

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

Gender is a concept used to identify differences between men and women from a non-biological perspective. Gender studies place more emphasis on the development of masculinity and femininity. (Arbain, 2015). Basically, women and men have equal degrees and rights in life. However, as time goes by, there are many different understandings, thoughts, and views on the roles of women and men. In general, in social views and thoughts, men have a role as the head of the family. Where, men are required to be leaders in their families and as breadwinners. Meanwhile, women have a role as housewives. Where, women are required to do household chores, take care of their husbands and children. There are many thoughts and social views that are negative towards working women, because they have different thoughts about the roles of women and men. Over time, the thought of gender roles creates gender discrimination which makes it difficult for women to get equal jobs and education. The view that women must be at home and men must live outside or work is very embedded in society. In fact, taking care of the household and children is not entirely the responsibility of a wife, but is a joint responsibility, namely husband and wife (Rengganis, 2023). Discrimination is a negative behavior or attitude that discriminates against an individual or group based on their gender, race, religion or ethnicity. Gender discrimination is an attitude or behavior that discriminates against an individual

based on their gender. Gender discrimination usually occurs by women, where women do not get their proper rights and are not equal to men. This discrimination can occur anywhere. In the field of education and employment, highly educated and working women are usually belittled and do not get equal rights, because there is an understanding of gender roles from society which makes them think that women's duties are only at home to be housewives. Gender inequality and gender discrimination refer to unequal behavior in individuals based on their gender. This inequality can occur anywhere, for example at home, work area, class, community, and others. Gender inequality itself has various levels; some of which are less profitable for both women and men (Firdausy, 2021). Law, politics, companies, and other types of jobs, are usually dominated by men, where men are usually the ones who lead the work. This means that women are often belittled in the workplace because they are seen as unable to work and not commensurate with the abilities of men. The existence of this discrimination makes women feel that their abilities and rights are very limited. The patriarchal system basically believes that men hold the highest position and power, which creates gender gaps and also discriminates and oppresses women who are allegedly inferior (Saputri, 2018). Because many things are detrimental due to society's patriarchal view of women, a movement called "Feminism" was born. Feminism is a movement to end the oppression of women. "Feminism is an ideology used to break patriarchy, look for roots or causes of discrimination against women and also look for solutions" (Hastuti, 2018). One branch of feminism is liberal feminism. Liberal feminism is a liberal understanding which



states that men and women should have the same rights and opportunities. "The ideology of liberal feminism is about equality in all things, opportunities and desires so that every individual (male or female) can be given the freedom to choose what is good, as the way he or she did without harming another" (Hastuti, 2018). In this study, the author will use the film *"On The Basis of Sex"*, a film by Mimi Leder, to analyze the issue of gender discrimination and gender equality using the theory of liberal feminism by Rosemarie Tong, assisted by the perspective of Allan G. Johnson *"The Gender Knot"*. *On the basis of sex* is a film inspired by a true story based on the story of a former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The reason the author chose this film as a data source is because this film discusses the struggle of a woman in realizing gender equality. This film raises the issue of gender discrimination and gender equality, where the issue in the film relates to the topic of this study.

The film *On The Basis of Sex* tells about Ruth's struggle to fight for equal rights. In starting her education at Harvard law school, Ruth was one of nine women who were successfully accepted into Harvard law school. In carrying out her education until graduation, Ruth received inappropriate and unequal behavior while she was at school. At that time, there weren't many women who made it into Harvard Law School, so it was the male students who dominated the school's department. As a result, Ruth and the other female students were looked down upon by them. Even after graduating, Ruth still did not get equal rights for herself. She struggled to study and replace her husband's class, because at that time her

husband was sick. However, she can't even get the job she wants, and has been rejected by several law firms, on the grounds that she is a woman. After being rejected many times, Ruth decided to become a professor at Rutgers Law School for the subject of sex discrimination and law. In the 1970s Martin (Ruth's husband) helped Ruth to find a case Ruth could handle, that is the *Moritz v. tax case. Internal Revenue Commissioner*. The case has something to do with discrimination between genders. Ruth took on the case with her husband Martin as attorney and Ruth as counsel. Even though at first it was full of obstacles because the people around weren't sure that Ruth would win. However, in the end Ruth managed to prove herself and fight against gender discrimination.

Several previous studies have identified and analyzed the issue of gender discrimination found in films. One example is an article entitled *"DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN SEXES IN ON THE BASIS OF SEX BY MIMI LEDER"* (Firdausy, 2021). In this article, the author uses a descriptive analysis method using De Beauvoir's theory of the Second Sex and Marxist feminism. The article focuses on analyzing the character of women who are discriminated against. What distinguishes this study from previous studies, is that in this study the author will use a different theory, using the Liberal feminism theory by Mary Wollstonecraft *"A Vindication of The Rights of Woman"* in the *"Feminist Thought"* book by Rosemarie Tong, assisted by the perspective of Allan G. Johnson *"The Gender Knot"*. In this study, the author will analyze which focuses



on the issue of discrimination against female characters in the film *On the Basis of Sex*, about how women are discriminated against and viewed sideways in certain fields. Furthermore, this study will also analyze how the female characters struggle to get equal rights

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the explanation above, the writer will analyze and identify the problems found in this study as follows:

1. How is gender discrimination depicted in “*On The Basis of Sex*” movie transcript?
2. How does the film “*On The Basis of Sex*” represent liberal feminism regarding the issues of gender equality?

## **1.3 Purpose of The Study**

1. The purpose of this study is to analyze the issue of gender discrimination in the film *On the Basis of Sex*.
2. To analyze the issue of gender equality in liberal feminism contained in the film *On The Basis of Sex*.

## **1.4 Scope and Limitation of The Study**

This study will focus on analyzing and discussing issues related to feminism regarding gender discrimination and gender equality and adding to liberal feminism contained in the film *On The Basis of Sex*, based on the theory of Liberal feminism theory by Mary Wollstonecraft “*A Vindication of*





*The Rights of Woman*” in the “*Feminist Thought*” book by Rosemarie Tong, assisted by the perspective of Allan G. Johnson "*The Gender Knot*".

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

This study was made with the aim of being able to provide messages and information regarding the issue of discrimination between genders, especially for women. This study is intended to theoretically increase the understanding and development of feminism and gender in literature by using literary theory. This study will provide new insights into the understanding of gender and feminism, and can be used as a reference for further research.

