

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women's Oppression

Cudd (2006) defines oppression as "the existence of unequal and unjust institutional constraints". The results of those constraints are advantage to one group, the dominant group and harm to another group, the oppressed group. This harm comes in the form of unjustified force. The groups of people that face the same or similar constraints do not choose to be in that positions. They are unwillingly oppressed by the dominant group. For instance, women are just happened to be the member of the oppressed group although they do not choose to be. In other words, almost everyone is born to be in the oppressed group and almost everyone is born to be a member of an oppressor group. Cudd (2006) views patriarchy oppression over women is probably the oldest and the most persistent form of oppression. Women may not be oppressed the same way because different women live in different societies and are affected by different hierarchies. For instance, race hierarchy, age hierarchy, and social orientation hierarchy. Therefore, women are not oppressed by gender alone, but also by different hierarchical situations.

Beauvoir (2011, pp. 340) states, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". The figure of women is not defined by biological, psychic, or economic; it

is defined by the society and civilization that specify her feminine qualities. Woman's subordination is a more significant form of oppression than slavery, racism, antisemitism, colonialism and/or class oppression. Beauvoir adds women are always persuaded to believe that men are the masters of the world and convinced of their superiority. She can only accept a given place and order of things made by the society without questioning or criticizing it. Her destiny is shaped by her gender and the destiny that society offers to women is marriage. Even today, most women are, were, or plan to be married, otherwise they will suffer if they do not follow her destiny (Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 402, 505).

According to Beauvoir (2011, pp. 671-672); marriage itself is another form of prostitution. Morally, married woman is respected as human being, but the prostitute does not have the rights of a person and is viewed solely as sex slaves. If married woman is engaged for life by one man, the prostitute has several clients who pay her for her service. Prostitute is a scapegoat because men unload his sexual desire to them but do not recognize her identity as human being. From economic perspective, her situation is similar to married woman but she is payed based on the service she has given. Man limits woman's function, whether she is a married woman or a prostitute, solely as a sex object. For both of them, sexual act is a service for them to willingly practice.

In addition, Bardwick (1979, pp. 30, 43 102) sees marriage as sexual, economic, and usually procreative union which is assumed to be permanent. Because

the commitment is public and permanent, thus, marriage establishes who we are and with whom we belong in the marriage. Our culture stereotypes married woman and housewife as passive, chained to domestic drudgery, and unconcerned with events outside the cozy cottage. Because the society expects women to marry, and assumes that their lives will be determined by marriage, then success or failure in education and work will not determine what she will become. As previously mentioned in the background of the study, the writer of the study only focuses on the issues about traditional traits and also beauty and body construction of women because the traditional traits are the fundamental reason why women have been and are always oppressed. The traditional traits itself also include of how women's beauty and body are constructed by patriarchy.

2.1.1. Traditional Traits

Beauvoir (2011, pp. 409) states for a woman to be considered feminine, they need to appear weak, futile, passive, submissive, and docile. Women lose their identity because they are forced to look and appear feminine and possess feminine quality for the purpose of male satisfaction. As stated by Jeffreys (2005, pp. 95); man makes femininity as the default position where a person associated with it is excluded from the privilege of male-dominated society. It is the position that represents the exact opposite of masculinity. Rather than being something to be loved or

appreciated, femininity represents the bottom position in sex where its position is formed by the desire of masculinity. The “feminine world” is the contrast with the masculine universe, but women live in a world that is ruled and dominated by males, where their position in that world is oppressed and limited.

Graham in Jeffreys (2011, pp. 26) states that feminine quality or femininity refers to any personality traits associated with subordinates who possess behaviors to please the dominants. Those behaviors that the dominants classify as ‘feminine’ are behaviors that characterize every member of the oppressed group. Culturally constructed behavior of how to be a man and woman is known as “sex roles”, or commonly called “gender”. The sex roles of male dominance and female subordination are used by male-dominated society to place the members of each group in their correct category. Graham in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 25, 57) also makes an analogy between femininity and the behavior of hostages under captivity and threat that has been named as Stockholm syndrome. Femininity represents societal Stockholm syndrome, where the dominant group threatens subordinate group with violence but also shows them some kindness and an attachment between the groups will develop. “Masculinity and femininity are code words for male domination and female subordination”.

Beauvoir (2011, pp. 815) also states that men have acquired forces into their individuality, whereas women will constantly be the slave of them. Her existence is as a pure passivity: she is ready and willing; she is an object and an instrument; she is

fascinated by the male who owns her like an object. She owns nothing; she is not raised to the dignity of a person. She is always a part of man's authority, first her father's and then her husband's. From an early age, she is taught to accept men's authority and to behave according to the requirement made by male. She learns that to be feminine means to give in. She gives herself over to please men. She gives him her independence and sexual fidelity. She gives him her person. She is an object and will never become a subject.

Once woman has accepted her function as an object, she will enjoy adorning herself. Her character and intrinsic value can be seen through the way she is adorned and dressed herself (Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 642). An elegant woman is expected to look feminine, classy, appealing, and also seductive. She can seek sensual or aesthetic pleasures in her clothes to attract men and show her image as a moral citizen. She will choose the color of her dress carefully to flatter her complexion and the shape of her dress to emphasize or improve her figure without showing too much skin. On the other hand, prostitute whose function as a sex object is expected to look feminine, seductive, erotic and vulgar. She displays herself in revealing dress, high heels, skimpy satin, harsh makeup, and heavy perfume. An elegant woman and a prostitute are both expected to look feminine and seductive, but they dress differently according to their status and roles.

According to Djajanegara (2000, pp. 5); some of the traditional traits that every female must possess in Victorian Age are innocence, pure, passive, willing, and domestic. Feminist critics think that those traditional traits are the main reasons for the inferiority and the secondary status of women. Bardwick adds (1979, pp. 37) our culture tends to see women as *understanding, tender, generous, loving, moral, nurturing, domestic, kind, patient, irresponsible, dependent, inconsistent, emotionally unstable, weak, intuitive (rather than intelligent), uneducated, anxious, fearful, and childish*. Women are judged negatively. It is hard for women to be too competent, rational, able, active, rigorous, and effective; but it is easy for women to be too personal, emotional, cautious, and fragile.

2.1.2. Beauty and Body Construction

Dworkin in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 7) states in male-dominated society, almost every part of woman's body is touched and modified. Hair is bleached, dyed, straightened, curled; eyebrows are plucked, shaped, tattooed, penciled; eyes are lined, shadowed, lensed; lashes are curled, mascaraed, extended; nose is contoured, shaded, highlighted; lips are filled, thickened. Every feature of a woman's face and every part of her body are modified and constructed by following the beauty standards according to male-dominated society. Beauty is just another quality a woman must possess. It is sometimes treated as an essentially feminine quality, trifle thing that

women are excessively concerned with. They are victim of this stereotype; they are also belittled and laughed at for doing and not doing something to improve their looks. They are constantly judged by their looks.

According to Wolf (2002, pp. 2-12); women have always suffered for beauty. Women and girls suffer from eating disorders because they are simply trying to maintain their thin figures and unnatural “ideal” body shape. Women who complained about the beauty myth were assumed to have a failure to reach a particular standard. For instance, they must be fat, ugly, incapable of satisfying a man, or lesbians. The beauty myth tells a story where the quality called “beauty” objectively and universally exists. Women must want to represent the “beauty” and men must want to possess women who represent the “beauty”. “Beauty” is a currency system like the gold standard. Culture stereotypes women to fit the beauty myth by turning the feminine into beauty-without-intelligence or intelligence-without-beauty; women are allowed to be intelligent or beautiful but not both.

Wolf (2002, pp. 13-14) adds the beauty myth is not only about women. It is actually about men’s institutions and institutional power. “Beauty” of a woman is merely symbols of the female behavior that a man considers desirable. In other words, the beauty myth is always actually ruling woman’s behavior and not appearance. Beauty myth creates a competition between women so that women will be divided from one another. Youth and (until recently) virginity have been “beautiful” in women because they represent innocence and sexual ignorance. Aging

in women is considered “unbeautiful” because women become more powerful and mature with time. Older women fear young ones, and young women fear old.

Beauty construction and beauty myth are formed by male-dominated society. In male-dominated society or patriarchy, women are expected to behave, to dress and to put on make-up based on men’s preferences. According to Jeffreys (2005, pp. 20, 37); women present themselves in a way that men are sexually tempted for the purpose to create a feast for men's eyes. Since women are identified as beautiful, women are expected to appear beautiful because they are different from men. Beauty is viewed as a form of oppression for women. Feminist critics of beauty have pointed out that beauty is a cultural practice that is damaging to women. Beauty and body construction forms beauty practices that must be performed by women to fulfil the requirement and her function in male-dominated society.

Dworkin in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 6-7) sees beauty practices as having enormous harmful effects on women's lives, bodies, and mental health. Beauty practices are viewed as a form of harmful cultural practices because it creates the differences between male and female; it becomes the benefits of men; it creates stereotype between masculinity and femininity. Beauty practices damage the opportunities of women and girls. It is justified by tradition because it is a part of the norm for women and girls to perform beauty practices. Beauty practices are timewasting, expensive and painful to self-esteem. It restraints female body function and defines her physical freedom. Other damaging effects of beauty standards to women are the psychological effects. The psychological effects arise because of the relation between physical

freedom and psychological development. Bartky in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 7) states the psychological oppression of women consists of women being stereotyped, culturally dominated, and sexually objectified.

Dworkin in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 7, 20) adds another oppressive element of beauty is its function as the differentiation of male and female. Beauty practices are important for male-dominated society to tell both sexes apart and differentiate the member of the dominant class from the subordinate one. Beauty practices form and represent the “difference” between the sexes. The creation of sexual “difference” through beauty practices is fundamental to fulfil sexual satisfaction of men. Jeffreys (2005, pp. 30-32) states that beauty practices are the main tool in maintaining the “difference” between male and female. It creates the stereotyped role for women of being sex and beauty objects. Women have to spend inordinate amounts of time and money on makeup, hairstyles, fashion, and even cosmetic surgery. Jeffreys also adds beside to create “difference”, women are required to practice beauty practices in order to perform sexual “deference”.

Fashion is another way the sexual “difference-deference” is created. The creation of sexual “difference-deference” in fashion is performed in several ways. These include the display of skin for women, the use of skirts versus trousers, the use of dress versus suit, and the use of bright colors for women versus dark colors for men. In fact, fashion is extremely gendered. Men’s clothes are functional and can be worn for several activities. There are no holes to show the skin, no skirts or dresses,

and no revealing and skintight clothes. On the other hand, the women's clothes often resemble dolls' clothes in bright and colorful colors and revealing and skintight clothes. The distinction in clothing between men and women is based on the need for the excitement of sexual imagination of men (Jeffreys, 2005, pp. 87-90).

However, beauty practices and fashion are not the only two ways the “difference-deference” is created. According to Jeffreys (2005, pp. 106-109); the wearing of make-up is also important in creating “difference-deference”. Lipstick wearing, for instance, can be considered as a very strange action where women smear toxic substances on to their lips a couple of times a day and thus, women are required to wear make-up to represent her inferior status and subordination within patriarchy. Patriarchy has made make-up wearing is seen as “natural” and justified by tradition. Make-up, shaving, waxing, hair dyeing and skin whitening can be seen as harmful cultural practices because they fulfil the criteria of creating gender stereotypes and making “difference-deference” between the subordination of women and the domination of men.

Jeffreys (2005, pp. 113-115) adds make-up is not a form of natural femininity but a beauty construction that has been made by patriarchy and there was a time and place where make up was not a requirement for women. Beauty and body construction are oppressive for women because men require women to put on make-up to be in the public world alongside men. Wearing of make-up signifies women’s prohibition to show themselves as the real and equal citizens that they should be. Men

feel that women who do not wear make-up are not looking healthy, fresh, and credible. Make-up marks women as heterosexual, and women who do not wear make-up are considered as tomboys or even homosexuals. The way to look appropriately feminine is to look pleasing to men. Men can wear suit to disguise his sexuality, but women have to look sexy but not slutty, tough but also feminine. A woman who has a “sexual identity” is the one who appears feminine and follows beauty practices.

2.2 Patriarchy System

Lerner in Majstorović & Lassen (2011, pp. 1) defines the concept of patriarchy as the relationship of a superior dominant group to an inferior subordinate group based on the mutual obligations and reciprocal rights. According to Beauvoir (2011, pp. 90); society has always been male and political power has always been in men’s hands. Political authority, or even simply social authority, always belongs to men. Beauvoir (2011, pp. 408; 505-508) adds patriarchy expected women to behave according to feminine qualities. It makes women lose their identity as an individual. Man does not like tomboys and overly thinking woman because too much intelligence and knowledge will harm man’s position within patriarchy system. The society destines woman to get married. After she gets married, she takes his husband’s name, joins his religion, moves into his world, belongs to his family and becomes his other “half”.

Beauvoir (2011, pp. 730) states male considers female as “Other”. Men need ‘Others’ to affirm his position and existence. Men make women to remain as the object and never become the subject. Women have to appear as an erotic object to attract men. Women have no authority and are destined to live under the authority of men. She can only accept a place that society has already made for her. She accepts the order of things as a given. Woman’s position is worse than slave because she does not and cannot see herself as subject, although slave is still able to see himself as subject or ‘essential’ in his struggle with the master. Therefore, woman can never win freedom for herself except by some independent change in the society or the ‘male master’ who creates the change. Woman is an object and prey that is owned and hunted by man.

The female role under patriarchy requires many varieties of providing services for men. Domestic labors, child-rearing, emotional labor, sexual service, as well as the performance of femininity are some requirements that women have to meet. Beauvoir (2011, pp. 702-730) adds patriarchal society has made all feminine functions servile; woman escapes slavery only when she loses all productivity. She was taught to accept masculine authority without criticizing, questioning, and examining the system. Thus, the masculine world is an absolute to her. Men are divines, and women worship them. Masculine world wants to confine woman in a dilemma. She has to agree in the name of the whole system of accepted principles,

whether she acknowledges it or not. Considering she is not capable to create another society if she denies and rejects the existing system.

Bartky in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 7) states male-dominated society is the cultural domination where all the items in the general life of people, language, institutions, art, literature, and popular culture are sexist. Jeffreys (2005, pp. 10-11) describes one characteristic of male-dominated society is freeing men from punishment. The “private” nature of this world has long protected men from punishment. Marital rape is not a crime in this male-dominated society, and domestic violence is a personal disagreement because those events occur within “private” world. Male-dominated society is a world where women have no other option but to give her energies and bodies for men despite whatever violence or abuse is handed out to them.

The basis of male domination is the treatment of women as sex objects and women’s identification with the cultural condition in male-dominated society. Bartky in Jeffreys (2005, pp. 8) defines the practice of sexual objectification of women occurs when a woman is sexually objectified; her sexual parts or sexual functions are divided from the rest of her personality; her status is solely as an instrument for men’s interests. Once a woman loses her identity as an individual, she makes herself the slave of her admirers (men). She dresses, lives, or breathes through the man and only for him. If she fails to please her admirers, to interest him, and to be sufficient for him, she feels disgusted, humiliated, insufficient, and lacked. All those feelings will lead her to self-hatred and self-punishment.

2.3 **Only Ever Yours**

Only Ever Yours is a Young Adult (YA) dystopian novel which is written by Louise O'Neill and first published in 2014. The novel sets sometimes in the future where girls are no longer born but designed. The girls are placed in an all-female boarding school where they are taught and designed to please men and beauty is the first priority of every one of them. The girls are brought up in The School at the age of four where they are taught and trained for 12 years before The Ceremony day when the girls or "eves" can be divided into their categorizations. They are prepared for the only three options available to women: a companion, or completely submissive wife; a concubine, who will spend her life sexually servicing men; or a chastity, a virgin teacher who will teach the next generation of girls. Their value is assessed only by their looks and ranks in school and only the most highly-ranked girls will be chosen to become companions, until they become useless and undesirable.

The eves and other woman characters fully accept their position in the society. Not knowing that they are under oppression, they do their best to follow the rules and perfect their roles given by the society. The eves are completely cut off from the outside world and forbidden to learn how to read. They are busy improving their appearances and comparing themselves with their classmates, therefore there is no way they realize that they are being oppressed, let alone fight against the society. The eves are pumped with drugs in order to make them get enough sleep, maintain their weight, and stop their "womenstruation".

Freida, the main character of this novel and also one of the highest ranked girl, is so desperate to become a companion. She is willing to do everything to be chosen as a companion at The Ceremony day. She is stressed by the burden until she can no longer sleep and is prescribed drugs (*sleepsound*) to help her sleep. She feels inadequate to measure up with the requirement and expectation. She is passive and weak. She does not know how to express her feeling and revolt against the society because she is only taught how to behave according to the requirement in her entire life. She has been brainwashed to recognize that herself, other girls and women in the society are constantly oppressed and subordinated.

2.4 Louise O'Neill

Louise O'Neill is a feminist dystopian novelist who explores how misogyny society treats and oppresses women. Louise O'Neill wrote her first novel *Only Ever Yours* after she spent a year in New York working as an assistant stylist for the senior style director of Elle Magazine, Kate Lanphear. She returned to Ireland in 2011 to write her first novel. She has won the Sunday Independent Newcomer of the Year in 2014, the Children's Books Ireland Eilis Dillon Award for a First Children's Book. The novel also won the premiere young adult (YA) Book Prize set up by book trade magazine *The Bookseller* magazine in March 2015. Her second book, *Asking For It* tells about the rape culture, sexism, and victim-blaming in modern society. The novel

won book of the year at The Irish Book Awards in 2015.

(https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_O'Neill)

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The study uses the theories of Beauvoir (2011), Jeffreys (2005) and Wolf (2002) to explore the issue about women's oppression in form of women's traits and also beauty and body construction in patriarchal and misogyny society as in *Only Ever Yours*. The issue of women's oppression that is portrayed in the novel will be furtherly discussed in chapter 4.