

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of The Study

Media has taken a large portion and been consumed by societies. Media affected everyone in many aspects of life. One example of such media is movies. A movie is one medium or literary work in the form of audio-visual. The film itself becomes one of the attractions for almost all aspects of society. Moreover, it has a massive impact on society. Michael Rabiger (2009) stated that a film is a video-shaped medium that starts or is produced with an accurate idea, and then it has to be a cloud of entertainment and meaning.

Back then, the existence of women in the media was filled with a stereotype about "who they are" and "*what their role is in society.*" As the age of time has grown, it is only reasonable for women to be featured in the media, notably in motion pictures that feature girls' themes. Many producers produce films that feature women's themes abroad or in Indonesia. To look at how we can get a clear understanding of this matter, Sutherland & Feltey (2017) stated the precise solutions that can be given by giving female filmmakers more and equal opportunities. In some media, it is well-known that women are always represented as weaker, lack braveness, oppressed by men, and an object of sexual harassment by men. It became a stereotype clinging to the society that women have always been described as mentioned. While in reality, the negative stereotypes of women have begun to change. Although representations of women in

film have improved in recent years, this growth has been mitigated because there has only been a 3% increase in female employment in the 250 top-grossing films since 1998 (Lauzen, 2018 cited in Kunsey 2018, p.28). Therefore, men have more opportunities to develop their talents (Busby, 2005), while some women will be denied such an opportunity and be excluded.

The term of the day in the age of globalization is media. In actuality, it was only the global information revolution that allowed for the rapid expansion of the phrase and idea of the current form of globalization (Mishra 2015, p.123). Media and feminism, furthermore, have an inseparable connection in promoting various values. Whatever entertainment is shown in media could deliver a particular implicit message toward society. Some media, such as reality shows where a woman becomes the host, could depict an implicit message that women could also lead. However, not a few media, such as movies, only represent women's role in domestic areas. When this view is narrowed down again to portray women or feminism in the media, mainly in a film, it gives us a depiction that within a movie, we can have a new perspective on how we see women or feminism. One issue that still appears in the film is the traditional gender role in a patriarchal society. They, to some extent, point out instances when "contemporary feminism" and "traditional values" clash.

Additionally, religion and mythology have been significant sources of inspiration for movies. Women characters were viewed as the pinnacle of virtue and ideals, people who could do no wrong (Mishra, 2015). Based on the analyses that have

already been discussed, media has a significant influence and contribution to the existence of feminism. They are consistently portrayed negatively by the media, and this problem is that this restricted role of women is much easier to find. Hence, it eventually remains a traditional gender role in a patriarchal society.

Besides the portrayal of women in media, especially in the movie, the writer also gives a depiction of female superheroes. The representation of superheroes in media, mainly film, has been questioned a lot about their present by the audience. The main concern about this kind is how female superheroes are represented in the movie and whether there are any ways to see it. It can be seen from how they act, costumes, behavior, and anything related to the female superhero characters. Female superhero characters are represented and highlighted throughout the age under different spotlights. They are being sexualized and not focusing on how they stand for and their abilities to fight for their goals. Throughout this study, the writer aims to show the different sides of female superheroes apart from depicting female superheroes who always related to a negative stereotype. The main focus of the writer of this study is to show how the main character has a positive side to fighting for their rights.

Feminism issues can be moral messages that can be applied and be known by a broad audience so that it is likely to cause a significant change in the issue of gender equality. Sex and gender are entirely different. Connell (2002) stated that "*Sex*" is known as a biological difference between "male" and "female" humans or animals, while "*gender*" is a social difference between males' and females' roles or men's and

women's personalities. Another expert, such as Bell Hooks (2000), defines feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." Feminism is closely related to a system that we often call traditional gender roles in patriarchy. These two things cannot be separated; they are always interrelated over time. The notion of patriarchy is an ideology and a way of thinking that legally, politically, socially, religiously, and economically enforces male dominance and power (Rakoczy 2004, p.10 & Rothman 1994, p.141).

Patriarchy is not stable but ever-changing. It is based on a system of power relations that is hierarchical and unequal. Sylvia Walby, in "*Theorising Patriarchy*," calls it "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990 cited in Ray 2008, p.1). The term patriarchy comes from Greek with its definition of '*rule of the father*' in a social system (Ray 2008, p.1). Patriarchy makes men have more advantages superiorly than women. Back then, The position of women in a patriarchal system is controlled by men. Women and Girls have to respect and obey their rules. Moreover, as a wife and mothers, women should fulfill their roles and preserve the concerns and prestige of the family.

One of the most significant problems in real life is women, and the discussion about women who challenge traditional gender roles cannot be separated from the patriarchal system. By patriarchal woman, It means a woman who has adopted the standards and beliefs of patriarchy, which is any society that gives men more power by upholding conventional gender roles. Patriarchal society always made women-only

domestic figures and limited them by grouping some parts. Back then, in traditional gender roles, women were expected to be bound to domestic labor: giving birth, nurturing, caring for their child, doing all household things, and staying at home. In contrast, men are expected to be responsible as a breadwinner for the family and have rights in public spaces.

According to Tyson (2014, p.85), traditional gender roles depict men as someone rational, strong, protective, and decisive. On the other hand, women are seen as someone irrational, weak, nurturing, and submissive. They are excluded from equal access to leadership and do not have rights in decision-making, family, politics, academia, and society. The term traditional gender role has been around since birth, and it affects people by the mindset that they are categorizing people according to their gender roles. However, despite all that kind of things, women deserve to get freedom and equality as the same as men. A group in the feminist movement try to change the idea of this gender role because it seems oppressive in women's life.

This research concern a lot about how feminist can fight against patriarchy and how they can challenge traditional gender role within a patriarchal society. In this study, the writer attempts to analyze one of the Marvel movies, *Black Widow* (2021), which also portrays how feminists can challenge traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society. Even though there are many female characters in the film, the writer only chooses one character to analyze: the main female character: Natasha Romanoff.

The writer is interested in analyzing this movie since it shows how women can fight against the patriarchal system that bound them for some years and breaks the stereotypes about how women should be. The other reason is the main character shows strength, so she inspires the writer. After having been through a childhood life full of enigmas and compulsions, she becomes a brave and independent woman who is not afraid of everything she might face and becomes a resourceful woman. For all the reasons stated above, the writer is interested in analyzing this movie more profoundly because the writer found something new inside this movie. When the writers compared the other female superhero models, such as Wonder Woman, the character of this movie has some superiority compared to the other female superhero in Wonder Woman. The main character, Natasha, can manipulate people, and she is also an ordinary human, so she does not need some superhero power compared to wonder woman, who is a demigod. It gives an impression that she is different from the other female superheroes.

Back then, before she decided to join Avenger, Natasha was joined by the most substantial secret spy agency formed by the Russian organization. In the development of Russian countries, especially Soviet societies, women played a significant role and were used as propaganda tools. During the first post-war decades, demographic imbalances took place, and women at this time began to be considered a source of production and reproduction. The women's press, with its ideas, represented labor issues and primarily focused on working-class women (Dneprovskaya, 2011). This situation leads to the rise of gender gaps in any field of human life. In the media during

the Cold war in Russia, men were always portrayed as masters, women, and vice versa. They are described as the one who always runs from it.

Moreover, the setting of this movie is also conducted in several areas, such as Norway and Budapest. In Norway, it is known that this country is considered one of the countries that be the most gender-equal countries in the world. In 2002 Norway introduced the Norwegian Gender Equality Act, which aims to promote equality and reduce the rampant discrimination in Norway. This broad measure covers the many facets of discrimination facing modern society. Discrimination can be based on gender, ethnicity, religion, belief, gender identity, gender expression, age, or other essential characteristics. In 1884, The Norwegian Association for women's rights was founded, and one year later after it, the Women's Suffrage Association was also organized.

The discussion about feminism and patriarchy is crucial nowadays, mainly about applying the Radical Feminism theory proposed by Kate Millet as the leading theory for research. Based on the writer's findings, the writer found some studies quite intriguing to be discussed. Since the object used is the latest movie released in 2021, no study related to the *Black Widow* movie has been conducted. Moreover, four related studies found by the writer analyze the representation of women, especially the main character, against patriarchy.

The first related study is from a journal article from Emanuela Giovanni Toisuta and Priska Febrinia Handojo entitled *'Katniss as a Representation of Girl Power in Hunger Games Trilogy'*<sup>8</sup>. This study shows how the main character can represent girl

power, and she also depicted that girl power is a power that women can have and perform well. This research shows that Katniss, as a female character in the movie, has several characteristics that made her become the representation of girl power. She is independent, depending equally on her brain and brawn, and the last is to be self-determined.

Meanwhile, a study by Christian Barli, Surya Sili, and Nita Maya Valiantien (2017) titled "*Women Portrayal in Patriarchal Society Through Female Main Characters in Beowulf Film (2007)*". It presents the portrayal of two female main characters who break the patriarchal system which is portrayed in the film. The study examined the description of two female main characters who break the patriarchal system performed in the movie. A female character is described as a character whose femininity is valued lower than man and even equalized as 'property.'

The third is a study from Lucia Dena Pratita entitled '*Challenging Gender Roles Within Patriarchal Society As Reflected Through Josey Aimes in North Country Film.*' This study portrayed how women experienced sexual harassment and subordination outside their homes; and the impact of challenging gender roles within the patriarchal system. Patriarchal society sees Josey as a female who can not work for some physically oriented job. She receives some negative impacts as the impact of challenging gender roles.

Lastly, the study titled "*Lilo Topchev as a Symbol of Woman's Power in Philip K. Dick's The Zap Gun.*" This study described how women and men see the reflection.

The author of this study has already characterized male characters as the one who holds control and sees as superior; meanwhile, the female characters here are usually stereotyped as inferior, emotional, incompetent, and weak.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

From the previous background of the study, the problems can be analyzed.

The writer elaborates them into one question:

1. How is the depiction of a feminist who fights against patriarchal society depicted through Natasha Romanoff as the main character?

## **1.3 The Objective of The Study**

Based on the statement of the problem that has elaborate, the writer determines the objective of the study as follows:

1. To depict how the main character can fight against the patriarchal system and Natasha's strategies or resistance to fight against it.

## **1.4 The Significant of The Study**

Most people think that women are always seen as someone weaker than men. They are oppressed and underestimated by men in some cases. In this case, the writer would like to prove that even though the patriarchal system and traditional gender roles constantly oppress the main character, they can fight against them. This study is expected could give in-depth insight to the writer. It will improve the critical skills and the understanding of feminism and patriarchy significantly how we as a woman can gain equal rights as men.

Besides, This study aims to show how the patriarchy works by analyzing it through a superhero movie. For the readers, the writer hopes that this research will give them new knowledge about how women struggle against patriarchy. In addition, it will make them more aware of patriarchy in society, the equality between men and women in nowadays era, and the expectations that they can treat women equally as men.

More importantly, the writer would like to contribute to cultural studies in general. The writer hopes this study will help readers, particularly students of Universitas Airlangga in the English Department who take cultural studies for their readability, who apply the theory of feminism to their research. In addition, this study could become a helpful resource that can help readers do their thesis.

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

The writer provided some definitions of critical terms for the readers to gain fresh insight from the topic to get a piece of new knowledge and a better understanding of the study.

- 1. Feminism** : Feminism refers to a noble philosophy that opposes the heinous idea of sex-based discrimination and the promotion of women's rights on the grounds of gender equality (Ranjan, 2019)
- 2. Gender Role:** Gender has a position parallel to the biological division of sex into men and women, but it also involves social divisions and judgments of masculinity and femininity (Ann Oakley, 1972)

3. **Patriarchy** : "Refer to male domination, the power relationships by which men dominate women, and characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in several ways" (Bhasin 2006:3).

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