

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the research, statement of the problems, research objectives, research significance, definition of key terms, and previous studies.

1.1 Research Background

The term gender is a result of socio-cultural construction produced through the socialization process from one generation to the next. It can be interpreted that this gender is the result of an agreement between humans. Gender should be regarded as a collection of relations that exist in social institutions and are replicated through interpersonal interaction (Smith 1987; West & Zimmerman 1987 in Lloyd et al. 2009: p.8). Thus, gender involves social rules about human sex, namely male and female. However, because this concept of gender is generated from the agreement of society, it creates other things that are also agreed upon by society such as norms. This norm especially in gender concept becomes something that limits the rights, treatment, participation, position, role, obligations, duties between men and women. Then the terms feminism and masculinity developed. Masculinity refers to the set of attributes, behaviors, and roles that a particular culture associates with being male. It encompasses societal expectations and norms regarding male identity and behavior which can be different in any societies and historical periods. It covers various aspects of individual characteristics and creates a biased relationship between men and women, where male hegemony over women is considered to be something that is natural.

Male dominance in society has become a universal phenomenon that occurs in any part of the world in the history of human civilization. Research reveals that unconscious gender bias permeates society and continues to perpetuate gender inequality even when equality has been legally established. Many unconscious biases are rooted in gender stereotypes that

reflect traditional gender roles and norms, such as that of women as housewives and caretakers or men as career-driven breadwinners (Gaddes; Jacobson; Montgomery; Moore. 2018). Society either consciously or unconsciously builds or organizes a patriarchal society. In such a society, men are positioned superior to women in various sectors of life. Male hegemony over women is legitimized by social values, state laws, religion, and so on. It is socialized from generation to generation.

In the 19th century, American society was characterized by very rigid gender concepts and strong social expectations related to gender roles. At that time, the hegemony of masculinity created a dominating paradigm in understanding how a man should behave and identify himself in society. Adult men were still expected to behave rationally, responsibly, and peaceably, though now refinement and sympathy were added to the general traits expected of the ideal man, and expectations that men should be self-controlled do appear to have become more extreme (Lombard, 2010). This created intense pressure on men to fulfill the prescribed norms of masculinity.

In the world of literature there is such a thing as popular literature. This popular literature includes books, comics, novels, and movies. Not only a form of entertainment, but popular literature is also one of the media that plays an important role in presenting a phenomenon that occurs, one of which is the gender phenomenon discussed earlier. Movies, which are part of popular literature, present a visual and auditive medium that can be enjoyed by a large number of audiences. By using visual elements, music, and acting, movies have the power to convey emotions, atmospheres, characters, and messages in a more direct way than the pages of a book. A movie is a mass communication tool as well as a kind of cultural art with cultural values. Movies can be said to be mass communication media because movies carry or contain messages and are transmitted en masse or use channels that connect between communicators and communicants in bulk, which means that there are many of them, spread everywhere, the audience is heterogeneous and

anonymous, and creates certain effects (Wilden Justice, 2019: 4952). Movies have a very important role in presenting a phenomenon, such as gender. Films have the power to visually depict various aspects of the gender phenomenon, from gender roles in society, gender stereotypes, to individual experiences in dealing with gender identity. By using images, colors, and visual compositions, films can powerfully convey messages to their audiences. Movies have the advantage of presenting a cohesive and compelling narrative on gender issues. By using techniques such as character development, plot and storyline, films can reinforce thought-provoking narratives about gender and its roles in society. Films also have the advantage of accessibility as they can be enjoyed by a wide range of people, including those who may not have the same access or interest in conventional literature. As such, films as part of popular literature have the potential to reach and influence a wider audience in terms of awareness about gender issues. With such a wide reach, films have the ability to influence the audience's perception and understanding of gender through the representations presented. Whether directly or indirectly, films can shape opinions, inspire change, or even spark discussions about various aspects of gender and identity. One of the movies used as a medium to raise issues about gender concepts is the movie *Little Women* (2019).

The movie *Little Women* (2019) presents a fascinating portrait of the lives of women in the 19th century and how they interacted with existing gender norms. This movie can be called as feminist movie. A.O. Scott as the co-chief film critic wrote on *The New York Times Magazine* about the review of this film and he stated that “The question of freedom — in particular of a woman’s independence in a society that is both liberal and governed by tradition — is threaded through nearly every scene” (Scott, 2020). Also, Tomris Laffly, a member of the New York Film Critics Circle (NYFCC), gave her review on *RogerEbert.com* “Yes, on one hand, Gerwig’s film gently critiques the old-fashioned perception of marriage as an institution where men are financially expected to look after women. But on the other, it also celebrates love and matrimony as choices equal to career dreams—Meg does,

after all, choose to start a family and defend the validity of her decision to Jo in an understatedly feminist scene” (Laffly, 2019). and many more positive reviews obtained by this film, greta gerwig as a director and writer with a cool adaptation of the original novel, as well as the actors and actresses who played the characters in this film. the actors and actresses who played roles in this film include, Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Eliza Scanlen, Laura Dern, Timothée Chalamet, Meryl Streep, Tracy Letts, Bob Odenkirk, James Norton, Louis Garrel, and Chris Cooper. Although this movie focuses on the lives of four strong March sisters. However, the male characters in the movie also play an important role that has caught the researcher's attention. Therefore, this study will examine how hegemonic masculinity was portrayed by the male character in the movie Little Women (2019) through R.W. Connell's theory of masculinity.

Connell's masculinity theory discusses the construction of masculinity and gender roles in certain social and cultural contexts. In her theory, Connell identifies the hegemony of masculinity as the dominant norms that govern male behavior in society. McVittie, Hepworth, and Goodall said that hegemonic masculinity in Connell's terms has come to constitute the most dominant and most socially prized form of masculinity available to men (McVittie; Hepworth; Goodall, 2017). By analyzing the male characters in this movie, this study aims to reveal how the hegemony of masculinity is reflected in their behaviors and characteristics and how the hegemonic construction of masculinity in the movie Little Women (2019) compromised by character development. This will help understand whether the movie depicts an evolution or change in the representation of masculinity over the given period.

By conducting an in-depth analysis of the male characters in the movie, this research will hopefully provide a better insight into how the movie responds to and reflects the norms of masculinity at the time, as well as how

these representations of masculinity can contribute to our understanding of the construction of gender in history.

1.2 Statement of Problem

According to the hegemonic masculinity concept that has been explained in the research background above, the concept is slightly depicted in the male characters in the movie *Little Women* (2019). In addition, the time setting of this movie in the 19th century or more precisely in the period 1860 to 1868 that in that era male dominance was still very closely related to people's lives in various aspects of life. Hence, from the background of the research above, the researcher concludes that there are two questions that will be the main focuses on this research.

1. How does hegemonic masculinity represented by the male characters in *Little Women* (2019) movie?
2. How does the hegemonic construction of masculinity in *Little Women* movie compromised by character development?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the researcher is intended:

1. To analyze hegemonic masculinity that represented by the male characters in *Little Women* (2019) movie.
2. To analyze the hegemonic construction of masculinity in *Little Women* movie compromised by character development.

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to provide knowledge and understanding as well as to enrich regarding the analyzing hegemonic masculinity in *Little Women* (2019) movie through R.W. Connell's theory. Also, this research can be used for adding research about masculinity which is portrayed by

characters in the movie. This research is generally directed to the student of English Literature, the general reader, and other researchers. The researcher expects this research to be a reference for the reader who wants to analyze the similar problem.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

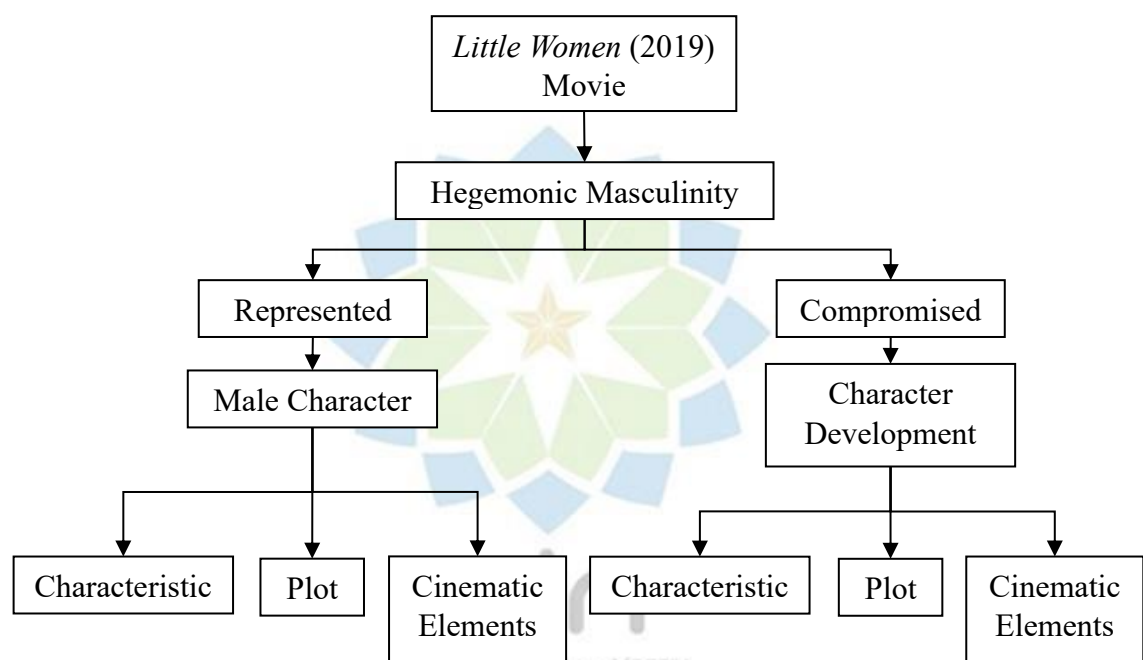


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

This section will define some key term used in this research. These terms have a wide range of interpretations and meanings, so a brief explanation will be given here to highlight their literary definitions. Furthermore, a written definition of these key terms is included to prevent misunderstandings in this research.

1. Gender

Gender refers to the socio-cultural roles, behaviors, and expectations associated for men and women. It goes beyond biological

differences (sex) and constructed by societal norms and cultural influences, influencing the way individuals perceive and express their identity.

2. Hegemonic

Hegemonic is an adjective form of hegemony, describing something that relates to or represents the dominant group's influence, power, or control. In the context of the research, hegemonic refers to the dominance or influence of a particular set of cultural, social, or political norms over others.

3. Masculinity

Masculinity refers to the set of attributes, behaviors, and roles that a particular culture associates with being male. It encompasses societal expectations and norms regarding male identity and behavior which can be different in any societies and historical periods.

4. Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity for being a “real man” that is privileged by society and accepted kinds of masculinity that are prevalent in a certain society. It represents a set of idealized, superior, strength, courage, aggression, and the ability to provide and protect.

5. Popular literature

Popular literature refers to literary works that are widely read and enjoyed by a broad audience. It includes various genres such as novels, short stories, poetry, and movies that may not necessarily be considered highbrow or literary but have a mass appeal. Popular literature often reflects the cultural, social, and entertainment preferences of a particular time and place.

6. Movie

Movie is a series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story, shown at the cinema/ movie theater. (Hornby, 2015)

7. Little

Little means not very often or to only a small extent. According to Voice of America (VOA), the difference between the words “little” and “small.” is when describing an amount, we use “little.” But when describing the size of someone or something, we use “small.”

8. Women

Women is a plural form of woman. According to Cambridge Dictionary, woman is an adult female human being. The difference with term lady from the Collins Dictionary is lady used as a polite way of referring to a woman, especially if you are having a conversation with a child.

9. *Little Women* (2019)

Little Women (2019) is a romance/drama movie directed by Greta Gerwig, adapting Louisa May Alcott's classic novel. The movie provides a portrayal of the lives of women in the 19th century, exploring their interactions with gender norms and societal expectations. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, the term little women is a compound word which means wife or used to refer to a man's wife. This term is old-fashioned relate to the time setting of the movie.

1.7 Previous Studies

In conducting this research, the researcher is indeed inspired by previous studies that had been done before. Previous studies have their own differences yet still have similar discussions and relate to this research. The first previous study is Representation of Masculinity in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016) Movie by Qayla Putri Safanah in 2023. The writer of the thesis analyzed the characterization and how the masculinity values of the characters in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* movie. The primary characters in the movie "*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*" (2016) exhibit a variety of masculine values. The central character, Newt Scamander, stands out in this regard by presenting a unique form of masculinity distinct from the typical male characters. He is depicted as a courageous, adventurous,

and animal-loving individual who prefers diplomacy over aggression and dominance.

The second is Representation of Masculinity in Film Clash of The Titans by Muhammad Halim in 2015. The writer analyzed how the representation of Masculinity in Film Clash of The Titans. In this study, R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is used to assess how men are portrayed in the movie Clash of the Titans. The study is carried out by watching and examining specific moments from the movie with an emphasis on how Perseus is portrayed as the major character here. The non-narrative is also analyzed, with a focus on wardrobe and shot type, and is just as important as the narrative portion of the movie. This study's conclusion is that this movie frequently depicted traditional masculinity, particularly Ancient Greek manhood. Although the tools used in this study are comparable, the theories used to analyze the research issue are different. However, the research subject and its main focus are different.

Then, there is The Representation of Masculinity in American Assassin Movie by Akhsanul Marom in 2020. The writer discussed about how the masculinity represented by the agent of CIA in American Assassin movie. The main character Mitch Rapp, who joins the CIA to get revenge, is described and examined based on Janet Saltzman Chafetz's concept. The writer found that the main character, as the agent of CIA has unique masculinity. He was portrayed with masculinity before 1980's. Also, the writer founds six of seven kind of masculinity that represented by Mitch Rapp as the CIA agent based on Janet Saltzman Chafetz's concept. One of those kinds is Mitch Rapp physical characteristic that are muscular, athletic, strong, and brave.

The researcher also found an article entitled Hegemonic Masculinity in "The Way of the Househusband" by Affiah Ramadhita Putri and Fajria Noviana which was published in 2022. This study analyzes the male main character of The Way of the Househusband through hegemonic

masculinity by R.W. Connell. This study seems more related because it used the same theory about hegemonic masculinity from Connell.

There is another article journal entitled Representation of Masculinity in Twilight Film by Pita Merdeka which was published in 2013. This research discussed a masculinity representation in Twilight film. The writer used this film which is the first series of The Twilight Saga as the object and used the concept of masculinity from Janet Saltzman Chafetz who divides the concept into seven areas namely, physical appearance, functional, sexual aggressive, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, and other personal characteristics. In this research, the writer embraces Stuart Hall's representation to construct masculinity from the major character, Edward Cullen. From this research readers can know that the main character (Edward Cullen) portrays the existence of almost perfect masculinity. He covers six of seven areas of masculinity concept by Janet Saltzman Chafetz except the functional part because he is not the breadwinner or the backbone of the family.

Based on the previous studies above, research on the representation of masculinity in film has been conducted on various genres, ranging from fantasy ("Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them"), action/adventure ("Clash of The Titans"), action ("American Assassin"), comedy ("The Way of the Househusband"), and romance ("Twilight"). However, there are topics that have not been explored in the analysis of hegemonic masculinity in the film Little Women (2019), which is a romance/drama genre film known for its depiction of femininity and gender roles. This shows that this research is different from previous studies because the analysis of hegemonic masculinity in films centered on female characters is largely unexplored.

The application of R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is also a reason why this research is different from previous studies. Although the study "The Way of the Househusband" uses R.W.

Connell's theory, it focuses on hegemonic masculinity in the context of men as a househusband and the movie itself has a different genre (comedy). Meanwhile, this study aims to apply Connell's theory to explore how hegemonic masculinity is portrayed in a narrative that is mostly centered on female characters.

In addition, previous studies have not investigated the nuances of masculinity in a historical context so the movie *Little Women* (2019) can also provide cultural and social insights into the expectations and roles assigned to men during the time period depicted. Thus, the research on hegemonic masculinity in *Little Women* (2019) stands out because the object of the film under study has never been used, especially regarding the genre that is different from previous studies, the application of R.W. Connell's theory and the historical context that has the potential to provide cultural and social insights that are different from existing studies. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct this research and make the previous studies above as inspiration.

