

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women's Oppression

Oppression refers to relations of domination and exploitation (economic, social and psychological) between individuals; between social groups and classes within and beyond societies; and, globally, between entire societies (Gil, 1994, p. 233). Oppression occurs when a person reduce or hinder the potential for others to be fully human. In other words, oppression is when people make other people less human. This could mean treating them in a humane manner. But, it can also mean denying the people the language, education, and other opportunities that might make them become fully human in both mind and body.

Thompson (2003) defines oppression as the hardship and injustice brought about by the dominance of one group by another; the negative and demeaning exercise of power. He describes discrimination as a process that results in oppression. In a book written by Viola Nzira and Paul William entitled "Anti-Oppressive Practice in Health and Social Care", they defined:

"Oppression goes rather further than discrimination in giving people bad experiences. Whereas the essence of discrimination is injustice or unfairness, the essence of oppression is being disliked and unwelcome, and you being made aware of that. One way of putting this is to say that oppression involves being cast into a negative social role, for example as a threat or a nuisance." (Viola & Paul, 2009, p. 36)

The discrimination and oppression is something different but related even though the essences are different. Oppression occurs when individuals are systematically subjected to political, economic, cultural, or social degradation because they belong to a social group...results from structures of domination and subordination and, correspondingly, ideologies of superiority and inferiority (Chalton, 1998, p.8).

The term “oppression” is widely used to specify women’s position in a hierarchically structured system and the methods of keeping them inferior. The oppression against women happens because men might gain some advantages by doing exploitation against women. To show the superiority, men use physical or biological differences as a tool to create the role of men and women differently in order to show that men dominance over women.

“...women are oppressed is frequently met with the claim that men are oppressed too. We hear that oppressing is oppressive to those who oppress as well as to those they oppress. When the stresses and frustrations of being a man are cited as evidence that oppressors are oppressed by their oppressing, the word ”oppression” is being stretched to meaninglessness.” (Marylin, 2000, p. 10)

The oppression of women can also occur because men are also oppressed by various reasons, such as frustrated with job or economic needs. When men are stressed on the job or frustrated with their economic needs. Men tend to look of impingement which is usually to women. This position makes women hard to be equal with men, especially for black women and even harder if their position is from the middle or low classes in the society. They have always been slaves or considered as inferior to men even though their position belong to higher social

classes. Black women in United States have more complex oppression where they are oppressed by gender, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age, and nationality. Black women suffer more oppression than black men, even worse if black men also dominate black women's life and live under the patriarchal system in family and society.

2.1.1 Patriarchal System

Patriarchy is a social system in which the men act as the central figure. In this system, men have authority to hold the authority over women, children, property, and all aspects of society. Men also have authority to make all decisions in their family or society and considered as superior. Men are superordinate and women are subordinate in patriarchy system. "Patriarchy is a social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line, and also broadly control of man to woman" (German, 1988, p. 34). In a patriarchy system, a man is superior who has a responsibility to earn a living his family. While woman is considered as an ordinary housewife where she just stay at home take care for children, a husband and house. Men will have the right to decide the decision of problem encountered or what will happen to their family because they are considered as the one who give income to family.

"...the rule of the father in a male-dominated family. Patriarchy is a system in which women experience discrimination, subordination, violence, exploitation and oppression by men. In a patriarchal society, women are treated as inferior in all aspects of their lives; men control

women's reproductive power, their sexuality, their mobility and even their economic resources." (Bhasin, 1993, p. 3-9)

The 'rule of the father' is a male-dominated family and as a social and ideological construct which considers men, as patriarchs, to be intrinsically superior to women. Ray on Walby (2011) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. According to Walby (1990), patriarchy is established of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relation in the state, male violence, patriarchal relation in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. These six structures have causal effects upon each other. The main forms of patriarchy are private and public. In private sector, the women's oppression occurs in the household production. While in public, women's oppression occurs in public sites such as employment and the state (Walby, 1990, p. 24).

Peter and Wolper (1995) stated it will be very difficult to remove the system of patriarchy in certain societies because usually it is rooted from its ideologies and beliefs. The ideology and belief in certain society became factors which are made the system of patriarchy and it is difficult to remove.

Women realize that they have to fight their right and break the system of patriarchy. They have to break this system because they have the same right with men. This issue linked with the women movement called feminist and entered into one of the main focus of the second-wave feminist where women want to break

the domination of men starting from the smallest domain that is the family, and continuous to a larger domain.

2.2 Feminism

According to Walby (2011), feminism organized the movement to reduce and eliminate gender inequalities as the goal of improving the position of women and transforming gender relations. In the late 1800s and 1900s, feminist movement was first occurred as 'first-wave' which focused in gaining women's voting rights, equal rights, property rights, education, employment, and marriage laws. Second-wave feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s focused on inequality in family, sexuality, and work. While the third-wave feminism in the early 1990s, it focused to response on the second-wave's failures.

McKinnon (1991) stated that feminism's search for a ground is a search for the truth of all women's collectivity in the face of the enforced lie that all women are the same. Feminist movement focuses on the inequality between women and men in all fields. Generally, feminism concerns on the commitment to fight against oppression to women, male dominance, gender discrimination, and all humiliation. Feminism explores theme of discrimination, oppression, patriarchy, and objectification. This movement rejects everything that is marginalized, subordinated, and demeaned by dominant culture both in political and economic fields in society. In the development of feminist movement, there are various groups of feminist: Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Marxist

feminism, Socialist feminism, and Post-colonial feminism. This research is categorized as liberal feminism based on the issues on the play.

Liberal feminism focuses on gender inequality and women's oppression that basically results from the fact that women lack opportunities to maintain equality with men in public realms (Rusli, 2010, p.118). He added that liberal feminism believes that in order to achieve their aim, attempts should be made to overcome gender inequality. The most important thing of liberal feminism is the introduction of legislation and an attempt to change attitudes. In legislation, liberal feminism was successful in outlawing sexual discrimination, rape in marriage, and sexual harassment. This is proven by the legislation of the Anti Sex Discrimination Act in 1984 and the Civil Right Act in America. They also successfully fought for legal abortion, and liberalized divorce and child custody laws. In education, they have been struggling to make access to education equal for men and women. If women are granted a chance to develop their rational capacities, the extreme gaps will disappear. In education, they have been struggling to make access to education equal for men and women. If women are granted a chance to develop their rational capacities, the extreme gaps will disappear. In economic life, the efforts are directed toward achievement of equal pay for equal work. This becomes a slogan for female workers reforming the injustices and miseries which they experience in the workplace.

2.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term that was coined by American professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw coined the term as an explanation of why black and immigrant women's experiences being ignored by both feminism and the anti-racist movement. On her paper entitled "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" contains dozens of stories detailing how domestic violence and rape crisis facilities had serious trouble helping these women because their cases were "too complicated". Collins (1998) stated intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another as opposed to examining gender, race, class, and nation, as separate system of oppression.

Intersectionality theory has been well developed over the past several decades, most of the developer are Black Feminist scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), Bell Hooks (1990), Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2002, 2005), and Agnes Calliste and George Sefa Dei (2000). McCall (1995) stated that intersectionality theory has been celebrated as the most important contribution that women's studies have made so far. Intersectionality as an analytical tool is used to help understand multiple forms of oppression and encourages examination of how different systems of oppression intersect and affect groups of women in different ways. Crenshaw conceptualized discrimination in an analogy to traffic:

Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman

is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination... (Crenshaw, 1989, p.139)

One person or group may have multiple forms of oppression directed against them at the same time. This can complicate matters considerably. Goertz and Mazur (2008) argued that they cannot understand the ways that women are disadvantaged as women or the ways that people of color are oppressed unless they examine the ways these structures interact. The concept of intersectionality has played a significant role in the academy since the late 1960s and early 1970s. Among the useful work it did was to help people recognize that poor black women experienced a form of dual discrimination because they lived at the intersection of gender, race and class (<https://www.insidehighered.com>). At the time, some people privileged gender above all other identity categories. The concept of intersectionality helped give theoretical warrant to the need to understand social positioning and the experience of identity as products of multiple forces and categories.

Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). Intersectionality theory could be used in order to seek Black women's oppression where they are not only oppressed by their gender and skin, but also class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, and age. Those oppressions could be intersected on simultaneous levels.

2.3.1 Kimberle Crenshaw

Kimberle Williams Crenshaw was born in 1959 in Canton, Ohio. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from Cornell University in 1981, a JD from Harvard Law School in 1984, and a Master of Laws from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1985. In 1986 Crenshaw joined the faculty of UCLA Law School, where she has continued to work as professor ever since. She teaches Civil Rights and other courses in critical race studies and constitutional law. She was a founder and has been a leader in the intellectual movement called Critical Race Theory. She also cofounded the African-American Policy Forum to highlight the centrality of gender in racial justice discourses and is a founding member of the Women's Media Initiative.

Crenshaw argues that Black women are frequently absent from analyses of either gender oppression or racism, since the former focuses primarily on experiences of white women and the latter on Black men. She seeks to challenge both feminist and antiracist theory and practice that neglect to “accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender,” arguing that “because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. Crenshaw argues that a key aspect of intersectionality lies in its recognition that multiple oppression are not each suffered separately but rather as a single, synthesized experience. This has enormous significance at the very practical level of movement building.

2.5 A Raisin in the Sun

A Raisin in the Sun is the first play by a Black woman to be produced on Broadway and to win the New York Drama Critics' Circle in 1959. This play was written by Lorraine Hansberry which known by her autobiography. This play catapulted her popularity at that time because it displayed some realistic portraits of black family in the late 1950s. *A Raisin in the Sun* became a turning point of art in America because it was considered to bring many important issues in the late 1950s. Issues such as discrimination, poverty, oppression and racial identity construction of African-Americans became important issues in *A Raisin in the Sun*. This play became a drama that had themes and conflicts on black family realistically and naturally on the American stage.

A Raisin in the Sun portrays a few weeks in the life of the Youngers, an African-American family living on the South Side of Chicago in the 1950s. When the play opens, the Youngers are about to receive an insurance check for \$10,000. This money comes from the deceased Mr. Younger's life insurance policy. Each of the adult members of the family has an idea as to what he or she would like to do with this money.

Lena or Mama, as the head of the family, wants to buy a house to fulfill a dream she shared with her husband. Walter Lee, as Mama's son, would rather use the money to invest in a liquor store with his friends. He believes that the investment will solve the family's financial problems forever. Walter's wife, Ruth, agrees with Mama's dream and she hopes that she and Walter can provide

more space and opportunity for their son, Travis. Finally, Beneatha, Walter's sister and Mama's daughter, wants to use the money for her medical school tuition. She also wishes that her family members were not so interested in joining the white world. Beneatha instead tries to find her identity by looking back to the past and to Africa. As the play progresses, the Youngers are clash over their competing dreams.

2.5.1 Lena Younger

Lena Younger, as Mama and the head of the family, is a down-to-earth and hard-working black woman. Lena has dedicated her life to her children and struggles to instill her religion values in them. One of Lena's most poignant moments was when Ruth said she did not believe the existence of God. As a person who adheres to the religion, Lena slapped Ruth and telling her that there is still God in this house. Except for the face-slap moment, Lena is mostly kind, patient, and struggles to connect with her children.

Lena is extremely worried about Walter's obsession with money and totally disapproved of Beneatha's lack of faith in God. Lena was oppressed by Walter's obsession where he wanted to invest the money in liquor store with his friends. She was also oppressed by the economics of the family that she had a dream to live in the own house where Travis could play in the behind of the house and nobody could bother her family in using bathroom.

2.5.2 Ruth Younger

Ruth is Walter's wife and Travis's mother. Ruth is a person who has a 'soft' personality. She takes care of the Youngers' small apartment. She is some ways like a typical housewife of the 1950s where she makes breakfast in the morning, cleans the house, supports her husband, and keeps her own desires to herself.

The financial stress is proving to be big trouble for Ruth's marriage. Walter is incredibly dissatisfied with his life, and he constantly takes it out on her. Ruth is far from a doormat and tells her husband off when he starts acting like a jerk. However, it is clear in the play that the turmoil in her marriage is taking a real toll on Ruth. She often seems irritable, depressed, and at times sinks into despair.

This all comes to a head for Ruth, when she finds out she is pregnant and considers an abortion. In the 1950s, an abortion would have been illegal and dangerous. Though Ruth hates the idea of aborting her child, she feels it's the best decision not to burden the financial of the family.

2.5.3 Beneatha Younger

Beneatha is Mama's daughter and Walter's sister. She is an intellectual woman, independent, feminist perspective, and her desire to become a doctor

demonstrates her great ambition. She attends college and has better education than the rest of the Younger family. Some of her personal beliefs and views have distanced her from conservative Mama. She dreams of being a doctor and struggles to determine her identity as a well-educated black woman.

Beneatha's desire to become a doctor was prevented by his brother, Walter. He thinks women did not need education because it needed expensive cost and would be useless in her future. Beneatha lost his dream to become a doctor because Walter was cheated when investing for a liquor store and he also put Beneatha's education money in there. But eventually the dream came alive again when Joseph asked her to marry with him and promised to help Beneatha become a doctor and took her to his hometown, Nigeria.

2.6 Lorraine Hansberry

Lorraine Vivian Hansberry was born in Chicago on May 19th 1930. She was a writer, playwright, activist, and Black-woman in the United States who fought against discrimination to Black people. *A Raisin in the Sun* was her best known work that made her to become the first Black writer to write a play performed on Broadway. Lorraine graduated from Englewood High School in Chicago, where she first became interested in theater. She enrolled in the University of Wisconsin but left before completing her degree. After studying painting in Chicago and Mexico, Hansberry moved to New York in 1950 to begin her career as a writer. She wrote for Paul Robeson's *Freedom*, a progressive

publication, which put her in contact with other literary and political mentors such as W.E.B. DuBois and Freedom editor Louis Burnham. During a protest against racial discrimination at New York University, she met Robert Nemiroff, a Jewish writer who shared her political views. They married on June 20, 1953 at the Hansberrys' home in Chicago.

Although Hansberry and Nemiroff divorced before her death, he remained dedicated to her work. As literary executor, he edited and published her three unfinished plays: *Les Blancs*, *The Drinking Gourd* and *What Use Are Flowers?*. He also collected Hansberry's unpublished writings, speeches and journal entries and presented them in the autobiographical montage *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*. The title is taken from a speech given by Hansberry in May 1964 to winners of a United Negro Fund writing competition.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The theory of intersectionality by Kimberle Crenshaw will be used as the theory in this study. Intersectionality is used because it is related to the issue of women's oppression in *A Raisin in the Sun* play by Lorraine Hansberry. Women's oppression can be seen through the narrations as the data among three women in the family as the main characters. It will be discussed in chapter 4.