CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Background of The Study

Literature is something that has been existing with humans' life for years. It exists to reflect on the ironies and stories of life, it has been used to reflects lives (Ramanathan, 2018). In Britannica, Literature refers to a body of written works. This term has been applied onto many traditional, especially imaginative works that is written which is: poetry, proses, and each of these works are written up to the author's intention and it is up to the reader's intention to judge the aesthetic of it.

It is also can be understood as something canon that consists the works in language by a certain community through the course of history. The artistic side of those works are the primary aspect and the aesthetic comes in second. (McFadden 1978:56). These works then will be judged by the readers. According to Pradopo (1994:26), a literary work can be a visualization of the world and human life, where the 'truth' can be put into the work through whatever the author is trying to portray. From what the author had written, the readers then can judge or perceive of what the world is like through the eyes of the author.

Through literature, it can really bring people into a whole new world and dimension as they are being absorbed into the story. Some might be a fantasy, but some tells the real world through the author's mind. The readers learn about the issues that is happening and what kind of environment the literary work is trying to capture through the work. (Pradopo, 1994). Some literary works even tell about a

certain social group. It is a historical point where the work is dependent and it is a very inseparable element from its literary environment (Morris, 2005: 81).

Tawhida Akther (2020), came to a conclusion that a lot of writers are pouring real life issues into literature and gender inequality is one of it. These days gender in the society have become so diverse that some people might have mistaken one for another. But out of the differences each of these genders have there is one thing people are seeking out for: equality. According to United Nations Women, equality refers to equal rights given to both genders. It doesn't necessarily mean both male and female would have to always face the same responsibilities or opportunities, but it stands as in, the responsibilities and opportunities given are not based on their gender. (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). The equality itself has shown a better improvement throughout the years, as taken from the Global Gender Gap Report of 2022 in Asia, around 65% of the gender gap (mostly in economics), has closed. Even so, the gap between the two genders are still wide, where even in Singapore, where it is expected to be one of the most equal country in Asia, is still struggling with female representation due to the old values. (Hocking, 2022).

As we know, in equality, we would have sought something deeper than just the gender the individuals have. It seeks and digs more into what is the interest, the talents, needs, capabilities, even the priorities of what they have—this idea would have given bigger things to be considered about and it will recognize just how diverse the groups are (UN Women). From our basic understanding, such issues would have been seen with women as the victim of the inequality. But in reality,

both are equally affected from this stratification in the society. (Hentschel et al., 2019).

From Eagly's (1987) theory, he argues that gender stereotypes develop from the gender roles that divides the society as it creates a certain characteristic. It started when the society separated what a certain gender have to do and the labor that is divided between the two gender then became a culturally associated thing. From there, the gender role then will be creating expectations in the members of the society itself and create stereotypes. Stereotypes itself stands for a generalization of something, whether it is good or bad towards something or someone. In most cases it usually gives some characterization or action into a group or individuals. It is generalizing a certain attribute, characters, actions that are ought to be possessed by a certain group of people in the society, which is being expected to be performed by the members included in the group (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014).

This idea of stereotype can be bad once people are going into the thoughts that the stereotypes is something that is certainly real and they started to projecting this idea onto other people of the same group without realizing the possibility of the stereotypes simply being stereotypes and it would hinder the role of a person in the society by labelling such things. (Hentschel, 2019).

With attaching certain attributes or characteristics onto others, gender stereotyping will happen. According to the United Nations of Human Rights (2016), gender stereotyping stands for the practice of categorizing an individual male or female with a certain attribute, characteristics, or roles from their gender only. The

difference between stereotype and stereotyping lies in the belief where it carries assumptions in stereotype. While stereotyping would be applying these beliefs or assumptions in real life and onto real people.

In our society, without realizing it, gender stereotyping can lead to other issues. With the stereotypes going around in the society, without realizing it, people would be attaching the beliefs onto themselves with time. In result, the stereotypes that might not be true will become a self-characterization. In most cases, female would fall into these self-characterizations far more often than males. Stereotypical classifications would eventually have strong implications for the individuals especially females. It prevents them from going with their full potential and lowers their self-assessment (Marsh, and Scalas, 2011). They would rate themselves to be less assertive and less competent, especially in leadership. While males are usually less affected by this kind of stereotyping. (Henstschel T., Heilman, M., and Peus, C.; 2019).

However, in the midst of gender stereotyping, empowerment rises along with it for a long-time course. Mainly, the feminists are the ones who is raising the consciousness over the matter. The movement for empowerment can be seen in the development in the 1970s. Since then, the empowerment movements have been louder and way more articulated during the 1980s and 1990s as a radical approach on the issues of power relation in the concern of women's rights, asking for equality for both men and women (Batliwala: 1993, 2007).

So, empowerment can be seen as something that is showing a change in consciousness along with collective power. The understanding for empowerment

does not refer to something that can be bestowed by others but it is something related to recognizing one's inequalities in power—thus, the people are out there asking for their equal rights and changes in the system (Batliwala: 1993).

For this paper, the main source of seeing the stereotyping from gender roles and empowerment of the characters would be used from the book titled 'Crazy Rich Asians' by Kevin Kwan. The book came out in 2013 and was a bestseller with a movie that came out not so long after. This book tells a lot of issues in a higher society, most of them includes class, economy, power, and gender. With this book, the issue related to the paper's topic will be analysed and discussed.

Crazy Rich Asians is a novel, with drama as its genre. It tells about the journey of Rachel Chu, a professor in economy who is having a trip to Singapore in order to visit her boyfriend's family. Then, she finds out that her boyfriend's family is not just any other family but the richest people in Singapore who own a lot of properties and have other branches of people who live on the wealth from their family's inheritance. Not only that, Rachel, who is an Asian growing up in the western, started to find out about the reality of strict gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes on women when she stayed over in Singapore.

Rachel, never knowing about his boyfriend's family background was stunned to see how different her boyfriend's life was compared to what she was imagining. In the story, the point of view changes from each character depending on the chapters but in this study, we will be focusing on Rachel's and Astrid's as the main female characters who keep appearing every now and then with the narratives written from their point of view.

Through the eyes and lenses of Rachel, who experienced being discriminated and sneered at from her boyfriend's family and Astrid who is struggling to manage her family's image while experiencing betrayal from her husband, we ought to see how they react to what these women do in certain circumstances with the social expectations of gender on them.

There are few previous related studies for this paper. The first one is 'Representasi Women Empowerment Dalam Film Komedi Percintaan (Analisis Semiotik Mengenai Representasi Women Empowerment dalam Film Crazy Rich Asians)' by Intan Tawaddada Ilaiha, published on 2021. The author used semiotics theory by Roland Barthes in order to analyze the meaning of the movie of Crazy Rich Asians.

Another study related to this paper is 'Crazy Rich Asians: Exploring Discourses of Orientalism, Neoliberal Feminism, Privilege and Inequality' by Devi Vijay and was published on 2019. The theory used in this study is Orientalism and Neoliberal Feminism where the study talks about how the Orientalism and the westernization of the story are being shown in the movie.

Another study related to this paper is 'Prejudice And Stereotype In Kevin Kwan's Crazy Rich Asians Novel (2013): A Sociological Approach' by Nadhifah Salsabila and Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S. This paper used a sociological approach in order to talk about the stereotypes and prejudices from the movie.

This study will be looking further into women empowerment against the common stereotypes as shown in the novel Crazy Rich Asians by Kevin Kwan. This study differs from the previously done researches and study regarding the similar

topic or issues by the main focus of this study where this study will be analysing how the stereotypes on the women are being countered by how they act throughout the novel by the depiction of characters from dialogues or narratives—showcasing the analysis with the use of liberal feminism theory, giving them the perspective how these characters are able to stand up for themselves and choose their own path despite the culture they're being introduced and raised by. The study will also being conducted by focusing in the Asia, especially Singapore where most of the people in the characters of the book are descendants from China with their own cultural values.

This study is done with the hope that it will bring further understanding and a bigger perspective of the book and how the author is trying to portray empowerment in his work through the characters he has shown.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How are the gender roles and stereotypes of Asian women is represented in Crazy Rich Asians (2013) novel?

2. How is the women empowerment in the book is being represented to counter the stereotypes in Crazy Rich Asians (2013) novel?

1.3. Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study is to see how the book represents women empowerment in the characters and story in contrast of how the stereotypes they have in the culture of where the setting takes place at. This study will contribute a further understanding of the issues in the book through the analysis.

1.4. Scope of The Study

This study will be analysing the women empowerment through the female characters and the story in the novel 'Crazy Rich Asians' by Kevin Kwan. From the novel, elements that will be analysed would be the gender roles and stereotypes mentioned in the story and how the characters are not living up to the stereotypes through empowerment from various aspects.

1.5. Limitation of The Study

The study will be analysing gender roles, stereotypes and the women empowerment found in the novel 'Crazy Rich Asians' by Kevin Kwan. The study will be limited with the previous related study that has similar topic to this study. Another limitation of the study is the lack of variety from similar topic in the book in where it will be analysed in this study. Therefore, there's a need for further studies and research regarding the topic to add into the variety where it will be future references.

1.6. Significance of The Study

This study is expected to add further understanding into the previous related studies' information and researches where this study might give a new or better perspective from the previous studies. With this study, it is expected to give an addition of the analysis of 'Crazy Rich Asians' by Kevin Kwan with a different approach and different focus to be discussed about and is expected to contributed for a variety in analysing the stereotypes and women empowerment mentioned in the story for other studies to refer, whether it's from the same research object of Crazy Rich Asians or not.