

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Girl Power is characterized as “emancipated confidence” that raises self-esteem, reduces depression, and alters gender roles among girls and young women (Zaslow 2009). In the early and mid-1990s, the word became popular with the punk community. Young females tied to the common term 'girl power' or 'girl culture' appeared in mass consciousness in the 1990s. It boomed through the products of girls' culture that started in the century and continues to a lesser extent today (Zaslow 2009). This term was popularized in the mid-1990s by the American pop music group Spice Girls. In her book *Girl Heroes: The New Power in Popular Culture*, Susan Hopkins wrote about the relationship between female power, women, and female action heroes in the late 20th century (Hopkins, 2002). The idea about women's power has a tradition of being directly connected with the fantasy and action of heroes in the 1970s and the character of women of the third wave on US television. Therefore, women's strength is usually related to the feminine role as a way to inspire other young women individually. Girl power also believes that women and girls must appear confidently, make decisions and do things independently without being influenced by other views from men or social and political movements.

Raya and the Last Dragon is an American animated film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

The film was released on March 5, 2021 worldwide and can be watched on the Disney+ platform. The film begins with a story about Kumandra. In ancient times, Kumandra was a prosperous land. However, a plague called Druun started to spoil everything. They absorbed the inhabitants and turned them to stone. Finally, Kumandra's dragons, who are believed to be immortal, used their magic to create an orb that has the power to not only fend off the Druun, but also revive everyone except the dragons, who turned to stone the moment after the orb was created. Everyone wanted the magical orb's, which eventually divided them into tribes based on their area. The Heart Tribe acquired the orb and has been keeping them safe ever since. The film explores these ideas of Raya's quest to find Sisu the last dragon and her beliefs about how dragons can influence the changes in nature. The identity of a princess as a Southeast Asian warrior is an essential part of her. Raya, described as a heroine without any love interest, teamed up with two adorable little children. Still, her best friend is Sisu, a strange water dragon, voiced by actress-singer Awkwafina.

In most cultures around the world, patriarchal ideology has a significant impact on the struggle of women, and it tends to support authoritarian principles over democratic ones. Male dominance is now both legal and usual (Ritcher 1990). For men, politics or public life in politics has been considered a natural realm, yet for women, who want a place or territory to call their own, the "natural" environment is seen as a choice outside of traditional rules. This division of responsibilities on "political filth or rudeness," "toughness" may be based on different cultures or religions. The nobility of public services, the requirements of

the community (male) with a sense of the "big picture" versus the people (female) whose devotion is "restricted" to family and a group. As a result, the private family role placed on most women is one of the factors that makes them "unqualified" for political positions. (Ritcher 1990). Also, throughout the post-monarchical era, women in Western countries shared much in common with women in Asia, who were persuaded that politics would stain their chastity and lead to family conflict. Women in South Asia, on the other hand, are usually persuaded that it is not their purity that is at risk, but rather the honor of the family that may be endangered by their less restricted existence (Ritcher 1990). Because of family ties to significant men politicians in South and Southeast Asia, the most important political positions open to women have greatly increased—opportunities for such women have massively enhanced.

As a result, the seeming contradiction between Asian women's overall standing and their surprising advantage over the less is due to their having overcome severe difficulties rather than their closeness. Social status The majority of female leaders recognize themselves as members of the elite. When social class explains a lot about who has political power in most societies, explaining women's leadership position in a nation where women's position is still low, such as Southeast Asia, is important. (Ritcher 1990)

Gender equality is currently a key feature of educational sector achievements in every Southeast Asian country. European colonialism in Southeast Asia finally ended with the end of World War II. The emerging independent governments are committed to gender equality in principle during the next 15 years,

but in reality, this phenomenon rarely reveals itself (Andaya 2019). Women have increasingly held public office in recent years, particularly in local government, although women's presence in national government has only increased to 10% in the Philippines (Andaya 2019). Because women are generally excluded in male-dominated countries, they demonstrate that they are capable when they achieve in politics. Some people have reached the highest political positions because they are the daughter or wife of a famous man. However, progress in terms of economic involvement and possibilities, and also political empowerment, is still limited. Women are still self-limiting and hesitant to promote themselves in the workplace, including as a leader (Apriani 2020).

The way candidates are recruited and the entrenched attitude that sees women's primary roles as wives and mothers often stymie women's increasing involvement in politics. Gender stereotypes preferring boys over girls are common in school textbooks and are sometimes influenced by religious beliefs (Andaya 2019). Even though all Southeast Asian countries except Laos and Vietnam have signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and have made progress in promoting gender equality, changing the preference for boys is difficult, particularly in Vietnam, which has a strong Confucian heritage.

The development difference between East Timor, Cambodia, and Laos (among the world's poorest countries) and affluent Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, generalizing about women's economic status in Southeast Asia is difficult. The proliferation of prostitution and women's trafficking, which is often a

concern in the environment, can be observed in poor countries and poor areas (Andaya 2019). Lower-wage women have become increasingly important for manufacturing employment since the mid-1960s when Southeast Asian countries gradually moved to export-oriented economies. (Andaya 2019). As a result, women are more involved in labor organizing. They are becoming increasingly important to the national economy as abroad domestic workers, sending huge quantities of money to their families. Due to global shortages, qualified women might find work in professional sectors such as nursing in other countries.

Due to a strong commitment to family responsibilities, women in Southeast Asia consider the domestic role to be more essential than the public role. Women's behavior reveals that they are preoccupied with welfare groups or families, even at the expense of individuals. This is a highly traditional Asian ethic that still guides women's behavior in Southeast Asia today (Apriani 2020). As Southeast Asian women acquire greater access to school, gaining vocational skills and academic certifications is far more likely than it is today (Andaya 2019). Except for Cambodia and Laos, the number of women pursuing post-secondary education has increased, and more women graduate than males in Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines; tariffs for Vietnam and Indonesia are relatively similar.

Opportunities for developing women's participation in Southeast Asia are still based on gender-responsive democracy and governance. Better gender relations, combined with the toughness and practicality of the modern location community, are leading Southeast Asian women into a bright future. This is the foundation of a woman's identity, and it is the basic capital that must be developed

further through a variety of educational initiatives, mentoring, and training to improve knowledge, insight, organizational abilities, and self-confidence (Apriani 2020). As a result, women will be able to become true leaders who can participate in a variety of activities that are not confined to men. Gender equality will become more widely realized if the state encourages it through gender-responsive legislation and consistent implementation (Apriani 2020).

The trend of protests came from the notion of equality for women called feminism. The term feminism came from the French language, *féminisme*, which was coined in the nineteenth century by Charles Fourier, a French philosopher and utopian socialist. First used in 1980, the English word shows women struggling to achieve equal opportunity with men (Cavallaro 2001: 201). Feminism existed in the early 20th century and was written in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), a book-length essay by Virginia Woolf. In terms of feminist women, women are grouped to fight for women's rights in everyday life. The aim is to balance the reciprocal relationship between gender-feminists (Woolf 1929). In a broader sense, the feminist women's movement rejects all things that have dropped women's rights and are handed down by the dominant culture, both in the political and economic realms and in everyday lives.

The feminist theory emphasizes women's struggle for their rights, the criticism on the dominant role of men in society, and racial conflict, especially gender conflict. Firstly, the feminist movement was considered as understanding as women's rights awareness is equal to men. Call this reading a woman, and read it a woman. By "reading as a woman" is the reader's awareness that the struggle for

meaning and significance of literary works involves significant differences in the sexes. The reader's awareness within the framework of the academic feminist study is a study of various methods. Feminist theorists are also generally concerned with traditional gender roles, which, in particular, are the norms built between men and women in social groups. Then, Feminism has to do with patriarchal politics, women's identity practices, gender divisions of labor, and the distinction of private and public spheres, as well as with power-over ties of mental, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, symbolic, and corporeal aspects, many of which are ignored by liberal feminism (Motta 2011). This theory was the theory used to analyze female characters in the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

There are so many films about a heroine that have been researched. One of the studies that have examined the main character as a heroine was the *Wonder Woman* character as a representation of women in cosplay and making *Wonder Woman* a feminist icon (Rose 2015). According to (Rose 2015), women in cosplay can be described as women wearing a costume or clothing that is identical to a particular identity, such as a superhero. Meanwhile, in this research, the focus was girl power representation in the main character. Both *Raya* and *Gal Gadot* are female superheroes depicted in their films and represent women as the main characters. Both films also show similar characters who have girl power. In *Raya and the Last Dragon*, it is *Raya*, and in *Wonder Woman*, it is *Gal Gadot*.

Rahmaniar (2015) did research on Gretel's girl power in Tommy Wirkola's *Hansel and Gretel Witch Hunter* film. The *Hansel and Gretel* movie was released to the public in 2013 adapting the Grimm Brothers' famous classic fairytale. This

research focused on the representation of girl power through Gretel as the main character and Gretel shows her feminine side as an emotional and weak woman who still needs a man's figure. Monica (2018) researched *Girl Power Represented through Visual Images of Artemisia in 300: Rise of an Empire*. *300: Rise of an Empire* is an American film released in 2014. This film is based on the graphic novel by Frank Miller entitled *Xerxes*. This research focused on the visual, costumes, accessories, weapons, and black color as a masculine symbol and feminine to become a powerful commander.

Traditional gender roles are roles in some respects which justify inequalities between men and women. When men and women first meet, their conventional gender roles cast men as having rational minds, strong, and protective. In contrast, women launched men as emotional or irrational, weak, defensive, and submissive (Tyson 85). This film contains a powerful message of women's representation. Representations of women in the media are used as a reference by its audiences and the society in general to "see" women. One example of media that mainly represents women is Disney. Young people, especially women, generally favor Disney films. Disney films primarily tells us about the life of a princess (of course, all the films have princesses in them, although there is a much larger number that doesn't) and all Disney female characters, past and present, are depicted as weak and passively sitting, waiting to be 'saved by a prince' (Michelle 1999). Strong and active women began to be portrayed in Disney animated films in the late 1970s and 1980s. Examples of such woman independence and liveliness have even appeared among some of the first-era Disney studio feature animation characters (From Disney's

earlier years, characters like Slue-Foot Sue and, to a lesser extent, Katrina van Tassel are examples of strong, non-passive characters.)

However, it is the presence of some of the most prominent and successful classic Disney characters; Snow White and Cinderella—both fairy-tale princesses were described as passive princesses, thus establishing a widespread accepted reputation that Disney films are full of weak and lethargic women. (Michelle 1999)

The way the media depicts a woman frequently becomes a reference and an example used to judge women generally. There are examples displayed by the media that make women out there often compare themselves to other women, feeling like they have to meet the standards recognized by the public as represented in the media.

In the film *Raya and The Last Dragon*, Raya can prove that the stereotype of people who claim that women are weak is wrong. For women, freedom is a form of action that is not bound by existing traditions or stereotypes. They can do whatever they want. Tradition is generally defined as “receiving everything that has been determined in the past” (Plested 2011). Someone who accepts tradition as the main view in life is called a traditionalist. is more than anything else and must be followed without any reason is called a traditionalist (Kalb 2002).

The writer argues this issue becomes critical because when the male view that audiences worldwide have been programmed indirectly to accept and be regarded as the only viewpoint that is 'made strange', as has been done by gender theorists for decades, the only point of view will remain. Producing films that are dominated by women and put aside (but still not controlled) Women's gaze takes us one step

further into the eyes of men who are strange and can run away, making us, women, not afraid to act. In the early 1990s, film production began to raise issues about women. In films like this, the woman is the focus or the main character. In old movies, women were depicted as a character who was weak and powerless. However, today many women are represented as courageous and strong. Some of Hollywood's biggest and most famous film productions have produced many films that feature women as the central issue and attractive women. An example is *Tomb Raider* (Chengting, 2020).

1.2 Statement of The Problem

This study discusses the female characters represented in the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Thus, below is a statement of the problem:

How does Raya, Namaari and Sisu as a female hero represent Girl Power in Disney's movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*?

1.3 The objective of The Study

Relating to the problem statement, the writer decided an objective of the research as follows:

To find out how Girl Power is depicted through Raya, Namaari and Sisu as a female hero in the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

1.4 Significance of The Study

This research has practical relevance. Practically, this research is helpful to students and readers alike. This research will help them understand women's girl power in *Raya and the Last Dragon* movie. For the writers, this work aims to make the audience and researchers more aware of the issue of gender equality which is represented in the film and break the stereotype of society, proving that women are able to unite what has been divided as told in the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

To have a comprehensive and deep analysis, scope and limitations were applied. *Raya and the Last Dragon* is a Disney princess movie with a heroine character. The scope and limitation of this research is analyzing Girl Power in the scope of cultural studies. The focuses were on the scene and scripts that showed women's representation as girl power of the main character, Raya, and other women characters. The writer used a specified theory and methods to analyze within the range of cultural studies aspects.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Girl Power : Girl power is known as a result of the industrial response that is formed and becomes a culture towards this social movement. (Zaslow 2009)

Gender in Media : Gender in the media is a description of the relationship between men and women who emphasize ancient roles and normalize violence by women. (Julia 2017)

Feminism : In terms of feminist women means women who are grouped to fight for women's rights in everyday life (Virginia 1929)

Heroine : The heroine is one of the female characters in the movie who likes to help many people. They are often called the hero or heroines. (Cindy 2017)

Sisterhood : The bond between one woman and another can also be linked to their participation in the same culture, described as a social understanding that includes ideas about what is important to unite and is realized as a strategic guide to action (Pearson 2007)