths to which individuals will go to uphold these values in South Korea, where maintaining family honor and cohesion is of paramount importance. Through their unwavering dedication, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung demonstrate that the protective instincts and familial duties often expected of men can be equally embodied by women. Their story resonates with the powerful message that family bonds and responsibilities are central to personal identity and moral conduct in Korean society, challenging traditional gender roles and expectations.

Their actions can also be related to the themes of second and third-wave feminism, which emphasize women's autonomy, strength, and the breaking of traditional gender roles. Second-wave feminism, emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on issues such as workplace equality, reproductive rights, and legal inequalities. It sought to redefine women's roles beyond domestic spheres, advocating for women's ability to participate fully in all areas of life (Pruitt, 2023). Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung's actions resonate with this wave's emphasis on women's strength and agency. Their willingness to confront physical danger and powerful adversaries showcases their resilience and autonomy, traits that second-wave feminism sought to highlight and normalize. While for the third-wave feminism, which began in the 1990s, further expanded these ideas by embracing individuality and diversity among women. It challenged the notion of a universal female experience

and encouraged women to define feminism on their own terms. This wave also placed a strong emphasis on women's empowerment and the dismantling of societal norms that restrict women's roles. Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung's protective actions reflect this wave's values by demonstrating their capacity to act decisively and courageously in the face of adversity. Their actions break traditional gender roles, showing that women can be protectors and leaders within their families and society at large.

Elaborating further, the second wave of feminism aimed to liberate women from the confines of domesticity and to challenge the systemic structures that marginalized them. Oh In-joo's willingness to endure physical pain and danger to protect her sister aligns with the second-wave feminist ideal of women as strong, independent individuals capable of facing and overcoming significant challenges. Her actions signify a departure from the stereotypical image of women as passive or dependent, instead presenting a narrative where women take active, courageous roles in protecting and providing for their families. The third wave's emphasis on intersectionality and individualism is also reflected in the characters' actions. This wave of feminism recognized that women's experiences are diverse and shaped by a multitude of factors, including race, class, and personal circumstances. Oh In-kyung's determination to save her sister, even when intoxicated, underscores a personalized expression of strength and care. Her actions demonstrate that women's empowerment can manifest in various ways, including through personal sacrifice and tenacity in the face of personal flaws and societal obstacles.

Furthermore, the third wave's critique of rigid gender roles and its celebration of women's multifaceted identities are evident in the sisters' behavior. They embody the idea that women are not confined to traditional roles of domesticity and subservience but can be fierce protectors and assertive figures. By climbing a power pole and confronting a powerful adversary, Oh In-kyung rejects the notion that women should be meek or restrained, instead embracing her role as a proactive and determined guardian of her family. These feminist themes, intertwined with the cultural values of filial piety and familial loyalty, paint a comprehensive picture of Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung as embodiments of both modern feminist ideals and traditional Korean virtues. Their actions highlight the intersection of cultural expectations and feminist empowerment, demonstrating that the pursuit of gender equality can coexist with and even enhance deep-seated cultural values. This blend of cultural and feminist principles showcases the complexity and richness

of their characters, making their protective actions not only a reflection of their personal commitment but also a broader commentary on the evolving roles of women in society. Through their courage and dedication, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung illustrate that true strength lies in the ability to navigate and harmonize diverse sets of values, ultimately reinforcing the importance of family and the empowerment of women.