CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The social phenomenon that is being debated and has become a lively issue is gender awareness. According to Martínez et al., (2010), gender awareness is a social phenomenon that favors gender inequality and discrimination against women. The existence of gender awareness makes the position of women feel alienated from social activities because of this discrimination. In line with what is stated in Arnaut et al., (2019), gender awareness is an understanding of gender equality that everyone must consider to reduce discrimination and violence against women. Gender awareness is closely related to gender equality, which can lead to a social phenomenon that can change the perspective of women in the social environment.

One of the phenomena in Indonesia concerns gender awareness in the education system, which has a substantial impact on the existence of women in education. According to Tuwor and Sossou (2008), the presence of a solid patriarchal system assumes that men deserve higher education than women. Social factors that support the support of male authority make women oppressed and replaced. This presence of a patriarchal system in education makes women not get the education they want to uphold their ideals. This phenomenon also occurs, as discussed by Rina (2017), as cited

in Julieta (2020), who said there is inequality in the education taken by girls in Indonesia. These two phenomena show that gender inequality or gender awareness is still extreme in social circles, especially in education.

Gender awareness in education has been embedded in the regulations since the beginning. Sihotang et al., (2020) also say that Indonesia's education system has liberated and gives everyone the right to receive the highest possible formal education without paying attention to their gender. With the existence of gender equality, the government, especially the empowerment of women, has planned the Indonesian National Long Term Development (RPJP) for the period 2000–2025, which states that there is a design for gender equality awareness and also women's empowerment so that it can be proven that education in Indonesia is no longer looking at gender (Siscawati et al., 2020). In line with what was said by Syukri (2021), the government is firm and has designs and regulations to deal with gender cases that occur in education. With the government's firmness, everyone becomes free and has more rights to get a better education without worrying about gender.

The importance of gender awareness in education can also be applied in the smallest social sphere, namely the family. Rafferty (2018) suggests that families, especially parents, can help children instill the principle of gender awareness and the gender role of each child. One way is to introduce books and puzzles to children from an early age that display non-stereotypical genders. In addition to giving books, it would be better if children were taught about various kinds of toys that represent their genders,

such as blocks, action figures, and others. The last way is to free children to choose their playmates and let them choose hobbies and sports activities that they like to hone their understanding of gender awareness. The film is also one of the media used to understand more about gender awareness. Florack (2014) also said that children could better understand and appreciate things by going through moving media and having audio that sounds like a movie. The use of film as a medium will help children to be more sensitive to their social environment and understand the issues around them. Of the several media used to understand gender awareness, the film is one of the most popular means of understanding social issues such as gender awareness.

To better understand gender awareness, films are used as one popular medium to provide an understanding of gender awareness. According to Bordwell et al., (2017), a film is a moving image created with the help of a robot so that it can produce sound and tell a story. Films can also contain some information that includes things that are still rarely known by someone so that they can gain insight into real life in the social environment. Films can also influence the audience, especially children, regarding gender awareness. Using film as a media will help children be more sensitive to their social environment and understand the issues around them. The influence of movies on children will allow them to be more aware of gender awareness.

One of the films favored by children is the film produced by Walt Disney. Walter Elias Disney created Disney in 1923 to introduce the cartoon characters he had made (Mittermeier, 2021). According to Giroux, (1999),

Disney is a medium that can assist children in developing their social identities. By relying on children's innocence, Disney creates a dream world that enables children to picture a life full of adventure, love, and life stories. Even though a collection of Disney films is a favorite of children, classic Disney films still receive criticism from the public because they still contain gender stereotypes or think that women should be beautiful, soft, graceful, and weak, which means they cannot do what men do. Some films where the princess character has a feminist character are Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Cinderella (1950), Sleeping Beauty (1959), and The Little Mermaid (1989).

According to Berlianti (2021), Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora are known as princesses who display the feminine style of a woman who has beautiful hair, clean skin, and a slim body. The three princesses are said to be symbols of feminists who have natural beauty. Why are these three classic Disney princess films still receiving criticism because of a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word feminine, in which the nature of the three princesses are represented as beautiful, soft-hearted, and weak women who are considered difficult to solve problems and require the role of men to help them to solve the issues. The female characters who are independent, confident, and strong are always represented as evil characters who want to hurt the three princesses. Despite having ugly characteristics, the villain has a strong and brave side like a man (Wellman, 2020). This is why the public still criticizes classic Disney films because they still show the side of women who are weak and not independent.

Over time, Disney has started to make breakthroughs that have changed the characteristics of the main characters, namely the princesses. Previously, Disney had three eras that, over time, have created breakthroughs starting from the old era, including Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959), which are the characteristics shared by the three princesses. It still shows that a beautiful woman is weak and very dependent on the help of others. Meanwhile, the second era, namely the middle era, which includes Aladdin (1992), Pocahontas (1995), and Mulan (1998), started to make breakthroughs or reforms where the female characters are not always depicted as white and weak, but they can become strong at a specific time". Therefore, the last era is a new era, which includes Tangled (2010), Brave (2012), and Frozen (2013), where the female characters are very different from the previous era, where the princess characters already look strong and they are also independent so that they can solve their problems (Youssef, 2020). In line with what Xu (2021) says, the film produced by the Walt Disney Company has shown how the development of gender equality in a film is applied to its characters who first appear as women who are soft and helpless, but over time, the female character shown has turned into a brave and strong figure.

One of the Disney films used as media to provide an understanding of gender awareness and feminism is "2012 Brave," which one of the Disney films used as media to offer a sense of gender awareness and feminism. The princess character in the film 2012 Brave, named Merida, displays

characteristics that lead to liberal feminism, which is related to research from Aprilia and Sutrisno (2020), which states that Merida's character, even though she has a masculine side, also displays the figure of a princess who is responsible for her actions, which she has done. She is responsible for turning her mother into a bear because of a misunderstanding by going on an adventure to find the cure so she can turn her mother back into a bear. It is also related to what Aninda et al., (2019) discussed, that in addition to being responsible, Merida also has a loving side, which is shown when Merida obeys whatever her mother wants her to be, who tells her to be the perfect princess so as not to embarrass her clan. With these two characteristics and habits, Merida can display as a female figure representing liberal feminism. With the liberal side of feminism found in Merida's character in the Disney's 2012 *Brave*, it can be used as an understanding by children about the issue of gender awareness and feminism.

Thus, this study discussed the representation of radical feminism in Merida's character in the film Brave (2012). Radical feminism is a movement to equalize gender and reduce the existence of a patriarchal system in which men dominate women in all aspects of life (Gamble, 2006). In line with what Daly (1990) says, radical feminism is a movement that requires women to emerge from the shadow of patriarchy in terms of ideas, institutions, and even the definition of patriarchy. The discussion

about the characteristics, hobbies, and physical appearance shown by Merida in the Disney's 2012 *Brave* are thought to be a type of rebellion against patriarchal society, the development of a women's-only organization, and the expansion of women's perspectives on male aggression. Based on the research background above, this study aims to analyze the representation of radical feminism in Merida's character in Disney's 2012 *Brave*.

1.2 Problem Identification

Gender awareness is a social phenomenon where there is gender inequality between women and men, and there is discrimination against women. The existence of gender awareness can lead to violence against women and discrimination against them, making it difficult for women to carry out everyday activities in the social environment. One of the phenomena concerning gender awareness is found in Indonesia, especially in education, which affects the existence of female students in education. It can be seen that most female students find it very difficult to pursue education and pursue their desired goals because the existing patriarchal system is still strong. With this social phenomenon, the government is aggressively providing a solution that education will not look at gender and uphold gender equality so that all children can attend school as high as possible regardless of gender. Thus, gender awareness is a social phenomenon that must be understood from an early age. One of the ways to introduce gender awareness to children is by using films because films are one of the media that can display social phenomena in the environment. One

of the films that can help children understand gender awareness is Disney's 2012 *Brave*. Therefore, this study investigated radical feminism reflected by the characterizations of the main character, Merida, in 2012 Brave.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is limited to Merida's characterization as the main character in Disney's 2012 *Brave*, directed by Mark Andrews and Brenda Chapman. The characterizations will be evaluated to determine Merida's radical feminist characterization. As a result, this research focused on Merida's characterization as a radical feminist in Disney's film 2012 *Brave*.

1.4 Statements of Research Question

Based on the research background, there are two research questions needed to be answered by this study, namely:

1.4.1   What are the characterizations of Merida in Disney's 2012 *Brave*?

1.4.2   What are Merida's Characterizations as a Radical Feminism in Disney's 2012 *Brave*?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Based on the aforementioned problem statement, the purposes of this study are:

1.5.1   To analyze Merida's characterization.

1.5.2   To analyze the characterization of radical feminism which are reflected through the characterization of Merida in Disney's 2012 *Brave*.

1.6 Definition of Keyterms

1.6.1   Radical Feminism

According to Gamble (2006), radical feminism is a feminist movement that aims to equalize gender roles between women and men. To equalize gender, the patriarchal system in which men are always prioritized or superior must be stopped and equalize the position of women. This is because women also have an androgynous characteristic that they want to show.

1.6.2   Character and Characterization

According to Gill, (1995), a character is a person in a work who will later play a role. As for characterization, which displays a habit or how a character is created, it is like how a character behaves.

1.6.3   Film

According to Bordwell et al., (2017), a film is a moving image which can display motion and sound which creates a story. Film is also a media that displays all information about the outside world that we cannot even predict the truth of and also how life is in society.

1.7 Significances of the Study

The significances of this study is involving theoretical and practical significances.

1.7.1   Theoretical Significations

1.7.1.1 Feminist Ideologies

This study could provide an understanding of feminist ideologies, especially radical feminism, in the characterization contained in the

character Merida in Disney's 2012 Brave to society in social life. According to Bressler (1994), Feminists are an association dominated by women and uphold what feminism is to voice women's rights and freedoms in a patriarchal system. Then, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the inclusion of radical feminism in a film that will urge people to retain gender equality.

1.7.1.2 Literacy Skills

According to Pilgrim and Martinez (2013) literacy skills are the ability to use technology to obtain information. Therefore, this study is able to provide society with an understanding of Literacy Skills, which is included information, media, and ICT skills are expected to be implemented by society.

1.7.1.3   Language Learning

This study provided more understanding and knowledge about language learning to society, where there are listening skills, reading skills, speaking skills, writing skills, etc.

1.7.2   Practical Significances

1.7.2.1 For Teachers

This study could possibly help teachers in preparing fun learning media, one of which is through using films. Film is one of the media that displays moving images and also emits sound that forms a story, which will make students more focused and gain a lot of new knowledge. This

study features a Disney film entitled Brave (2012) and features the characterization of a character named Merida.

1.7.2.2 For Students

This study might provide information and understand more about feminism, especially radical feminism in the characterizations in the film Disney's 2012 *Brave*. Therefore, this study is expected to help students find fun learning media such as films.

1.7.2.3 For Society

This study is able to provide information and understanding about the importance of using film as a medium in knowing the social environment. Film is not only used as a medium of entertainment but can also be used as a medium to seek information and educate, especially on social issues such as feminism.

1.7.2.4 For Other Researchers

This study could possibly help other researchers conduct similar research. This research is also can be used as a reference source for film analysis, characterization, and feminism approach.