

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the midst of high interest in the issue of gender equality, women's empowerment is currently being intensified all over the world. According to a new UN survey, nearly 90% of people around the world have some type of prejudice against women. The mistreatment is not always in the form of physical violence, but also the unfair treatment and degrading to a particular gender, which in this case is women. Nevertheless, there are still uncountable cases in which women lose the treatment they deserve. Conforming to the data from Komnas Perempuan Indonesia in the 2020 annual record, there were 299,911 cases of violence against women. Meanwhile, gender equality fights for equal rights and power where there is no inferior gender. Debora L. Spar (2020) argued that gender equality can be achieved when empowerment is accomplished but every single conflict, dispute, and achievement in history has been dominated by men's opinions.

There have been many criticisms of films, dramas, or other works that still place women as weaker or backward characters in recent times. Therefore, some works that emphasize the role of women are increasingly being produced. Despite female participation in films has risen in recent years, this progress has been hampered by the fact that female employment growth in the top 250 earning films has only increased by 3% since 1998 (Lauzen 2018b). A film is a depiction of cultures that grow across time, as well as a reflection of genuine conditions that

occur in real life. It provides insight into how the universe actually works. Films, being one of the most popular forms of media, become an important step in understanding how people interpret the phenomena of life. It also has the ability to depict and alter the perception of a topic, institution, profession, or company as the key elements of contemporary culture. As a result, films about women's issues continue to be produced in order to change society's patriarchal perception. Women's issues advancement is also a way of empowering women to achieve gender equality.

According to Jurban and Sa'eed (2019) in *The Representation of Women in Horror Movies*, horror films in the 1970s marks the growth of women's empowerment, but women's status has not improved significantly since then. The way women are portrayed in horror films is intriguing. Women have a propensity to be the genre in which a woman may play the "star" of the story. When horror films aim to make female characters the heroines, it conveys a deeper value to the viewer that women can be strong and independent.

There are certain horror movies that do include a lot of strong female characters that drive the plot along. In recent years, the way that women are represented in horror movies has shifted from it being the victims to now portraying them as the perpetrators. As seen in the 2013 film adaption *Carrie*, in which the female lead transforms into the character in control of everything. The depiction of women is very unique in this film where women are usually depicted as victims but here, the female character is the perpetrator.

In comparison, *Doctor Sleep* introduces a fresh transition in how women are represented, in which the female characters are shown as superior yet they are neither the primary characters nor the film's central figures. This research uses *Doctor Sleep* as the object to analyze the representation of women's issues. *Doctor Sleep* itself is actually a supernatural horror film. The film is an adaptation of the horror novel by Stephen King in 2013 which is also a continuation of the novel *The Shining* (1977). This 152 minutes film is distributed by Warner's Bros. Pictures in 2019. This film is available in the media digital services, HBO GO and Netflix. This film stars Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson, and Kyliegh Curran as the main characters who become the center of the story. *Doctor Sleep* (2019) took home every award in the South African Horrorfest's nominations, including best feature film, best director, best actor, and best screenplay.

In this film, there are two characters that are highlighted, Danny and Abra. These two people have gone through traumatic and painful experiences in their life. Danny with his traumatic memories with his father, meanwhile Abra is a girl in silence because she is haunted by all the prejudices against her that are considered different since her very young age. Nonetheless, Abra is seen as a young girl full of thoughtfulness towards other people. In terms of supernatural power, she is indeed the strongest. She is considered the special one by recognizing that her power is different from any other shining people. The point is becoming the strongest does not always make someone bolder. However, Abra's character seems to have both traits.

Abra can see and feel other shining people's pain and it provokes her to do something. In this part, Abra shows that she is very determined to reach what she wants. As the story goes, there is another female character named Rosy. She is the leader of the villain and also the strongest among all the villains. Both of them are met before Abra and Danny meet. Both of them also try to suspect each other in order to know how to knock down one another. It shows a hint of how the story tries to emphasize the focus on the female characters. Two female characters with one typical attitude and self-perception somehow become the highlight of the story.

According to an IMDb review, *Doctor Sleep* is an absolutely fine picture in terms of plot and characterization, but it disappointed many viewers since it did not live up to their expectations as a successor to *The Shining*. This film was criticized for being overly long-winded, despite being classified as a picture with sufficient running time. Similar to the risk of a sequel picture, fans will have their own high expectations that will be impossible to meet. The cast of this picture, on the other hand, has received a lot of appreciation for skillfully conveying an epic and realistic portrayal. In accordance with RottenTomatoes review by Rob Gonsalves, the emotional impact of *Doctor Sleep* is greater than that of *The Shining*. It focuses more on human issues such as childhood trauma, addiction, abusers, the violence wheel, and mortality fright. It is challenging to locate publications that discuss gender issues from a feminist perspective in *Doctor Sleep* because this issue is vaguely shown.

However, there have been several other films that focus on the role of women. In such a long-standing culture where superheroes are men, the film industry starts to raise women as superheroes to capture gender equality. One of the films that raise this issue is *Captain Marvel* (2019) which breaks all the discrimination toward women by showing a woman as the main character in the film. It is also illustrated by exposing that the superhero with the greatest power in Marvel Cinematic Universe is a woman. This is clearly stated by making the Captain Marvel character the single female lead and leader in the story.

This is continued in subsequent Marvel films that feature more female superheroes such as *Black Widow* (2021), *WandaVision* (2021), and others. However, it turns out that this continues to be a contentious issue due to the notion of gender inequality that still exists in various walks of life. Another film that highlights women in a unique way is *The Nun* (2018). In this film, women are the main focus, which is even the title of the film, indicating the significance of the female character depicted in the nun, Sister Irene. Even though *The Nun* in the title refers to the devil, this film outlines a lot of puzzles about the representation of women where the nun is the main character who becomes a superior character. However, *Doctor Sleep* comes differently where the male character who is the title of the film and the main character is actually inferior. In fact, the female supporting character is superior. The difference in how women are portrayed in these movies also exemplify how women's perspectives have evolved through time.

A research was undertaken to assess an audience's impressions of gender female stereotypes in a horror film. The results show that stereotypes existing in horror film influenced the audience's perceptions. This is the reason that various film industries continue to try to include women's empowerment in various ways to achieve gender equality. Therefore, this study uses *Doctor Sleep* as the object because this film depicts women's issues quite differently. The difference is *Doctor Sleep* still puts the male character who is inferior as the main character. Meanwhile, the female characters that are not the main characters are superior. Subsequently, this study focuses at the narratives of women depicted in the film, whether it turns out that this film implicitly tries to raise women's issues by making the characterization of women more stand out or there is another highlight that might be missed out.

Based on Plumauzille, Clyde, Mathilde Rossigneux-Méheust, and Siân Reynolds (2019), women are human beings who are born biologically with the female sex. It has nothing to do with pride and position. For such a long period of time, men have become a barrier to women's equality. With no need for doubt, women should own and control the pursuit of their own rights. The ability to make decisions is one viewpoint regarding power. Disempowerment refers to the procedures through which persons who have been denied the ability to make decisions acquire that ability. Change is a part of empowerment.

A real case that occurs most often against women today is discrimination in the workplace. Many women lose their right to be able to achieve as high as possible. Moreover, women also experience sexual harassment both physically

and verbally in the workplace. As reported by Equal Rights Advocates, one of these obvious discriminations occurred to Hanna Hurst who worked in the gold mining industry in the United States. She experienced various acts of discrimination ranging from being belittled because of her gender as a woman, facing tremendous difficulties in getting promotion and training to sexual harassment and severe threats not to report the case. Hanna's story is just one of many stories of women who experience discrimination but their voices are not heard.

Women are seen as weak, emotional, and powerless. As the traditional gender roles place women as inferior to men, feminists try to break the idea by empowering women (Tyson 2014). Women's empowerment began to be intensified with the existence of organizations that defend women's rights. One of them is Equal Rights Advocates (ERA) that established since 1974 which helps women to fight for justice to be treated equally. Likewise, Women Deliver is also a global advocate who also fights for women's rights and gender equality. Based on reports from these organizations, cases of discrimination against women continue to be found around the world which shows that this cases are not over and gender equality has not been fully realized. Therefore, measures against discrimination towards women have also begun to be developed in various fields.

According to Kahn and M. Ronald (2000) in *The Causes And Effects Of Women's Superiority Towards Men As Seen In Aristophanes' Lysistrata*, the superiority complex displays an identity of dominance in order to embarrass, if not subjugate, the inferiority complex. Superiority in gender goes when it focuses

only on one particular gender by making one gender better than the other. This is the result of the analysis on the object of her article by looking at how women are depicted in this film, implicitly and explicitly. In relation to the current issue of feminism, this film seeks to eliminate discrimination against women and illustrates how women are an equal gender with men.

A previous study that discussed the issue of women is found in the Universitas Airlangga thesis by Shinta Pratiwi Adinda in 2020 entitled *Women Subordination In Annabelle (2014) And Annabelle Creation (2017)* using Beauvoir's gender theory, Women Subordination and Women as 'Other'. Adinda's study aims to discuss how the patriarchal system affects the mentality of women experienced by female characters in both films. Using a narrative non-narrative approach by Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White (2012), her study found that the ideal women who can do their domestic work are discriminated, but play an important role in their families and women also get punished when they do not carry out their roles correctly. Adinda's study dissects using two Beauvoir theories, while this research study uses Greimas' narrative theory.

Another related study is entitled *The Struggle of A Black Mother In American Movie Entitled Kidnap (2017)* by Jerry Arga Dewantara Tulle in 2019. Tulle's study aims to figure out the representation of violence toward a black woman by using a theory of feminism by Bell Hooks. His study also uses the narrative non-narrative method to understand the object deeper. It proves that the black woman can fight back the kidnapers with all the struggles by her own.

Despite having similar issues and research purposes, *The Representation of Women: An In-depth Analysis using Greimas' Structuralism in Doctor Sleep* (2019) has a significant difference in which this research focuses on the narrative aspects of women who are depicted significantly without making them the main characters. Using Greimas' narrative structure, this research examined the issue of feminism in the film *Doctor Sleep* (2019) to give another perspective of women's issues. This theory is used to see the relationship between subjects, objects, and events by using a sign system. Structuralism is used to define the meaning of these relations by identifying the actants.

Since the issues discussed are hidden and not the major emphasis of the film, narrative theory is used in this research. The narrative component is utilized to explore thoroughly how women are represented in dealing with every problem, as it is difficult to see solely via the cinematic aspect. Greimas theory, in particular, is performed to explore issues using the concepts of six fundamental actants and four homology terms. This research uses the actants principle to examine the subject-object, sender-receiver, and helper-opponent relationships in order to discover the underlying meaning of dialogue and uses four homology terms to analyze the representation of female characters through dialogues in *Doctor Sleep* (2019).

1.2 Statement of the Problems

The researcher has developed an issue that is investigated further in this study based on the background described above. The following is the study's primary issues:

1. How does the narrative of women in *Doctor Sleep* (2019) illustrate the ability/practice of women toward traditional gender roles?
2. How are the women's issues represented in *Doctor Sleep* (2019)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The researcher has developed objectives that investigated further in this study based on the background described above. The following are the study's main objectives:

1. To analyze the narrative of women in illustrating the ability/practice of women toward traditional gender roles in *Doctor Sleep* (2019).
2. To reveal the representation of women's issues in *Doctor Sleep* (2019).

1.4 Significance of the Study

The researcher expects that this study will help to inform people about how the issue of feminism allows women to have complete freedom to become the best version of themselves. In addition, the researcher also hopes that this study will be beneficial to enlarge knowledge about gender equality and feminism to everyone, especially people who are concerned about this study. This topic can also be applicable to Indonesian issues, as the country still has patriarchal beliefs that men are always superior to women.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope and limitation of this research are to analyze the representation of women in *Doctor Sleep* (2019). Using structuralism theory and a feminist perspective, this research focuses on the story of women encoded in the object. The female characters are Abra and Rosy. Abra is a character who has the greatest supernatural powers but also a character with a very strong character and motivation, such as providing clues about the issue of feminism in this film. Likewise with Rosy's character as the leader of The True Knot group. These two characters are the focus of this research by looking at how their stories are described. Thus, it focuses on the female characters and analyze the issue of women in this movie.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

The key terms that are used in this research include:

1. Superior Women

Superior women alludes to a higher position or hierarchy for women. Superiority is the concept that one gender is emphasized as having greater capability than another (Beauvoir 1949).

2. Feminism

Feminism refers to a belief that all sexes are equal including supporting women's rights. The concept of feminism drives people to strive for the recognition of women's presence and value in humanity (Beauvoir 1949).

3. Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to equal opportunities and power to men and women. Men and women are thought of as two distinct human kinds with equal opportunities for growth and development (Beauvoir 1949).

4. Film

The film is a work that represents stories through moving images. Films reflect cultures and create a political critique through form, using an artistic technique that emphasizes performativity and a lack of authenticity (Baer 2021).

5. Narrative

The narrative is the portrayal of actions or events in the form of a textbook. Narrative is also defined as a conceptual embodiment that develops through the performance of its functions and derives its meaning solely in the two eternal qualities: the beginning and the end (Greimas 1983).