

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Throughout history, females have been oppressed due to their gender and have suffered at the hands of a patriarchal society (Alshammaa 2022, 19). In some countries, women still struggle to live regularly because they are often treated unfairly in society. Women and girls have been portrayed as victims of an oppressive systematic and alluring culture communicated to them through their own popular reading material (Yob 2000, 90). Women frequently have no freedom and are still seen as inferior to men. The environment usually creates oppression for women in a patriarchal society, in which women are regarded as inferior, and men regarded as superior. The term patriarchy refers to the basis of women's oppression where women become so weak and powerless.

According to Hooks (2010, 19), patriarchy can be defined as a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone seemed to work, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain the dominance through various form of psychological terrorism and violence. In many cultures, patriarchal and prejudiced societies constantly presume that women are weak, emotional, and empty-headed. Nevertheless, patriarchy persists in many parts of the world. Women's positions will continue to be impacted by patriarchy. Men are regarded as the dominant characters who possess all the power to demonstrate that they are

stronger and superior to women. Based on Sultana (2011, 1), patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres, as well as put the women in lower position.

According to Dewi (2020, 105), historically, the gender differences in men's and women's roles in society are significant. Women were constantly under strain and subjected to unreasonable social expectations. The specific characteristics embedded in their personality are also contrasted. For instance, men are strong, bold, and aggressive, while women are sensitive, soft, and respectful. As Humm (1994, 123) stated, “patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women”.

Since the late nineteenth century, there have been numerous movements promoting gender equality, some of which have been feminist movements. According to Humm (1994, 12), the history of feminism can be divided into three waves. The first feminist wave occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second in the 1960s and 1970s, and the third from the 1990s to the present. Because of these feminist movements, the feminist theory evolved. Feminism attempted to explain the similarities and distinctions between gender and gender equality in women. It prompted feminists to frequently contend that male concerns are conveyed through female figures. As Wendell (1987) stated, “feminists are people who fight for equality between men and women, so they receive fair treatment. Feminists criticize the oppression of women in economic,

social, psychological, political, and so on. Although not all feminists are women, most of them are, and they fight for their rights to achieve gender equality.”

The feminist movement is involved in maintaining global peace and promoting gender equality. As Rosenstand stated in her book (2006, 566), “women and men should have equal opportunities, that women should not be discriminated against based on their gender, and that women and men should get equal pay for equal work, chances are she will say yes and so will most men”. Furthermore, “feminism is a movement that advocates for equal rights for women and men” (Desmawati 2018, 93). In these modern days, feminists are assemble to fight against gender issues that happened to them. Feminists believe that women can be equal to men, so they concentrated on women's potential strength and mental intellectuality (Alshammaa 2022, 22).

Based on Willey (2018), feminism has been broadened to include a struggle against gender-based expectations and the larger gender stereotypes that are founded on these expectations. It is critical to recognize that feminism does not only refer to the experiences of women but also the experiences of men within this larger patriarchal structure. It is about achieving equality for both sexes in terms of political power, economic power, social freedom, and social liberation. Furthermore, women have initiated movements to demonstrate that they, indeed, have the power to fight for their rights and achieve gender equality in all parts of their lives. Throughout its long history, “feminism has worked to disrupt the comfortable certainties of such a patriarchal culture, to proclaim a belief in sexual equality, and to eliminate sexist domination in society itself” (Humm 1994, 115).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, film has evolved into one of the most powerful mediums in depicting social issues (Kaul 2014, 140). Today, many social issues have occurred, one of them being the oppression of women. The struggle against women's oppression is often depicted and encouraged in films, such as the *Moxie* (2021) film. *Moxie*, as the object of this study, is a film directed by Amy Poehler and was released in 2021. According to an article from The Harvard Crimson (2021), *Moxie* is set against the backdrop of the Riot Grrrl Movement, which began in Olympia, Washington in the 1990s to confront sexism in the punk music scene and create a home for punk rock girls. Bess (2015) in her writing explains that the typical Riot Grrrl, as outlined in an infamous 1992 Newsweek article that defined the movement for the mainstream, was ‘young, white, suburban, and middle class. Politically, Riot Grrrl blasted feminism into the future: centering the needs of a new generation via direct-action strategies, witty mantras, and slogans such as “girl power” and “support girl love”. It became one of the most visible branches of what was dubbed in third-wave feminism. (McDonnell 2019) As González-Rivera (2010) stated, many people have observed the early and late twentieth-century involvement of Latin American women in armed revolutions as guerillas and spies in independence movements and rebellions. In that way, patriarchal ideology is fundamentally established in Western culture, and motivates some women to rebel against traditional customs and demand their rights. (Alshammaa 2022, 19)

This film tells the story of Vivian Johnson (Hadley Robinson), a teen who discovers injustice at her school and attempts to build a voice for herself by

publishing an anonymous zine titled "MOXiE!". The high school girls and boys in Vivian's school are treated differently and injustice. The principal is sexist toward the girls, but she cared and gave more attention to the boys. From that moment, Vivian knew something was wrong with the society in her school. Furthermore, Vivian anonymously created a zine containing the feminist movement, protested, and demanded justice so that women will be treated equally by everyone. Because of that zine, most women want to be a part of this movement. They made a group of feminists consisting of school girlfriends who also feel the same. The group wants to make a voice and tries to fight against the gender issues, such as patriarchy, sexism, rape, sexual harassment that occurred in her school.

*Moxie* film portrays one of the issues of the gender discrimination that is a relevant and important risk factor in African American adolescents' everyday lives in school (Cogburn 2011, 26). According to this viewpoint, gender discrimination, racism, oppression is more severe in hierarchical societies because subordinate males are more likely than females to be perceived as threats to dominating institutions. African American females which include adults and adolescents are more likely to face racial and gender discrimination than African American males (Cogburn 2011, 26). This study examined by the researcher shows evidence that gender discrimination has a detrimental impact on a variety of physical, psychological, and personal characteristics, including low self-esteem, depression, and limited career goals (Cogburn 2011, 26).

According to Retallack (2016, 87), Teen Vogue stated in 2013 that high school and college students are at the forefront of the still-evolving, also essential

in feminist movement, from standing up to slut-shaming to founding their own feminist clubs. This inclusion of student-led feminism indicates the scope and resurgence of the fourth-wave feminist movement as a concern for young women and girls. There is one example case in 2014, over 100 students at a Florida high school staged a walkout in protest at what they saw as slut shaming language around the implementation of a new uniform code. The female students were outraged and have begun to create posters and flyers in order to protest the teacher to teach people what to think instead of teaching girls what to wear in school. (Retallack 2016, 87)

This film shows how women's power can make a movement and can fight against the patriarchy at school. However, all the struggles that they have done to stand against the patriarchy are not that easy. They are empowered to make women feel safe and are no longer inferior to men. Since the feminist movement continued to evolve, it classified feminism into several types of theory, one of them being liberal feminism. Liberal feminism attempts to liberate women from oppressive gender roles that place women in inferior positions (Haryoko 2019, 7). Nonetheless, the focus of this study is to elaborate on the struggle of Vivian as the main character in fighting against the patriarchal society in her school.

Many researchers focused on feminism and liberal feminism as the major issue and used movie as the object of the study. The writer discovered several related studies which can help as references to analyze this study. The first related study is a thesis by Septiana (2020) entitled “Liberal Feminism Depicted by Jo March as the Main Character in Greta Gerwig's Movie Script *Little Women*”. This study discussed the struggle of a woman named Jo who desires to accomplish her

dream without being stereotyped in her patriarchal culture's perception of women's limitations. However, she believes that women can be equal to men. Next is, a thesis titled “Sisterhood Fights Against Patriarchy in Jojo Moyes’s *The Giver of Stars: A Feminism Study*.” By Redowati (2020). This study portrayed the friendship of women filled with pure love and the real challenges that women face when trying to achieve their goals. Another thesis was conducted by Puspitasari (2016), under the title “Liberal Feminism Values Seen through the Female Main Character in Kinberg's *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*”. It discussed the ambition of a woman named Jane to become an independent woman and achieve gender equality among her husband and society. Another related study is a thesis entitled “Mina’s Struggle Against Patriarchy Portrayed in Carolyn Cohagan’s *Time Zero: A Feminist Criticism*” by Haryoko (2019), this study discussed a young woman named Mina who lives in a male-dominated society in a future Manhattan. Lastly, a thesis by Atma Yunita (2018), entitled “Gender Discrimination in 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Film of *Little Women* by Gillian Armstrong” is also related to the current study. This study highlighted the gender discrimination that occurred against the female characters in the movie.

The current study focuses on Vivian’s struggle in fighting against the oppression and discrimination in her patriarchal society in which it becomes the gap of the studies on feminism. In addition, the writer elaborated the form of oppression that Vivian gets among males by using the Liberal Feminism theory by Mary Wollstonecraft.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

Regarding to the background elaborated in the previous part, this study answered the following questions:

1. How does patriarchal society portray in this movie?
2. What oppression does Vivian suffer in her patriarchal society?
3. How does Vivian fight against the oppression and discrimination in her patriarchal society as portrayed in the movie?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Regarding to the statement of the problems above, this study was done with several objectives as follows:

1. To examine what kind of patriarchal society that portray in this movie.
2. To elaborate what form of oppression Vivian suffers in her patriarchal society.
3. To find out how Vivian's character can fight against the oppression and discrimination in her patriarchal society as portrayed in the movie.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study are expected to be valuable in a variety of ways. This study aimed to see how the women characters especially the power of women in the film can established a movement by making a group of feminists named "Moxie" so that they can stand and fight against the patriarchal society.

The writer of this study hopes that this paper provides more knowledge and a deeper understanding of liberal feminism for anyone who pursues similar or related studies in the future. Furthermore, this study is aimed to make the readers realize that women should be treated equally, no more patriarchy, and no more oppression of women that makes it difficult for them to continue their lives.

### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

1. Gender Inequality: “Gender inequality is a characteristic of most societies, with males on average better positioned in social, economic, and political hierarchies.” (Ibid 2005, 170)
2. Women’s Oppression: “The discrepancy of the dominant and submissive perspectives on gender roles between males and females in the society” (Rahma 2017, 2)
3. Liberal Feminism: “Liberal feminism emphasized women's legal rights and freedom in public and private, as well as men’s and women's equality.” (Purwarno 2021, 560)
4. Patriarchy: “Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres.” (Sultana 2011, 1)