

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In literary works, gender issues is not a new issue that authors such as Shakespeare, Susan Glaspell and Euripides from the ancient Greece have shown in their works. The issues can be seen through the dynamic of play or drama, vividly felt by the audience through the gesture of motion and tone that the actor performed, and it becomes one that operate the meaning of the whole story (Adams, 2007).

In the ancient Greece, Euripides was known as one of the tragedian of classical Athens, along with Aeschylus and Sophocles, deemed as the three Greece tragedians with plays have survived until today. The works of these author are also influenced by the depiction of women during their era. Most of the city during that time still have the beliefs that women as a sexual being is evil, giving most of the women in Greece during the time the image of women's inferiority (Harahousou, 1996). However, one of the major city in Greece, Sparta, have been treated women better than anywhere else in Greece, as they can own their own property and transmit it, filling half of the city-states wealth during the time (Harahousou, 1996). Although, the people still think the ideal type of women was the passive and frail one. Because, of their isolation from the corrupting influences of the world outside the family they were to be worshipped for their purity and romanticized as objects of adoration (Harahousou, 1996).Furthermore, during the centuries of Ottoman rule

the condition of women in Greece society was unequivocal concerned with their demanding ignorance and seclusion. Until during the enlightenment there was a transition of traditional forms of women's subjection as long as they limited themselves to a monologue within their own sex (Harahousou, 1996).

In the early Medieval era, authors such as Jeremy Goldberg, Barbara Hana Walt and Judith Bennet have used a variety of historical sources to discuss the same issue like in the ancient Greece era, to discuss women's work, reconstruct aspects of their lives throughout the life course and their relationship with men (Smith, 2007). Although the time and culture and culture was different, the act of the society gave to women have not make a significant change, for instance, women focus on tasks that involved around the house, such as cooking, cleaning and activities associated with the taking care of child (Smith, 2007).

It can be suggested during the medieval era that women had greater competency within the house and its material culture than men and therefore may have experienced a sense of greater power and possibility of agency in the sense of 'power to' instead of 'power-over' (Smith, 2007). Therefore, Smith (2007) argued that it is also possible for women to have similar competence to men outside the house, as it can be seen from asymmetrical spheres of expertise women could do virtually everything that men could do, but for vice-versa did not apply. Furthermore, Smith (2007) has also added that medieval men are extremely dependent on their wives for the competition of the vital tasks of transforming raw products into food and also for child care, men, in addition had fewer alternatives to their wives' labor than women had to men's labor.

However, women have instead usually been primarily investigated with regard to their relationships to household and men (Smith, 2007). Regarding to this, women should have been able to establish their own gender solidarity group, like men. Still, unlike men's tithing groups, women's gender solidarity lacked an institutional structure thus meant that the power produced was more vulnerable to alteration and possible diminution by the vagaries of individual women's characters or other specific factors, which secured the longevity of men's group (Smith, 2007).

The play Macbeth by Shakespeare gave a clear image of this role and women's representation in the early medieval era as (Roberta Gilchrist 1988) argued, both men and women in the medieval era have different skills and a separate domain, for instance, men are always involved in the physical exercises and the skills of war, while women are always occupied in taking care of the children.

In the late nineteenth century where the movement of feminism emerge to gain women's right in the society, author such as Susah Glaspell wrote a play that is based on a patriarchal society, where men are the leaders, and they control the situation (Obead, 2010).

While back in the medieval era, in 1778 women are prohibited by the English House of Commons from attending or even listening to its debate from the floor or the gallery of the house (Styrkardsdottir, 1998). In 1832, women were expressly prohibited from voting in the House of Commons through the introduction of the language of 'male person' instead of the previous 'person' in suffrage law (Reuterskold, 1911). Not only it became a common trait in Europe for

the political exclusion of women, but it also became a conscious of informal standard of civilization (Towns, 2009). However, it does not stop the women movement to gain their rights, as at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, movement for women's suffrage began to gather force in many parts of the society of civilized states (Towns, 2009).

However, even when the main movement of women suffrage was to gain their rights, including for vote would be beneficial for the civilization advancement of a state, the opposition respond to it as 'propaganda of woman suffrage is part and parcel of the world wide movement for the overthrow of the present order of civilized society (Towns, 2009). Although the exclusion of women are a common trait, there are still room for both female sovereigns and female state officials, whereas others forbade female succession to the throne and were more restrictive about women serving as state officials (Towns, 2009). Therefore, the differences in the practical of women treatment in society gave way to more standardized behavior, such as women became banned from the formal channels of political influences and public office in the states across Europe and among European settler states.

In addition, the nineteenth century became the witnessed the emergence of several prominent female literary figures, such as Kate Chopin and Fanny Fern. Like female authors in their time, Chopin and Fern wrote about the inequality of sexes and the inability of women to live their own lives without reliance to men (Latifa Ismael Jabboury, 2010). Susan Glaspell, author of the play *Trifles*, who struggled with the similar themes and concerns, inherited a rich legacy from these

women and wrote the play *Trifles* who were based on the true story of male dominance and patriarchal culture in the society of 19<sup>th</sup> century (Latifa Ismael Jabboury, 2010).

Living in society means following the rules in it, and by following rules means there are roles that each and every one have to keep in the order in society, such as the rule and roles that are assigned by gender known as gender roles. Gender role is to describe the manners in which individuals expressed their status as a male or female in a situation where no clear biological assignment existed (John Money, 1954). Conway (2000) stated that the suggested gender stereotypes stemmed from the influence of society, such as the media, and even the common perception of what male and female roles do, for instance, most people would think that a position of a secretary must be filled by female, as that is what the media have been picturing female.

The three era from which the corpus taken, ancient Greece, Medieval and the late nineteenth century was clearly had their own ways of giving roles to shape their society, this roles that occur when certain traits are assigned to someone or a group of people because of the social role that they had eventually gave birth to what is known as stereotype (Wych, 2012). According to Leod (2017), a psychology teacher and assistant at University of Manchester, Division of Neuroscience & Experimental psychology, stated that stereotype is a fixed, over generalized belief would make a certain perspective either in the group or someone with a certain characteristic have the same abilities or trait that all people assume.

Crammer (2002) has also argued that stereotype came from the differentiation of roles for men and women, either in occupations or in behaviors.

Given that gender stereotype tend to be accurate, people may learn them through observation and induction, even transmitted by social learning and communicated family, peers and media (Schulz & Bahník, 2019). The depiction of roles spread through media, through the advertisement where women are frequently portrayed at home, associated with domestic products, and in a dependent role (Eisend, 2010). Meanwhile, Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) argued that in the children's cartoon, male characters are more likely as an independent, assertive, athletic, and technical, while the female character portrayed to be emotional, warm and affectionate.

This gender-focus that have been consumed then make a new concept known as patriarchy. Hunnicutt (2009) argued that the concept of patriarchy evoke images of gender hierarchies, dominance and power arrangement, it would retain gender as central organizing feature, maintaining a hierarchal emphasis and focusing on social systems and social arrangements that reinforce domination.

Women herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole hence created the anxiety as the expression of the distrust of the world (Leung et al., 2012). They argued that the subordinate role of a women in society, psychologically research has confirmed their view of women as victims of male dominance, in a male-dominated world, positions or power, decision making, and authority. This dominance affect women in a wide-ranging discrimination, for instance, a reduce

of wages and barriers to advancement, receiving less pay than men in the same jobs even when the human capital qualifications is taken into account. They had also added in their research, the one possible explanation to these fetter is that women's higher pay or faster promotion would challenge the status quo of a male-dominated world (Leung et al., 2012).

An example of an explicit form of male dominance is sexual harassment of women by men, which is common in the workplace (Leung et al., 2012). While they share of how women are harassed in the workplace as the proof of male dominance, Hunnicutt (2009) added that violence against women are also one of the form of a male dominated society. Furthermore, he argued that the effect may varies such as from men's inability to fulfill the role of economic provider, thus the increase of social pressure and loss of hierarchal gains threatens them. This insecurities and threats that men felt arises from the social binds of patriarchy itself that cast man as dominant, not just over women but also over other men and groups not defined by gender.

However, even when they social pressure that keep men to be dominant, men themselves are striving the preserve the power and domination when women are aspiring to change it (Hertzog & Lev, 2019). As Gramsci (1972) argued, that dominance is possible without direct coercion, and violence is needed only when consensual because ideological dominations works through symbolic climate that engineers agreement and obedient. In a research conducted by Hertzog and Lev (2019), they showed how a male-dominated space territory at the gym is undergoing a threat by the gradual infiltration of females into the perceived masculine space.

They also added that men would do anything, such as, they resist and scorn demonstrations of female power, enthusiastically attend ceremonies organized by the gyms' managements that emphasize masculinity while showing off their presence vocally. This extreme form of male dominance, as Leung et al. (2012) has argued, can inflict significant psychological harm on women, such as lower self-esteem, and higher anxiety depression.

Researchers have been conducting studies regarding to the gender role and patriarchal system that can be found in literary works like Euripides' Medea, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Aristopanes' Lysistrata, and Susan Glaspell's trifles. Uddin and Sultana (2017) discussed about the gender role through the feminist perspective and patriarchal dominance in Shakespeare Macbeth. The researcher found that Lady Macbeth, the main female protagonist in the play is a victim of the culture and social system, the system which is formed by the patriarchal culture in the medieval era. They also stated that Lady Macbeth femininity was considered as a flaw in patriarchal society, which feminists believe that inequalities of men and women shows how much representations of women reflect, and continued to actual life and social conditions (Nayar, 1983).

While the previous researcher explores the male dominance through the perspective of feminism and patriarchal culture, Latifa Ismael Jabboury (2010), in his research explores the symbolism in the play of trifles by Susan Glaspell. The research was conducted to show the injustice, women role, male dominance and oppression that the main female character had experienced. Jabboury (2010) found in his research the symbols that Susan Glaspell used in the play are belong to the



female character and can only be found in the kitchen, which is the least place for the male character to check regarding to their role that have been depicted by the society at the medieval era as leader, which not supposed to be in the kitchen. He also added that the symbols are not only showing how the society expected women to act at the time, but it can also be seen from the house, and also the background of the murder that happened in the play. Also, the three main characters are the proof of an oppression of the society which denies them their right to think and speak freely, as in the case of Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Hale and a free life as in the case of Mrs. Wright's case (Jabboury, 2010).

The famous sex strike drama written by Aristopanes have also been discussed by Taiwo (2012), where he argued how the concept of otherness are present in the play. He argued that otherness are concept by which society and groups exclude "others" whom they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society or group. This play itself not only showed the concept of otherness, but also the gender politics or battle of sexes, an expose gender role contradictions in the ancient Greek society (Taiwo, 2012). Furthermore, Taiwo (2012) also argued, it is crucial to realize the stress on the politics of spaces, margins and identities as they are all related to gender issues in which Aristopanes are trying to show of how women during his time are treated, and the play are the one that oppose to it.

Another researcher, Othman et al. (2011) discussed about Euripides Medea and how the gender formation and positioning occur in the play. The gender positioning for Medea have been considered ambiguous according to Othman et al. (2011) due to the factors of contribution that Medea made during the story, despite

the fact that her sex form as a female is fixed, the precariousness of her identity and especially her gender have been widely addressed and inquired to critics and scholars.

Furthermore, Griffiths (2006) argued that even when scholars and critics questioning her gender, he point out that the truth of gender stereotypes is challenged in the play. He refer to the stereotyping of the notion of a fixation of Medea's female sex form of conventions and expectation of women, especially during the time of ancient Greece which was founded in the patriarchal society.

Although it have been discussed in number of different forms from feminist theories, there is a common acknowledgement that even when women and men live intimately, gender is a principal division among members in society, the patriarchal structures of societies are one of the sources of such oppression that happened to women throughout time (Hunnicut, 2009). Taken from the official site of World Health Organization, globally, one in three (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Furthermore, 27% of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their partner.

With the possible exception of intimate partner violence, women's patterns of victimization look different compare to men. On one hand, women are particularly vulnerable to rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. However,

compare to men, women are less risk at violent death, robbery, and aggravated assault (Hunnicut, 2009).

Violence against women is one type of oppression that requires its own theoretical explanation. Thus, this study is aimed to analyzed and highlighted how women from different era are fighting and struggling with the role assigned to them from the society, The study include Feminist Psychoanalysis theory to uncover the female characters respond according to the oppression they had. Furthermore, this study will show how the female characters counter their oppression turn the discursive pattern in their respective society.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the reason for choosing the topic, the study tries to answer the following question:

1. How do male characters oppress the main female characters physically in:
  - a. Euripedes' Medea
  - b. Shakespeare's Macbeth
  - c. Susan Glaspell's Trifles
2. How do female characters produce counter-power in response to their physical oppression through the perspective of feminist psychoanalysis?
3. How does the discursive shifting of physical oppression occur?

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the main female characters from Medea, Macbeth and Trifles in:

1. The mechanism of how the male main character oppress the main female characters.
2. The mechanism of how the main female characters oppress the main male characters.
3. The mechanism of the discursive shifting occur.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on the role the female characters from the corpus. Medea from the play Medea, Lady Macbeth from Macbeth and Mrs. Hershaw from Trifles. The psycho feminism and gender role theory are used to understand how these characters are handling the role and stereotyped assigned to them from the society.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The results of this research is aimed to give a better understanding for the society that gender role and stereotype are connected and can give a threat to those who were given the stereotype. This research is expected to be a knowledge contribution in Gender role and Feminist Psychoanalysis criticism.