

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the patriarchal system, women are always the center of attention than men. They are more often talked about in the social environment and have an attractive side than others, it is a beauty. However, the beauty that should be an honor makes women suffer because they are always considered weak and cannot do something. Society's image of women is constructed by the judgments of society, especially men. Some philosophers argue that women are creatures created by God only to accompany men and they consider that women are the sex that is determined based on their shortcomings (Ummah2009). This construction of women has shaped society for centuries.

Social construction in society is born not only in one place. This construction spread globally then became a huge issue. The world is like having only two colors. It is like they reconstruct the color black as the most powerful color, and white as the symbol of weakness. Likewise, women and men are formed by a system called the patriarchal system. In this case, society also forms a gender bias where gender is divided into two parts, feminine and masculine. The feminine side is womanliness or girlishness and it is often seen as something that is inherent in women. According to Tyson (2015), traditional gender roles cast women as a gender that are considered weak, emotional, and nurturing. This issue will have an impact on women such as doubting their abilities. The

masculine side is the manly side which is usually considered the inherent side of men. They are considered strong, decisive, and rational figures so they feel more powerful. Yet sex and gender are two different things. Sex is a biological condition created since we were born and this is the property of human bodies, while gender is a societal construction and can be changed depending on the attitude and nature of the perpetrator. A system like this presents gender inequality such as stereotypes, subordination, and gender discrimination.

Inequalities that have been faced by women in recent centuries have very affected their whole life. It is not only between the relation of them and their family, but also in social boundaries such as education, economic class, and also political terms. Women were noticed as inferior to men. They were weak, not an intellectual people, and just as the one who can be controlled by men. The public environment such as work and political sphere belonged to a male, while women had to take care of the household. Hodgson-wright in Suwastini (2013) suggests that the beginning of the feminist movement was an effort to confront patriarchy in 1550 to 1700 in England. Jenaniati and Groves in Suwastini also state that this struggle has a focus against the patriarchal view of women who are considered weak, emotional, and irrational (2013). The thought that eventually became a new movement was probably due to the Enlightenment era in England and the influence of women as part of the society that played a role at that time.

The existence of this issue brings a huge impact of the society such as gender inequality and gender discrimination. In order to end the sexist and patriarchal system, the women who were aware of this issueshow the idea of

feminism. The word feminism was used to describe the ideology made by women to end the sexism that aimed to achieve social equality legally. In feminism movement, one of best ways against patriarchal system in society is to build bond among women which known as sisterhood. Sisterhood is the loyalty and affection felt by the woman for the other woman who has something in common with them. Thus, the concept of womanhood or sisterhood makes a bond of women together even though they are bound by the system of patriarchy across classes, race, and other backgrounds. Feminists with the bonding among women have opportunities to straighten assumptions made by society toward women (Angela 2017). Hooks argues that political solidarity could empower each other and feminists have to encourage this concept instead of shared victimization (Hooks 2015). This concept could help women to make the strong group and proves that they also can have the power same as men.

In fighting for their rights, women also flock to contribute in the field of literacy. This is not without basis, women realize that in the world of literacy, men dominate and many literary works are contained in cornering women. This situation makes women dare to compete in literacy to clear their names which are branded badly by the patriarchy. Literary works are the path taken by writers and writers to overcome this. They managed to make a critique as well as a work like a novel that presents a reflection of social conditions. Since the demands put forward by the women are still the same, it is regarding the elimination of sexual discrimination, anti-sexual harassment, and fair division of housework, domestic issues, and other interests (Friedan 1963).

An example of a feminist literary work about a woman's struggle to build solidarity of women is reflected in Kiran Millwood Hargrave's *The Mercies* that was published in February, 2020. Kiran Millwood in her novel *The Mercies* (2020) wrote about how the patriarchal system in society is afraid of the role of women that has more power than men characters who are holding dominant rules. Women in the story are described as strong, clever, can replace the position of men, and better in every aspect including caring for the children and their houses. The story opens in 1617 in Norway, when all of male passengers of an island are killed in a storm at the sea, thus only the women on the island. Women are struggling to replace men's position so that they must be able to work independently. Until one day the pastor, minister and the King found out about this issue and they were afraid of being considered weak because of the power of women. This story tells the struggle of women and how they deal with women oppression.

Kiran Millwood Hargrave inspired by an actual history that happened in Norway 17 Century. It began in 1593, when a law by King Christian IV passed in Norway that “all those who were seeking or using ungodly sorcery should be sentenced to death without mercy.” Willumsen also states that the factors of issues are concentrating on the predominance of women, ethnicity, attitude to witchcraft, and structures of local power (2013). According to Hostetter (2020), from 1600 to 1692 in the Finnmark, about a hundred and seventeen women and twenty four men were executed because they were accused of using magic. Women there were labeled as witches and then arrested and condemned by institutions. Seventy

seven of those who were executed were women and 3 people were killed before the end of trials. Since the urgent situation and the oppression that happened to the women there, inevitably, they naturally have a bond with each other to solve the problems there. Their biggest problem was when the women were sentenced to death by the authorities for being accused of practicing witchcraft. A strong sense of sisterhood is built on empathy for one another. The novel consists of the solidarity among women against men who have a higher social status and also power. The issue of the patriarchal system that has been known until nowadays really makes women anxious.

This study applies the branch of feminism theory which is the concept of Sisterhood by Bell Hooks and patriarchal institutions in French feminist theory by Dani Cavallaro. The concept of sisterhood and struggle of women portrayed in *The Mercies* novel by Kiran Millwood Hargrave that the writer chooses for this study is based on the consideration that this novel has not been previously studied. However, there are some previous studies about the concept of sisterhood.

First study entitled *Sisterhood Fights Against Patriarchy in Jojo Moyes' the Giver of Stars: A Feminism Study* by Dinar Syamsiah Redowati in 2020. This study examines how women create bonds of women to fight against patriarchy (Redowati 2020, 6). The second study is conducted by Maria Medin Doce in her master's thesis in University of A Coruña, 2018. Doce conducted a study entitled *From Subaltern to Heroine: Sisterhood and Empowerment in Alice Walker's The Color Purple*. It reveals the notion of women's solidarity which is really vital to help other women and to pay attention to the connection among women (2018).

The next study is arranged by Rodak in her article entitled *Sisterhood and the 4th wave of feminism: An analysis of circles of women in Poland* which agrees about the concept of sisterhood that appears as branches of feminist movement. The aim of the study is to contributing on sisterhood discussion of the theoretical framework of feminist debate (2020). Another study which uses the concept of sisterhood can be found in a study entitled *The Portrayal of Sisterhood in Liane Moriarty's Big Little Lies* Novel that is conducted by Irma Noor Fitriastari as the Undergraduate thesis of English literature in Airlangga University, 2018. This study uses feminism approach and theory of sisterhood by Bell Hooks. The issue raised is how the three characters overcome patriarchal domination (Fitriastari 2018). Thus, the objective of this study is to find out how the concept of sisterhood or solidarity among women is used as a defense system against patriarchal institutions.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the following problems can be formulated as follows:

1. How is the power of patriarchal institutions oppressing women depicted in the novel?
2. How is the sisterhood among women used to defend themselves against patriarchal institutions in the novel?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on statement of the problems that have been formulated, the objective of the study the writer decided can be designed as follows:

1. To analyze the oppression by patriarchal institutions to the women depicted in the novel.
2. To elaborate the sisterhood among women used to defend themselves against patriarchal institutions in the novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The patriarchal system forms a societal stigma that reconstructs that women are weak. They believe that women are weak. They believe that women cannot compete with men, when in fact the patriarchs are afraid of being rivaled. The concept of female power refutes the stigma that shapes female characters as weak characters. This feminist movement is known as sisterhood. This research contributes to the students of Airlangga University, scholars, and other people to know more about the concept and help them to look for the data and use it in their study as a reference in related fields. The writer also believes that this research will contribute to making profits for society considering that the study of feminism and the patriarchal system will provide insight into how we live life without sexism or hegemony that women are not worthy to appear and contribute in all aspects just because their role is limited by a system.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

In order to make it clear about key terms of the study, these are the definition of key terms which are going to be discussed in this work by the writer:

- Feminist criticism : Literary criticism using feminist theory which is to analyze oppression of women in literary work. This is the critical analysis based on perspective of feminist (Guo 2018).
- Sisterhood : The feminist movement to build a bond among women against patriarchal system which strengthen resistance struggle (Hooks 1984).
- Solidarity : An expression of emotionally and normatively motivated openness for mutual assistance as in the slogan “one for all and for one” (Laitinen and Anne 2014)
- Patriarchal Institutions : Various institutions that support and perpetuate male dominance or patriarchal system (Nwagbara 2020).
- Oppression : The social practice of an individual or group who have power in a cruel and unjust manner (wormer 2015).