

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The famous author Anne Boyd Rioux points out that *Little Women* is one of the reasons not only for a romantic and sweet novel, but also a book about female rage. There are many positive responses to this book that have been discussed in *Little Women* novel. It can be seen from website goodreads. *Little Women*'s novel by Louisa May Alcott depicts the lives of women in nineteenth-century America just after the Civil War in reacts to the demand for a novel by a publisher. Through the involvement of the main character, Josephine March, who at that time rejects feminine archetypes, the novel depicts the girl power in the patriarchal society that began to raise feminine values.

The novel was first published in 1868 and 1869, in two volumes. At Alcott's publisher's request, the first volume was written quickly over several months, and welcomed with immediate commercial and critical success. The story attracted readers, and demanded more details about the characters. A second volume was quickly published by Alcott and was indeed a great success. The two volumes were published in a single work called *Little Women* in 1880. *Little Women* has been translated into more than 10 languages, and has been one of the most demanding novels. Meanwhile, it has been adapted to plays, movies, television shows, which draw great public interest. Oscar-Nominated producer Grets Gerwig is now creating awards attention for her latest interpretation of Alcott 's novel more than 150

years later, Stars included Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Eliza Scanlen, Laura Dern and Timothee Chalamet. The girl power will be depicted in Little Women novel.

Louisa May Alcott was born on 29 November 1832 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. The publication of Little Women was received with overwhelming excitement, which surprised both her publisher and Alcott. On August 26, 1868, when the final manuscript was finished, Alcott wrote that it turned out "better than I expected" and that it was "simple and true, for we really lived most of it; and if it succeeds, that will be the reason for it." The author wrote the story in her diary, and the book succeeded, Little Woman was never out of print at all.

The original Josephine was none other than the author of Little Women, Louisa May Alcott herself, who published the 1868 book in Concord, Massachusetts, about the true poverty-stricken life of her family. Josephine's character is based on Louisa May Alcott's real life. Alcott is like Josephine, the second oldest sister in her family. However, Alcott became a famous author and remained unmarried, in contrast to Josephine who married someone she loved. The lifetime of Louisa May Alcott has been a period of considerable debate about women and their positions within and outside the household. The women's movement that included Alcott was also interpreted as an assault on the house and the men. The media described the move in clear terms, make it look that the public should choose between just two choices: Supporting women who stay in the domestic sphere or supporting women in men's roles. Through her novels Alcott provides a more complex interpretation of the women's movement by creating realistic characters that explore women's roles and show what these women can do. Her books advocate suffrage and strong-mindedness in women, though at the same time empowering girls to become homemakers and mothers "womanly" especially in Little Women novel.

There are many aspects that must be considered empowering to assess a character, or not. A common phrase which can be used in a number of ways is the word 'empowerment.' According to Collin English Dictionary, the word 'empowerment' means someone or a group that has 'power and status in a particular situation.' In examining Jo's character, female empowerment is discussed, and female empowerment is the focus of the empowerment process. As the main goal of feminism, women's empowerment considers women's self-reliance and independence as two significant factors in empowered: "you are the only important consideration in making a decision for yourself". Thus, female empowerment can be interpreted as a condition in which females have the power and control to do something. It can be called empowering women who are both socially accepted and able to decide their own lives beyond gender.

Empowering Women has become a frequently cited goal of development intervention (Mosedale, 2005). Women play a significant role in formulating social aspect of society. Both men and women are needed equally in society. The women represent half the world's population. According to Okeke (1995), such strategies involve increasing women's access to education, promoting complete participation in cash economy, involving women in politics, and reforming women's status laws.

Empowerment considered as an important issue because of the environment where males tend to dominate society. Women who do not have direct access to land and cash crops or men's work will order such services from their husbands or other household males to whom they are tied (Adams & Castle, 1994). The important aspect is that both of them are limited by their parental responsibilities, societal norms, values, traditions and principles that separate societies from men (Kabeer, 2000). Gender equality is something that a lot of women, or even some males, around the world have fought for. The society, either knowingly

or implicitly, adopts a doctrine that states males are superior to females. This dogma is definitely harmful to women or it unfairly over-generalizes all women and creates invisible barriers which separate them from men in society. They have low power of decision-making as opposed to men. The dominant patriarchal ideology, which encourages ideals of submission, sacrifice, obedience and silent pain, frequently threatens women's attempts to express themselves or claim a share of wealth and right (Hawkesworth, 1990).

According to Kate Young (1993), empowerment helps women to take control of their own lives, set their own agenda, organize to help each other and make demands on the state for support and on the society itself for change. As Young, empowerment is a total change in the processes and methods responsible for the inferior status of women in society. It is focused on a 'transformative potential' linked to the need to transform the role of women in such a way that progress is maintained. Finally, she summarizes the idea of empowerment from person to broader political viewpoints and gives collective action adequate importance, as it is a sure means of individual empowerment.

Based on expert statements above, empowerment is a positive change process that strengthens the fallback role and negotiating power of women within a patriarchal system and identifies multiple causal paths of change; material, cognitive, perceptual and relational. In short, empowerment is a knowledge and capacity building process that leads to greater participation, greater power and influence of decision-making, and transformative action. Women's empowerment can be described in a variety of ways, and its meaning varies based on the social, economic, political, cultural, and legal context. If "power" is defined as "control," "empowerment" is described as "the process of challenging existing power relations and gaining control over one's own life." As per the United National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) cited in Dandona (2015, p. 36), Women's empowerment

consists of means to gain knowledge and understanding of gender relations. The ways in which these relationships can change, develop a sense of self-worth, belief in one's ability to secure desired changes, the right to control one's life, acquire the ability to generate choices, develop the ability to regulate and influence the direction of social change in an effort to create order. socially and economically nationally and internationally. Women's empowerment is also a process by which women can take action and raise issues that are essential to their own lives, communities, and societies (Bandura, 1986; Page & Czuba, 1999; Maton, 2008; Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010, as cited in Huis et al., 2017).

Therefore, female empowerment can be accomplished by creating a situation where in self-definition males and females are equal in every aspect of their life. As time goes by, society has gradually accepted the concept of female empowerment and discrimination against women has decreased significantly. In the past, the whole idea of gender equality and women's empowerment was treated as strange and new to society. It was an additional challenge for Alcott to build an inspiring female character like Jo March in the *Little Women* novel. It should be taken into consideration how the social circumstances of the early 19th century, in which *Little Woman* is taking place, have significantly varied with today's circumstances.

Several studies have been conducted of Girl Power in literature by various researchers. Rahmaniar Endita Rini at Universitas Airlangga conducted a study titled "Gretel's Girl Power in Tommy Wirkola's *Hansel and Gretel Witch Hunter* Film" in 2016. In a based fairy tale film entitled *Hansel and Gretel Witch Hunter*, this study tries to explore the portrayal of girl power through the main character, Gretel. This study uses a qualitative approach that involves both the narrative and non-narrative elements of the film to conduct the research. To get information about the issue, the primary data source is taken from the

transcript and pictures of the film. In addition, secondary sources of data are taken from books, journals, articles and other credible sources to prove the issue. As a result, the research shows that Gretel is both feminine and masculine, which symbolizes a figure of girl power. Gretel portrays an aggressive, brave, dominant, strong and rational woman on her masculine side. At the same time, though, Gretel still reveals her feminine side as an emotional, loving, caring and vulnerable woman who still needs a man to survive her life. This study used discourse analysis to analyse the characteristics of main female character in Hansel and Gretel Witch Hunter movie, while the writer here trying to analyse the representation of main female character with Nomi Rockler Gladen Theory, Third Wave Feminism.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted a study that has not been discussed before. The researcher analysed how main female character in Little Women novel represented Girl Power, as well as the image of women in the nineteenth century portrayed in Little Women Novel. In order to analyse Josephine's characteristics, the researcher will use feminism approach especially Third Wave Feminism Theory by Naomi Rockler Gladen. The researcher entitles this research *Representation of Girl Power in Little Women Novel by Louisa May Alcott* with the theory of Third Wave Feminism by Naomi Rockler Gladen. Therefore, the researcher going to use this theory to analyse Josephine as the representation of girl power in being creating women own's identity, speaking up for an unfairness without worrying about the norms, becoming survivor not a victim, freely choosing her own partner of life, and using her personal empowerment.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the research above, the study proposed these following questions that has not been discussed yet:

1. *How is Girl Power of 19th century represented in Little Women novel?*

1. 3 Purpose of the study

Based on the research question, this study aims in representing Girl Power in 19th Century Era which is developed in the personalities of the main female character in the novel, Josephine March. To further comprehend about feminism in Little Women Novel using Third Wave Feminism by Naomi Rockler Gladen, this study aims to see how the Girl Power Movement can be influenced by the image of women in the 19th Century.

1. 4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the representation of girl power in Little Women Novel by Louisa May Alcott by using feminism approach especially Third Wave Feminism theory by Naomi Rockler Gladen. Furthermore, the data are the clauses and/or sentences that indicating the girl power characteristics. Whilst, the data source is from Louisa May Alcott's Little Women Novel.

1. 5 Significance of the Study

Little Women in American Literature was a magnificent novel. It is focused on real life, primarily describing the growing process of the four March sisters and their mother's guide to their growth. The whole book highlights the welcoming spirits of the family members and the unique characteristics of Josephine March that inspire women to be.

This study is expected to be beneficial for further study and enrich the literary works, especially for the next researcher who is interested to analyse the same type of literary work that is novel. Besides, it is also hoped to be beneficial for readers who want to know personality of all characters in details as shown in the novel especially Josephine's characteristics that represent Girl Power by using Third Wave Feminism Theory. This study

is also beneficial in showing the community, especially women, to remain courageous with principles and stand independently so that women are no longer oppressed.

