

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

Women are more than half of the world's population, so it's natural that discussing their representation is interesting. There are many things to talk about when it comes to women. They are interesting not just because of their beauty or gentleness, but because their existence. In the context of society, it is a community where people, both men and women, engage with one another. Naturally, gender differences can lead to varied treatments during these interactions. Unfortunately, since thousands of years ago until now it is women who have experienced more different treatment. Based on the study results, it shows that women experience more inequality in the workplace than men (Cortina et al., 2013). Inequality against women can be carried out both in the form of general harassment and as a way to selectively target women as a minority group. Women who experience differential treatment in the workplace typically have overlapping vulnerabilities and privileges, racially and sexually charged work environments, and asymmetries in workplace composition and mobility (Hirsh, 2014). Gender inequality in the workplace often limits women from being hired in competitive jobs and obtaining leadership positions (Ronzio, 2012).

Generally, women's full and equal participation in all aspects of society is a fundamental human right. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights said that all people are "born free and equal in dignity and rights." This means

everyone should have freedom, dignity, and equal rights, regardless their gender. However, women and girls still face discrimination and serious human rights violations every day. More women than men live in poverty and need, often have limited or no access to health services, and are often denied property or land ownership. However, all over the world, from politics, entertainment, family scope and even the workplace, most women are also under-represented and treated unequally and even where they are often seen as powerless, women tend to be seen as weaker than men. This statement is in the line with the studies conducted by (Aldilanesia, 2015). In this study, the writer took the novel entitled “*Our Only May Amelia*” as the object of the study. The results of this study found that May Amelia did not have the same equal rights as her brother. May Amelia is the only girl in her family even in her village, Nasel River. She grows up like a boy because she doesn’t have a sister or friend to play with, she just plays with her brothers. May Amelia wants to achieve equality upon her brother in doing job and activities but she was told that she must not forget about her biological essentialism that she is a girl. Jalmer, her father, never allows her to do something like what her brother does because he thinks her daughter is weak to do what boys do. So, that’s why her father only asks her to stay at home and to help her mother prepare everything for the family. He only wants her daughter to be a proper young lady. The depiction of May Amelia shows that there is inequality in treating boys and girls. It can also be seen that discrimination against women still often occurs. Up until now, gender discrimination is still a hot topic that is frequently discussed in our society, particularly among women who often face it. Sex-based discrimination

has taken place in a variety of spheres of life. Therefore, many of them who have experienced it want to express their opinions and demand justice for the harm they get. Although this is no longer a taboo issue nowadays, gender discrimination is still often found in various places, including in the workplace. This can take many forms such as unequal pay, differences in promotions, racism, or even incidents of sexual harassment. Inequalities in the position of men and women exist in nearly all societies and sexual harassment at work is a clear manifestation of unequal power relations. Sexual harassment is also used as a tool to discourage women who may be seen to be competing for power (Aman et al., 2016).

Sexual harassment is a degrading and abusive act directed at someone based on their gender or sexual orientation, frequently occurring in workplaces, educational institutions, or public spaces. This harassment can manifest in various unwelcome behaviors, such as sexually charged comments, non-consensual physical contact, or other actions that make the victim feel intimidated, uncomfortable, or offended. As stated by (Cullen et al., 2014), workplace abuse is characterized by unsolicited, unwanted, and offensive conduct that leads to disrespectful treatment of individuals. Such acts not only violate human rights but also significantly impact the psychological well-being and mental health of victims, causing fear, trauma, reduced productivity and loss of self-confidence.

Additionally, sexual harassment can foster a toxic culture in the workplace, hindering personal growth and development and undermining justice and equality in society. Apart from being a common problem in the workplace, sexual harassment is also often found in a number of creative works, including films.

Films, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, became one of the products associated with written works and the practice of commenting on the qualities and character of literary works, according to (Klarer, 1999). There are connections between literature and movies, and each impacts the other. The process of literary analysis progressively has an impact on film. In short, the same method known as the textual study approach can be used to thoroughly analyze both literary and film works.

Movies are a form of communication that has a significant impact on how people think and shaping people's mindsets. It is also an appropriate means of conveying important messages to the public. Movies share ideas, stories, and emotions, creating a unique experience for the viewer. They can inspire social change and shape personal opinions, including attitudes toward social issues, as stated by Nelmes (2012) who argues that film studies not only discuss the mechanisms of film making, but also how they influence the audience. The impact of films on attitudes can be both positive and negative, and has the potential to change societal norms and values. By watching movies, people can also express their emotions, such as laughing and crying. Furthermore, movies can help us appreciate art. In this study, the author decided to take the *Bombshell* (2019) movie as the study object. The author chose this film as the object because it contains issues about sexual harassment that are currently happening and often discussed in our society. *Bombshell* was released in 2019, directed by Jay Roach. This movie depicts the struggles of women who demand justice for the harassment they received in the workplace. Nicole Kidman stars as Gretchen Carlson, who tries to expose her CEO, Roger Ailes, as the perpetrator of several acts of sexual

harassment. In the movie, a culture of misogyny also appears in the workplace, when senior male employees abuse their positions on female employees. In addition, women are also pressured and forced to accept unwanted sexual advances in exchange for promotions, or they will lose their jobs instead.

The struggle for gender equality is clearly depicted in this film as the female characters seek justice after being sexually harassed by their CEO. They strive to speak out to the public about the mistreatment they endured. These women collaborate to encourage other victims to come forward and share their experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace. One of the reasons they don't dare to talk about this kind of treatment is because they are bound by a pact that forces them to keep silent. This movie also portrayed how the main character struggles to collect evidence by collecting several other victims.

In conducting this study, the writer used several previous studies to help achieve the aims of the study. (Rosigno, 2019) discusses discrimination, sexual harassment, and the impact of power dynamics in the workplace. In the article, he explains that workplace discrimination often focuses on a single aspect of inequality or type of exclusion, with less emphasis on how positional and relational power among employees can either heighten or lessen vulnerability. The author examines data from approximately 6,000 full-time workers collected across five waves of the General Social Survey (2002-2018) to investigate discrimination, sexual harassment, and the significance of employment status as well as vertical and horizontal work interactions. In this article, the author emphasizes the potential for discrimination and sexual harassment rather than

detailing specific instances of unfair treatment, the processes leading to discrimination and harassment, or the rationale behind such unfair treatment. Actions against minority, female, or elderly employees are also discussed. In these situations, it is easy to envision scenarios where biases and assumptions based on status are linked to multiple statuses rather than just one, making the process of understanding these dynamics particularly relevant.

Another study by (Maryam et al., 2022) looks at how black women characters in the movie “Hidden Figures” handle gender inequality. The study aims to identify instances of gender inequality in the movie and the factors that contribute to it. The descriptive qualitative method was employed in this study. This relates to how the data was described in a movie as a conversation. In this study, the writer focuses more on discussing gender inequality and demonstrates that it happens as a result of factors that support it. Spreadlay analysis, along with Fakh and Relawati’s theories, is used in the analysis. The study found two types of gender inequality: marginalization and subordination. It also identified four factors contributing to gender disparity in the movie: people’s mythological beliefs, reason, patriarchy, and capitalism. Additionally, the study shows that gender inequality is influenced by the environment and community groups, which create harmful stigma and behavior patterns, leading to injustice for individuals or groups.

(Mustikawati, 2022) focuses on feminism-related incidents that take place in the Enola Holmes movie. The aim of Mustika’s study is to describe the different gender injustices that women and feminists have to contend with in the Enola

Holmes movie, but the writer also relates it to the Introduction to Literature course. In order to conduct the research for this study, a descriptive qualitative technique with tools for document analysis and Madsen's feminist analysis theory were used. The results of this study show that the *Enola Holmes* movie contains a number of gender inequalities, including the inability of women to vote, as well as violence against them and sexual harassment of them. Women also had to follow every man's order, and their freedom of expression was constrained by social norms. The study also highlights the struggles of women and feminists to overcome these inequalities, including the fight for women's suffrage, equal education, full political representation, protection against violence and harassment, and freedom of speech.

The gap between this study and previous one is the focus on women's struggles and gender discrimination, particularly in the fight for gender equality rights. In the previous one, the focus was simply on issues of inequality and gender discrimination faces by women without delving deeper into how women combat the issues. In this study, the writer provides an overview of how women fight against sexual harassment in the workplace in their own ways and explains in greater depth how the struggle of women in empowering each other to demand equality which represented in the *Bombshell* movie (2019).

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This study tries to prove and answer some questions:

- a. What kind of gender discrimination is shown in the *Bombshell* movie?

- b. How do the main characters empower fellow women to fight against sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace?

### **1.3 Aims of The Study**

- a. To find out what kind of gender discrimination shown in the Bombshell movie.
- b. To identify how the main character empower fellow women to fight sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace.

### **1.4 Scope of The Study**

This study will focus on gender inequality and sexual harassment as the forms of gender discrimination. Additionally, it aims to explore how the main characters fight against sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace, representing women's empowerment through the lens of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. The author believes that these approaches can provide readers with insights on how to address sexual harassment and gender inequality in various aspects of life, particularly in the workplace.

### **1.5 Significance of The Study**

The significance of this study is conducted with the aim of delivering messages and information regarding issues of gender inequality and sexual harassment, which are currently still became hot topics widely discussed and often occurs in various places. This study is intended to enhance the understanding and development of feminism in literature by employing literary theory. Additionally, this study offers new perspectives on comprehending studies on feminist topics,



thus proving highly beneficial for readers interested in this material and serving as a reference for further research.

