

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Feminism is considered a belief and ideology in society that prioritizes the equality between a man and woman. Girl power, according to Riot Grrl is a feminist subculture movement that was included in third-wave feminism as a brave act of protest in fighting for women's rights in that era (L. Wright 2015-2016). The feminist movement has made a significant development through four-wave of feminism (Delao 2021). The first wave of feminism is the beginning of the movement to fight for women's rights in political fields, and they are focusing on women's voices in giving vote and how women could contribute as men do. The second wave is broadened to cover women's sexuality, workplace, and domestic things. Third-wave feminism started a significant movement of girl power in the 19th century. This act then developed to influence women and girls to keep fighting for their rights, including women's individualism and diversity. Fourth-wave feminism elaborate the idea of postfeminist idea which focus on woman individualism as the act of woman responsibility for their own behaviours and action (Day and Wray 2018).

However, girl power nowadays usually appears and occurs in real life through a movie or some feminist movement as the portrayal of how woman speaks up for their right (Garret 2019). For example, superhero movies such as *Captain*

*Marvel* and *Wonder Woman* are some of the movies which portray the representation of girl power. Most of the previous studies which discussed an issue about girl power only focus on some part of the representation or portrayal of girl power on their object. They only try to show the girl power without seeking deeper into the issue, which means that it only approves that girl power as the act of feminism is contained in their movie. For example, a study entitled *Katniss as A Representation of Girl Power in Hunger Games Trilogy* written by Toisuta and Handojo (Toisuta 2015) only shows a representation of how the woman character of the movie portrays girl power. It shows that girl power has three kinds of characteristics such as being independent, equal, and self-determined. The discussion explains the findings about girl power is portrayed and challenged. However, the previous study's conclusion is only to prove that Katniss shows the act of girl power, which means the goal of this study is only to mention the evidence without seeking out and finding a new problem in the discussion. Similar to the study mentioned above, there are also several studies which later mentioned as related studies in the review of related studies section and most of those studies only try to approve that girl power is present in their object, but those studies are still important for the researchers to develop this research.

*The Fast & Furious* franchise focus on the production of an action movie and started its first movie saga in 2001. The movie is mainly about performing illegal racing with many expensive and cool sports cars in facing the problem of each story such as spies and heists. A group of people becomes the main focus of each movie in doing their job. *Fast & Furious 9* is an American action film directed

by Justin Lin and officially released by Universal Pictures. It was released internationally on May 19, 2021, in South Korea, and on June 25, 2021, in the United States. The *Fast & Furious 9* movie reached the amount of US \$ 162.4 million or around Rp. 2.3 trillion for the gross revenue in its debut week of release on May 19, 2021 (CNN 2021). It is the sequel to *The Fate of The Furious* (F8). This film brings back memories of Dom's father and his brother's appearance after a long time. The mission is to stop Dom's brother who is a deadly professional assassin and to save the world. There is also the surprise of Han's appearance, a character who died in F6. In the end, their mission is a success. However, the focus of this study is on how the female characters such as Letty, Mia, Ramsey, Cipher, the archenemy, and the other female characters perform their selves and prove that they are also able to be as strong as the other male members, so their position could be equal.

Women characters might be seen to be powerful but not as powerful as the other men characters in an action movie. Most of them might only show as a complement to their team. There are three female characters in the main team and the other three characters who are not part of the team, but also take part in helping Dom and his friends to save the world. The three female characters in the team are Letty, Ramsey, and Mia. Letty is an independent woman who will not let others control her to do a favor. She has risen as a mechanic, racer, and thief who has expert driving skills and fighting skills. That is how she becomes a strong woman. Ramsey is another female character in the team who has expert hacking skills and also has a device called "God's Eye" which can track anything that they need from

the satellite. Even though she is an introvert who is barely shown to fight physically, she is a genius woman who has extraordinary intelligence. Mia is Brian's wife who is joining the mission in *Fast & Furious 9*. She is Dom's sister who also has good driving and fighting skill. She is a warm-hearted woman who puts her family over anything. The other three female characters are Queenie (known as Magdalene Shaw), an older woman with tactics and full of spirit; Leysa, Dom's friend who led the female paramilitary group; and Elle, Han's friend who has the expert fighting skill and become the key of the project. There also archenemy in the is Cipher who is also a female character who has an amazing skill and become a powerful villain in this movie. Nevertheless, *Fast & Furious 9*, has shown several portrayals of how a woman shows their girl power. Few female characters have their time to shine, to show how a woman also has equal power as a man. This is the key reason for choosing this action film as the object of the study.

Contrary to the previous study mentioned in the second paragraph, my research seeks deeper on the issue of girl power in my object. The position of my research will be explained in this paragraph as well. There are few kinds of research in discussing its object's issue, which could be either challenging, affirming, negotiating, or ambivalence. When the research is affirming an issue, the discussion tries to examine the object and see the representation of the issue on the object. It might slightly look like it has to prove that the object does represent the issue and problem. If a study is negotiating an issue, it means that the research tries to find a way to relate if the object might cover the problem. On the other hand, ambivalences show the ambiguity of the issue which actually happened in the object. While the

previous studies are more into affirming the issue of girl power, my research attempts to find a new finding of ambiguity on the issue that happened in my object and give insight through narrative analysis in the movie. As it is mentioned in Karnanta and Sukmawati (2021), movie appears as something which important to tells a story through sets of events which related to each other to move the characters to act in the story. Narrative then becomes the important thing in interpreting and reveals the meaning of a story. There are a few pieces of evidences that later states that there are ambivalences in my research. In this study, it is shown that the *Fast & Furious 9* movie does challenge girl power which is portrayed by several female characters. However, after seeking deeper and seeing from a different perspective, the researcher found the ambiguity in which this girl power action is only shown as a symbolic heroism scene which is later drowned by the ideology and stereotypes of the society. Therefore, the position of this study is challenging and also seeking the ambivalences of the girl power issue.

In analyzing this research, the researcher used the theory of the girl power subculture movement. The girl power movement is a part of postmodernism and the third-wave feminism that emerged to redefine femininity including class, race, and sexual orientation, which indicate intersectionality. This wave concerns women's individualism and diversity (Snyder 2008). Girl power phrases become a powerful slogan to encourage the woman empowerment movement in the 90s era. That phrase was introduced by several groups of people who had a big influence on women and girls such as Riot Grrrl and Spice Girl. The subculture of Riot Grrrl gathered women and girls to fight for their justice against strong social ideologies

such as capitalism and patriarchal culture (L. Wright 2015-2016). Riot Grrrl included music in doing the feminism protest that later shows how to present the girl power movement in a fun and rebel way. This made the women and girls involved in that protest more confident and freer to show their expression during the fighting for female rights. One of the goals of the girl power movement is to show equality for women and against the stereotypes in society, that is why this theory is suitable to be used in analyzing the issue of my research.

There are six related studies applied as references to help the researcher in analyzing the object. The review of related studies section consists of five research by other researchers covering feminist issues and theories with few similar methods and problems as this research. There are four related studies analyzing movies as their object while the other one of them analyzed Femina magazine. The list of movie's titles that were used as the object of related studies are includes *Captain Marvel* (2021), *300: Rise of An Empire* (2018), *Birds of Prey* (2020), *The Princess Diaries: Princess Mia* (2005), and *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* (2019). Those related studies are covering the feminist issues as this research does. As the researcher of this study uses actantial narrative theory by A.J Greimas, the gap between those related studies can be seen in contrast to how the issue is being analyzed. While the researcher analyses the actant to understand the role of woman characters in the object, there is only one who also use it. Most of the related studies did not use the actantial theory which limited how the girl character's role through actant cannot be completely explained for the understanding of how the women's

action function in the story. The details of each related study are explained completely in the next chapter.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem discovered in the object of this study comes from the feminism issue which portrays girl power in the *Fast & Furious 9* movie. However, the portrayal of those feminist acts in the movie challenges the representation of girl power and the ambivalence which implicitly shown in the movie. The statement of the problem could be formulated as follows:

1. How are female characters and girl power narrated in the *Fast & Furious 9* movie?
2. To what extent does the narrative of girl power in *Fast & Furious 9* signify women's representation in the current action movie in Hollywood?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

By doing this research, the researcher has several aspects of the problem to be analyzed for this study's purpose. The first objective that is expected to be fulfilled is investigating the feminism issue in the movie, which later helped the researcher examine the data collected in the study to represent how the film represents girl power. By understanding the characteristics of girl power, this study aimed to analyze female characters' action that reflects and represents girl power in *Fast & Furious 9*. The second objective that will also be achieved by doing this research is the explanation of the ambivalence of girl power which is reflected

implicitly in *Fast Furious 9*. The ambivalence is then compared with the other current movie in Hollywood which contains feminist issues through several previous studies. The purpose of the study is expected to cover the issue of feminism.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of doing this research is analyzing the *Fast & Furious 9* movie and discussing the portrayal of girl power representation through the female characters' action in the film, in which most of their act is helping their team and other people to save the world. The findings of the study would give some contributions to all the readers for those who were concerned with this field and issue. The findings of how feminism issues are represented will later be expected to be significant for the researcher, society, and cultural studies. This research offer the analysis of girl power as it narrated in the movie. By using the narrative approach as the method to analyze the actants, the researcher will be able to discover the pattern of woman role in the movie based on the analysis of their function in actantial status (Courtés 1982). The importance of this study for the researcher is to give a new perspective and insight into analyzing a study that not only tries to state the issue's representation of the study but also analyses the issue by examining the correlation between the theory and the data in the object. The reader of this study is expected to understand how the narrative of the story explains the understanding of women's role through actants and their girl power contribution portrayed in the *Fast & Furious 9* movie as it can empower women. This study is

important to give new knowledge about feminist issues including the representation of girl power and the problem of its ambivalence.

### **1.5 Definitions of Key Terms**

**Feminism** : An action or movement to establish equality between women and men throughout history as it has the goal of ending sexist injustice (Jenainati and Groves 2007)

**Girl Power** : Subculture movement by Riot Grrrl that can be considered as a theory that emerges from third-wave feminism, focused on woman empowerment to actualize emancipation. (L. Wright 2015-2016)

**Actants** : Role and character's function in the story. (Hébert 2019)

**Narrative** : An entity of word to utter an information through its discursive structures. (Hébert 2019)

**Ambivalence** : The state of having or displaying multiple attitudes or feelings toward an idea that are in direct opposition to one another. (Webster n.d.)