

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Gender awareness is a social understanding that all circles of society must understand. Moghaddam (2007) emphasizes that gender awareness is the recognition of socially determined differences between males and females based on learned behavior. Moreover, gender awareness needs to be increased to foster general understanding and sensitivity about gender inequality, such as discrimination and violence against women (Arnaut et al., 2019). In Indonesia, the knowledge of gender awareness in the educational field is still relatively low and unequal between men and women. This is proven by the view of the community, who considers that the level of higher education pursued by women in Indonesia is unimportant and is still crowned as a taboo subject (Fachrunnisa, 2020). She adds that this is caused by an element of mixed culture and religion that influenced the society's principles. Furthermore, the community thinks that the essential education for women is taking care of the household properly. This principle contradicts the parents' view that they believe their sons are the breadwinner of the family and they deserve to get the highest education (Fachrunnisa, 2020). Besides, this is also in line with Tuwor & Sossou (2008), which state that men have a superior right to get an education over women.

Another principle regarding gender awareness in Indonesia is the existence of public stigma about the patriarchal system, which is still strong (Fachrunnisa, 2020). She also emphasizes that by the patriarchy, most parents have high hopes for their sons because everything related to the family and financial decisions is

regulated by men (Fachrunnisa, 2020). This can trigger discrimination, intimidation, and violence experienced by Indonesian women. In order to overcome this, gender awareness in the educational world is determined in the form of government regulations by providing equal opportunities for women and men to get the same right to take formal education (Sihotang et al., 2020). This is stated in law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, especially in Chapter III, Article 4, which states: "Education is carried out democratically and fairly without discrimination by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism." Moreover, this is also regulated in Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that every citizen has the right and is obliged to receive education. Furthermore, the government realizes gender awareness by trying to develop participatory development as outlined in the draft of commitment to gender issues and women's empowerment with a gender-based firm action strategy (Syukri, 2021). This is also supported by the statement from Siscawati et al., (2020) which state that there is an affirmation of gender awareness in Indonesian, which is realized in the form of the National Long-Term Development Plan/Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang National (RPJP) in 2000-2005, which adapts to gender equality and protects women from discrimination. Therefore, those are the efforts made by the government to foster an understanding of gender awareness.

Considering the importance of gender awareness, it needs to be understood from an early age which can be started in the family environment. This is supported by the statement from Leaper (2014), which states that the role of the family, especially parents, can affect children's gender development and their

understanding of gender awareness. Moreover, to provide this understanding, families can provide some knowledge about the importance of gender awareness to children under the guise of informal education. This can be started by delivering stimulation in the form of puzzles, books, or toys that refer to a person's profession, such as women as police, men as nurses, etc. (Rafferty, 2018). Besides, Florack (2014) states that the involvement of films in children's education can also increase children's literacy, awareness, and understanding of something. One of the things that are often used to teach understanding to children is film. This is because films can motivate children to understand something through the freedom of expressing their understanding by looking at the characters involved in the film (Nuansari & Sriyanto, 2021). According to Bordwell et al. (2017) argue that the film is a technology-based medium that displays moving images and has an impact on the audience. There are several genres in the film industry, namely, fantasy, animation, realism, adventure, music, war, musicals, and literary adaptations (Lobanova et al., 2019). In addition, the film can provide an experience for the audience through the visuals and sounds displayed in each of its scenes (Bordwell et al., 2017). As a medium that displays both visual and audio, a film can influence and inspire the audience from all society, including children, through its storyline. The attractive visual appearance and also the back sound make films in demand and make children more interested in learning new things (Caixia, 2013). Moreover, films are also useful for learning development and forming children's identities (Blasco et al., 2015). Therefore, a film can bring the impact on a children's perspective to the social issues that occur in daily life.

The increasing use of films for children's literacy, awareness, and understanding has resulted in many companies competing to produce the best films. One company that often creates children's films is the Walt Disney Company. Disney became the biggest entertainment company and was first founded in 1923 by Walter Elias Disney (Merskin, 2020). Moreover, princess films produced by Disney greatly influence children's lives by providing an overview of popular culture, and the characteristics of the cast are easy to recognize (Azmi et al., 2018). Furthermore, the depiction of characters in Disney films makes children imagine by entering the fantasy world and enjoying the storyline (Giroux, 1999). He also asserts that Disney films influence children's culture, literature, and daily lives.

However, at the beginning of its existence, Disney often described the female character as a white, soft, and powerless woman (Azmi et al., 2018). Moreover, in the old era, Disney princesses also depict their female characters as submissive, passive nature, prioritizing beauty and household roles (Youssef, 2020). This has an impact in the form of criticism and misconceptions from society because of Disney's tendency to depict that beauty and gentle nature are the most important things for women rather than independence, intelligence, and courage (Berlianti, 2021). As a result, people indicate that classic fairy tales by Disney provide an understanding that women's problems can be solved by getting married and focusing on household matters.

Despite that, Disney princess films have experienced significant developments and changes in terms of animation, themes, and moral messages implied in the films (Azmi et al., 2018). According to (Youssef, 2020), there

are three major eras of Disney princesses, such as the old era includes Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959); the middle era includes The Little Mermaid (1989), Beauty and the Beast (1991), Aladdin (1992), Pocahontas (1995), and Mulan (1998); and the new era includes The Princess and the Frog (2009), Tangled (2010), Brave (2012), and Frozen (2013). The changes in the representation of female characters who are stronger and braver can be seen in the middle era to the new era, where the concept of female characters who are weak and gentle transforms into more courageous and independent characters (Xu, 2021). This is in line with the statement from Youssef (2020), which emphasizes that although the female character in classical Disney is related to household and marriage, over time this image has changed with the development of the Disney film "Princesses" who is depicted as an independent, strong, and happy heroine, do not expect love from a man.

Nowadays, there are various kinds of social issues as outlined in films. One of them is the feminism issue as outlined in the live-action Disney Mulan (2020). Based on Harinanda & Junaidi (2021) in their previous study, they found three streams of feminism in the live-action Disney Mulan (2020), namely, libertarian radical feminism as seen from the strong patriarchal system, liberal feminism seen through the character of Mulan, who is not allowed to become a soldier, and existentialism feminism which can be seen from how free and wild Mulan in expressing herself. Moreover, the study conducted by Sulistia (2016) also found the liberal feminism side of Mulan, which is shown by the presence of female masculinity, which can be described as a strong

individual and brave figure that grows in herself. Furthermore, she added that Mulan's figure still has a feminine nature, which is shown by her willingness to dress like the ideal woman to be brought to the matchmaker. Thus, those previous studies can be a bridge and foundation for further research.

Considering previous studies that tend to lead to liberal feminism in Disney's 2020 live-action *Mulan*, this raises the desire of the researcher to make a breakthrough in this study. This research focused on discussing the representation of feminist ideology in the characterization of Mulan to provide an understanding of feminism and gender issues. The feminist ideology used as the center of this research is radical feminism. Radical feminism has emerged as the feminism with the most fervent ideology for the abolition of the patriarchal system among the various types of feminism movements (Tong, 2009). Moreover, as (Gamble, 2006) states, radical feminism holds the view that women have an androgynous side (feminine and masculine) to fight against the domination of the male role and oppression of women. Furthermore, radical feminism in *Mulan* (2020) is illustrated by the desire of Mulan's character to break the patriarchal system in society that only allows men to become soldiers. The depiction of Mulan's character is represented as a woman who is strong, brave, heroic, independent, resourceful, persistent, and responsible. Mulan loves and wants to protect her family, which makes her dare to replace her father's position as the royal army. Furthermore, there was also a situation when Mulan's disguise was discovered, which disappointed everyone. Nevertheless, Mulan still tried to protect her emperor with her true identity as a woman by using her "Chi" power. Mulan's character also realizes that she has a strong side

of masculinity, shown by her skills in using bows, swords, and arrows. It indicates that Mulan's character has a radical soul and breaks the existing patriarchal system in society.

1.2 Problem Identification

Feminism is one of the most frequently discussed social issues that often get attention from the public because it involves gender awareness and gender equality. The lack understanding of feminism regarding of gender awareness and gender equality in Indonesia can lead to an underestimation of women's pride in society's perceptions, especially men. Moreover, this also can make the development of the patriarchal system in Indonesia become more powerful and rampant. Thus, the importance of providing understanding to children about gender equality must be started as early as possible to instill a positive mindset and also make children respect gender differences. This understanding can be taught by utilizing technological developments in children's literature in the form of films as the learning medium for children. One of the films that can be used as a medium for understanding feminism is the Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan. This film contains elements of feminism, especially radical feminism, which is represented by the main female character, Mulan. The character of Mulan in Disney's live-action Mulan (2020) is able to change the public perception that women are weak creatures into women are brave, strong, and independent creatures. Therefore, this study focused on discussing and analyzing the value of radical feminism portrayal by Mulan.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study analyzed Mulan's characterization in the Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan. The data was taken using the film itself by Niki Caro. The characterization of Mulan was analyzed to find out and describe the radical feminist character portrayed by the main character Mulan.

1.4 Statements of Research Questions

From the explanation on the research background above, there are two research questions that need to be answered in this study, as follows:

- 1.4.1 What are the characterizations of Mulan in Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan?
- 1.4.2 What are Mulan's characterizations as a Radical Feminist in Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Based on the statements in the research questions above, the purpose of this study can be formulated into two parts, as follows:

- 1.5.1 To identify and describe the characterizations of Mulan in Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan.
- 1.5.2 To investigate Mulan's characterizations as a Radical Feminist in Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Radical Feminism

The term "radical feminism" is a form of women's resistance to get equality in the social, economic, political, and educational fields (Tong, 2009). Moreover, she also added that radical feminism also strongly opposes the granting of privileges to men, or commonly known as the

patriarchal system. Besides, (Gamble, 2006) emphasizes that radical feminism tries to highlight the androgynous side that can display both feminine and masculine sides that are owned by women. In this research, the form of radical feminism refers to how Mulan struggles and sacrifices to get an equal position with men in the social and political fields.

1.6.2 Character & Characterization

Character is a figure involved in a literary work which is depicted through the physical appearance, name, and actions of the figure itself (Gill, 1995). Moreover, characterization is a way or depiction of how the character is created by involving the character's habits (Gill, 1995).

1.6.3 Film

Film is a form of technological media that uses moving images to influence the audience (Bordwell et al., 2017). In this research, the film is a moving image that contains moral values about radical feminism for the audience.

1.7 Significances of the Study

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

1.7.1.1 Feminist Ideologies

This study could possibly educate and provide a public understanding of feminism that women also need to be respected by society. According to Bressler (1994) states that feminism refers to the movement that seeks to equalize women's rights with men in all fields of life. The result of this study is also hopes can provide an overview and show the feminist ideologies, especially radical feminism possessed by Mulan's character in society.

1.7.1.2 Literacy Skills

Literacy skills lead to the ability in reading and writing effectively which continues to develop into the ability to use and involve technology to collect and communicate information (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013). Considering the importance of literacy skills which include information, media, and ICT, this research is able to provide children with an understanding of how the contribution of the Disney's 2020 live-action *Mulan* in honing literacy skills in everyday life.

1.7.1.3 Language Learning

This study might improve and develop language learning considering that film is a part of literary work. The use of literary work in language learning plays an important role in developing language skills, including writing, reading, listening, and speaking (Okyar, 2021). This means that the implementation of films can be used as a strategy by teachers to improve and attract children's attention in language learning.

1.7.2 Practical Significance

1.7.2.1 For Teachers

This study could possibly serve as a resource for teachers in using films as a learning media. Moreover, the use of films that display interesting audio and visuals is also expected to be able to provide shortcuts and make it easier for teachers to provide an understanding of radical feminism based on the Disney's 2020 live-action *Mulan* in a fun way.

1.7.2.2 For Students

This study is able to provide understanding and information about radical feminism which is described through Mulan's characterization. Besides, this study is also can improve the language skills of the students through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. Moreover, through this study, students are also can capture the meaning and appreciate the existence of gender equality.

1.7.2.3 For the Society

This study focused on explaining the understanding of radical feminism to achieve gender equality in the Disney's 2020 live-action Mulan. Feminism supports all women in the world to get equal rights like men and changes society's perception that women are just incompetent and weak human beings (Tong, 2009). Therefore, through this analysis and by watching the film Mulan (2020), women could possibly raise their degree and self-esteem to get equal rights. The community is also can change their mindset, which always puts men first and considers women as weak creatures.

1.7.2.4 For the Other Researchers

This study provided information about the characterization and radical feminism of the live-action Disney Mulan (2020). Therefore, this study can be used as a source of information and reference by other researchers with research topics related to the analysis of radical feminism in films.