

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

All living beings, including humans, have the right to live equally in society and fulfill all their rights and freedoms without ever experiencing oppression. Oppression can happen in many contexts, such as oppression toward race, color, religion, gender, etc. Anyone can become a victim of the pressure in our society, including women. The cost of it is always the disadvantaged person. The oppression of women started a long time ago, and it is part of gender oppression. Undoubtedly, women were the continual victims who suffered the most in this case, usually experiencing unexpected side effects.

According to Jindy Pettman's book entitled, *Worlding Women* (1996), delivering human rights also depicts how society respects women and men. The value of masculine qualities should not burden our community, affecting other damage points in another human being. Speaking of men's character, which relates to masculine qualities, they consist of self-serving, aggressive, competitive, and warlike attributes. Those aspects tend to be the potential cause of the oppression and discrimination of women. Several external factors are taking essential roles towards women's oppression and discrimination; indeed, the lack of understanding and education includes it.

Women's oppression happens through the discrepancy of the dominant and submissive perspective on gender roles between males and females in our society (Rahma 2017, 2). Our community believes that men are in the top place, whereas women are submissive. The traditional gender roles take part in determining the roles of men and women. Men are rational, protective, and strong, while women always stereotype as emotional human beings, nurturing and weak (Tyson 2015, 81). The barbaric of women's oppression arose in the late 18th century. At that time, women got a rejection and limited through social, economic, and political discrimination. The only responsibility that women carried was to be married, motherhood, and spinsterhood (Cruea 2005, 1).

Nevertheless, traditional gender roles are not the one reason for women's oppression. The traditional gender role underpins the patriarchal environment, which is so intimidating for women. Based on Tyson (2015, 99), the existence of patriarchy decreases women's self-confidence to grow and their assertiveness. Therefore, women will not be able to foster and a walkout from their nutshell. Patriarchy indeed plunders the power of women. Besides, patriarchy enables oppression in the first place. Nowadays, women are losing the chance to build a career in the work environment or achieve higher education. One of the examples which also portrayed, in reality, is, Bangladesh teenagers aged 18 years old and more have to get married rather than pursue their education (Sultana 2011, 7).

Besides getting dumped from social, political, and economic aspects, more prominent aspects also square themselves from women's existence (Lee-Koo 2011, 78). Thus, it shows that society oppresses women's capability due to the women's

stereotype who describes them as weak creatures (Rahma 2017, 14). Therefore, women need to prove and break that wrong stigma. They need to work harder than men to get a good position and image in public.

The Seneca Falls Conference happened in 1840, marked as one of the tangible pieces of evidence of the perseverance of women against patriarchy and women's oppression. The conference aimed to discuss women's right that were left behind. It leads to the emergence of the feminist movement. Feminist is a name for the women who believe and fight to spread the feminist movement. Feminists argued that as humans, women also be permitted unfettered access to civic participation, work, market, and other activity in the public sphere (Musgrave 2003, 217).

The feminist movement truly impacted positively for women in society. As stated by Iowa Press, feminism has confronted social injustices which addressed to women (Marie and Williams 2015). It also involved in supporting gender equality and ensuring the world's peace. Gender equality is a term to ensure the equal right fulfilled by men and women to enjoy all rights perceived on earth (Barbera 2008, 219). Thus, the situation and position of women were changing rapidly. In fact, after feminists aired many social communities born to campaign and help women get their equal rights.

Girl Up, a global community founded by UN Foundation, promotes gender equality by outgrowing young women's potential in education, career, and leadership through their facilities and campaigns. This community realizes that women around the world deserve a chance and have power toward everything. Even

in the 21st century, gender equality is not globalized widely, such as in Africa, many young women become an object of discrimination and limitation (Rabbitt 2010, 3).

The practice of feminism is not the only thing that continues to evolve. The theory of feminism developed until it resulted in several branches of feminism theory, such as liberal feminism. Liberal feminism came to make women succeed to fulfill their potential as human beings (Lee-Koo 2011, 86). This movement centralized to focus more on the equal rights of women and men. Liberal feminists argued that women, like men, were entitled to their pursuits, free of state regulation (Musgrave 2003, 217). This kind of feminism works perfectly as a valuable tool to face women's oppression issues from the 19th century until the 21st century.

The writer intended to analyse the issue of women oppression by using the novel as the research object. A novel is interpreted as one of the genres in literature that often to depicts, recreates and delineates people's social life with issues in various aspects, such as; politics, family, class, nation and others (Laurenson 1972, 75). Somehow, the author could take the story's inspiration from the writer's surrounding area or the social condition of where they lived. Therefore, their literary work defined the author's impression and point of view from the particular issue around them. They can express their perspective freely and elaborate on the problem based on what audience perceives.

The Queen's Gambit is an American novel written by Walter Tevis, a legendary novelist who admired women's intelligence. He is famously known after he launched six novels in which he won two awards from his previous novel books, three of his books became influential films. *The Queen's Gambit* has already been

adapted into a miniseries that won several awards. The writer intends to discuss women's intelligence and ensure the public that women have the above range of intellectual more than just a household matter (Barbera 2008, 279). *The Queen's Gambit* tells us about a genius and unfortunate young girl named Beth Harmon who spent her childhood at the orphanage after her mother died due to a car crash. One day, she found herself interested in chess played by Mr Shaibel, the janitor in the orphanage. Later on, chess became her inseparable part and led her to her success.

Moreover, Walter Tevis wrote *The Queen's Gambit* with the setting in the novel around the 1950s to 1960s. Tevis cleverly associated the women issue inside the novel with the actual condition in 1950-1960s society. At that time, most women were expected to be at home, doing the homemaking duties, being a mother and a wife only. None of women were identified as labor, high-educated and skillful at that time. Women who live in the patriarchal society have no future choice, because their position will always be the number two after the men (Widjaja 2020, 47).

In line with the setting, chess, at that time, was already labelled as *a male sport*. Chess is known as an intellectually demanding activity where men dominate at the top level. Still, the difference in performance between best men and women is primarily accounted for by the contrast they would expect, given the much more significant number of men participating (Bilalic 2008, 1116). It was the most demanding game and the predominance of male participation, similar to in education, where mathematics, engineering, and architecture were masculine spaces (Jimenez 2021, 2).

The purpose of this study is to give hope to all women out there who also struggle with the same matters as Beth Harmon in the novel. The writer used liberal feminism to elaborate Beth's strategies to overcome the dominance of men. This theory supports women's equal rights to pursue women's careers and dreams. Liberal feminism by Mary Wollstonecraft elucidates those women have similar capacities and chances to succeed and develop their intellect (Correll 2004, 315). It is not only that liberal feminism exists to empower women to accomplish and enter the world that they desire without being perceived as masculine or undesirable traits in society (Blaes 1999, 22).

The writer strengthens the argument in this study by finding the previous and related studies which support this study. The first previous study was written by Mohammad Hossain (2021), entitled *Political and Socio-Cultural Poetics of the Novel the Queen's Gambit by Walter Tevis: A New Historicist Perspective*. Hossain elaborated the political and socio-cultural aspects that happened in the United States around the mid-20th century as the setting of *The Queen's Gambit*. In the discussion, the historicism perspective emerged to breakdown several events that connected with Beth Harmon, such as the intensity in society caused by the Cold War, the everyday Communism practical, the rise of Women Empowerment, and the vast spreading of critical radical issues. It portrayed the influence of hysterical situation among objectified women at that time, including Beth Harmon.

The second previous study is A Feminist Reading of the Queen's Gambit by Monica Jimenez (2021). The focus of this article journal was how the predicaments about women's roles and how they accepted it in *the Queen's Gambit*. Talked about

how women react to it, Jimenez mentioned the different reactions between Beth and her stepmother, Alma Wheatley. The writer also found several related studies which most likely resembled this research. Firstly, a journal article entitled *Patriarchal Oppression: Strategies of Resistance in Selected Stories from Ojaide's the Debt-Collector and Other Stories* by Margaret Nutsukpo (2019). This journal elaborated the strategies used by the protagonists of three different short stories in dealing with oppression and achieving what they want. The scope of oppression that is displayed is around aspects of domestic, social, economic and cultural oppression.

Secondly, a journal article titled *Analysis of Feminism in the Novel of Little Women by Louisa May Alcott* by Eka Desmawati (2018) portrayed March's effort to help her family's economic stability toward working as a man. Thirdly, an article titled *Feminism Reflected in Pride and Prejudice Novel by Jane Austen 1813*, written by Suaidi and Rusfandi (2016), talked about women's ambition among society prejudice toward education, morals, and marriage. Fourthly, *Authenticity of Liberal Feminism in Namita Gokhale's Texts* by Priyadharshini and Mohan (2021) examined the major female characters who earn freedom in life choices and marriage. Priyadharshini and Mohan used three different novels from Namita as their research object, entitled; *The Book of Shadows (2001)*, *Priya: In Incredible Indyya (2011)*, and *Things to leave Behind (2016)*.

Thus, based on those journal articles the gap lies in the discussion that focused on Beth's strategies to get her bright career and elevate her social status. Additionally, the writer also examines how the society responses to it by applying the Liberal Feminism theory from Mary Wollstonecraft.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to the background study, the writer formulated the statement of problem as follow:

1. How are Beth Harmon's strategies to overcome oppression caused by patriarchy and become the next champion of the World Chess Competition?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Regarding the statement of problems above, these thesis purposes are:

1. To find out Beth's strategies for defeating oppression caused by patriarchy to become the next Grand Master of Chess.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The discrepancy between men and women has widely happened in almost every sector surrounding us. Our environment is still not friendly enough to open up new opportunities for people of all genders. Gender becomes one undeniable factor when it comes to a starter of oppression. This research brought the feminism issues to analyse a conflict experienced by Beth Harmon, a young female character from Walter Tevis' *The Queen's Gambit*. She is a brilliant and ambitious girl who fights against the harshness of oppression from a sport known as a male sport, chess.

Using the liberal feminism theory, the writer believes that this research would enlighten our society to realize that gender is not a border limiting us from achieving everything. Besides, the emergence of this study could support the young female generation and women to be confident to build their careers in every sector. Furthermore, the writer also expects that this thesis could contribute to providing

proper knowledge and insight for all researchers who will conduct further research and the public who want to know more about feminism.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- Chess : Chess is a board game played by two people to protect their kingdom and attack their rival's kingdom. It requires strategic motives and potential moves (Gobet 2002, 105)
- Ambition : Ambition is a strong, positive desire or goal made by people intent on making promotion and realizing to get a higher and more admirable career for their future (Elchardus 2008, 251).
- Society : Society is an environment or community where people live, do their activities, connect and communicate. Society is also a place to share values (Luhmann 1985, 11).
- Strategy : Strategy is a way or tactic constructed by someone, some countries or some institutions to achieve freedom toward a specific aspect (Strachan 2013, 33).