CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Society continues to presume that the majority of things are better for men than women. For example, men are more suitable for leadership roles, whereas women are less competent. Men are also granted authority and a role in household decision-making, whereas women are obligated to follow their male counterparts. Stereotypes and gender roles have connected the belief that one sex or gender is inherently superior to another, a phenomenon known as sexism. According to Vetterling-Braggin (1981; cited in Mills, 2008), sexism is the act of emphasizing a person's gender over others when it is not the most prominent aspect. This is due to the fact that conversation plays a crucial role in communication and personality formation. Sexism can affect both men and women, but it primarily targets women.

This notion of sexism posits that women must remain submissive to their spouses, as all roles are still held by men, despite their academic or career achievements. Men tell women that they can have a successful career, be a wife, and be a mother in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the situation becomes problematic when a woman's success interferes with that of her partner. Men will experience anxiety when women surpass them in terms of

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experience and authority. The message conveyed to women is that they are capable of achieving success, but they are not more successful than men. Some men, but not all men, continue to maintain the belief that women should only occupy supporting roles.

In 2020, the Young Women's Trust, a charity that supports and represents women in England and Wales aged 18 to 30 who are trapped by low or no pay and confronting a life of poverty, conducted a survey of HR decision-makers. The total sample size consisted of 802 senior HR professionals or people managers. The results indicated that 37% of women believe that "sexist behavior in my organization still exists," while 22% of men do. In total, 29% of employers supported the statement. Another research found that 6% of employers believed that "men are better suited to management jobs than women" and 10% believed that men possess better IT skills. This shows that sexism is prevalent in the office sector which considers the abilities of men and women to be different.

The difference between men and women in socializing can also be identified by the way they communicate. Women's activists have observed that English language frameworks contain elements that reject, insult, and despise women. Sexist language and behavior is a representation of the existence of sexism between men and women. Feminists have disputed sexism since the 1960s, and their main goals have been to change it and the way that it discriminates against women. They also want to change how

women are described in media, advertisements, texts, and interactions, as well as how they are addressed.

The circumstances of sexist condition arise frequently in daily life. People in society sometimes act and say things that are sexist without even recognizing it. For instance, there is always a perception that catcalling is normal because of repeated jokes and compliments. Catcalling is a product of patriarchal culture, placing men above women and causing power relations between men and women where women are objects. It is often carried out by strangers who do not know each other in offices, campuses, or public places. Calling a woman "sweety" or praising a woman's body shape as "nice ass" is the example of sexist word. In 2023, Utama et al. conducted research on Semarang State University students (women) about the occurrence of catcalling as sexist humor. As a result, 36 respondents admitted that they had experienced catcalling on campus. This behavior makes the victim, who is women, feel uncomfortable and humiliated.

Gender is inextricably connected to sexism. Gender refers the dynamic relationship between women and men, and the societal formation and construction of these relationships. It can be regarded as a societal term that differs between men and women. Differences in functions and roles between men and women are not determined because both of them have significant differences in terms of biology and nature. Consequently, a social label consists of the characteristics that the culture attributes to each sex characteristics that individuals assign to themselves as cited by Brannon in

2017. As time goes by, gender differences has entered and been integrated into all dimensions of human life so strongly that it seems it cannot be changed.

Gender is consistently associated with equality. There are many issues that pertain to gender equality. For example, when considering the general gender, women tend to become unnoticeable. The patriarchal cultural system, still ingrained in society, perpetuates stereotypes that portray women as weak, gentle, passive, more emotional, and possessing a motherly nature. These things, in contrast to men, who are always portrayed as strong and mighty and have more roles, lead to discrimination against women, who seem to be treated as if their position is always below that of men. It is linked to prejudice that the one gender who has more power will be treated with more favor than the other gender.

Gender bias is one form of prejudice. This is often a negative attitude towards a person due to his or her actual or perceived gender identity or presentation. Prejudice occurs when someone forms a belief about a person or group based on a stereotype, which is typically negative. Various factors, such as family, friends, the environment, and historical events, often motivate the appearance of prejudice in an individual. Parents can also transmit prejudice from one generation to the next, and so forth. This might develop during childhood, when it was previously unknown, but it subsequently develops into an incorrect belief. In certain cultures, prejudice and social issues are prevalent.

For instance, during the Victorian era, numerous concerns regarding women were addressed due to the fact that women were seen as inferior to men in a variety of spheres, including education, economics, and sexual activity. They were severely restricted in their classes, as well as at work. They were perceived as belonging to the domestic, which required them to keep their homes clean for their children and husbands, cook meals, and nurture their children. Years after the Victorian era ended, these issues are still widely discussed on some platforms, including in novel, poem, and also cinema. The condition of women in Victorian era is also depicted in the movie Poor Things in 2023.

Poor Things is a movie directed by Yorgos Lanthimos and written by Tony McNamara, based on the 1992 novel by Alasdair Gray. This movie can be assigned a wide range of genres involving science fiction, drama, and black comedy. Poor Things is set in the fictional Victorian era in London and depicts a woman named Bella Baxter as the main character. Bella Baxter, a childlike young woman, is the subject of experiments by an eccentric surgeon named Godwin Baxter. Previously, pregnant Bella attempted suicide by leaping off a bridge, then her body was found by Godwin. Godwin then swapped Bella's brain for that of her fetus, giving her an infant's mind. Bella's intelligence developed rapidly, and from that moment on, she began her journey of curiosity. Her journey reflects a woman's self-discovery that challenges conventional gender norms.

Bella Baxter is shown as a woman who learns many things, like a child who learns to eat, walk, and behave very childishly. Then she reached adolescence and began to try and question the things she had just discovered. her life is surrounded by several men who become part of her journey. She must confront the roles of several men who believe they are superior and have power over her. She then brings up the courage to seize her freedom and attempts to shatter the prejudice that women must live under male authority. This movie portrays the intolerance that considers Bella a weak and easily exploited woman and can be considered as sexism.

The story above states that movies is a portrayal of everyday events and present phenomena that occur in life. The scriptwriter's use of wild imagination to create a good storyline often combines reality and fiction. A movie has two important elements: intrinsic and extrinsic elements. People usually only focus on the intrinsic element because it is seen more clearly without further interpretation, but there is not so much concern that the extrinsic element also has to be a focus. Extrinsic elements are built from the outside, including moral values, the author's background, and stereotype. Those are the element of the movie that is widely researched in certain fields, including literature, and movies themselves are part of literary works.

Literature is known as a medium that conveys expression. Jago et al. (2011) defined literature as a work that is compensated for the time, concentration, and creativity invested in its reading, rereading, exploration,

analysis, discussion, and interpretation. Literature can also describe the life or background of the author. In creating a work of literature, imagination and creativity are needed in order to produce a work that can arouse charm and be of interest to many people. In the present day, literature is more than just entertainment, it has become a reference for many people to write scientific papers. This is due to the fact that a significant number of literary works address practical concerns and societal stereotypes that have evolved over time.

Literature has always served as a mirror, reflecting the complexities of everyday life and conveying the essence of human existence in a variety of historical periods, cultural contexts, and social settings. This problem can be connected through poem, novels, dramas, and movies. Even though most literary works do not openly depict social issues, due to the ingrained stereotypes of society, the author creates a storyline and a setting in which that issues are present. This is illustrated by the characters' behavior and utterances. Readers are able to go into the depths of inner reflection, the richness of everyday activities, and the larger social circumstances that influence people's lives through the lenses of literature.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested in exploring sexism in the Poor Things movie. In this movie, there are scenes and conversations that can be investigated as being sexist by all the characters targeted to Bella Baxter as the main character. This movie highlighted the phenomenon of sexism that manifested itself against women and its impact

on Bella's daily lives. The movie was set during the Victorian era. Sexism might have happened at that time, and there were people who thought of men as superordinate while women were subordinates as it had already profoundly influenced the societal mindset. Beside that, until this study was written, there were no analyses using the Poor Things movie as an object of study.

B. **Questions and Scopes of the Research**

   1. **Questions of the Research**

      Based on the research focus mentioned above, the writer has structured this study using the following questions:

      a. How is sexism depicted in the character Bella Baxter in the Poor Things movie?

      b. How does sexism impact Bella Baxter in the Poor Things movie?

   2. **Scope of the Research**

      This study is focused on exposing and investigating literary aspects of sexism on the main character, Bella Baxter, in the Poor Things movie. The emphasis centers on the theory of levels of sexism by Cudd and Jones, as well as the ambivalent sexism theory by Glick and Fiske.

C. Objectives and Significance of the Research

1. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this study are as follows, as determined by the research questions:

a. To investigate the sexism depicted in the character Bella Baxter in the Poor Things movie.

b. To examine the impacts of sexism to Bella Baxter in the Poor Things movie.

2. Significance of the Research

The writer hopes that this study will be able to convey its significance to readers. The significance is divided into two aspects: theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this study can hopefully contribute to the literature field, especially in studies related to sexism and gender equality. Additionally, as a reference for the development of further research regarding literature and sexism .

Practically, this study is expected to be able to provide an understanding of how to see forms of sexism, especially in the Poor Things movie. Therefore, it has the potential to enhance the body of knowledge in the field of cinematography, as well as to educate audiences who rely on movies as their primary source of entertainment.

D. Operational Definition

1. Sexism

Sexism is gender discrimination against one of the aggrieved parties, where there is a belief in society that one of them is superior to the other. It is characterized by stereotypes and biases that reinforce conventional gender roles and can be observed in both overt and subtle ways, which can impact the personal experiences, rights, and opportunities.

2. Movie

A movie is a compilation of sound-assisted visuals that tell a story and are presented at a cinema or movie, and have the power to convey emotions through expressions, including experience, ideas, motivation, and confidence.

3. Literature

Literature is an artistic, imaginary creation of enduring fascination that interprets the meanings of life and nature via words of charm and strength, filled with the author's personality.

E. Systematization of the Research

Systematization of the research means showing the well-arranged composition of the study in a clear order. This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which consists of the background of the research, the question and scope of the research, the objective and significance of the research, the operational definition, and

the systematization of the research. The background of the research discussed the underlying reason that made the writer want to research this topic. Then there is the question and scope of the research, which are the basis for the problems that were raised by the writer and the focus of the object of the research. After that, objective and significance of the research, where in this section the writer explained what will be done in this study based on the research question, as well as what the benefits of this study theoretically and practically. Finally, in this chapter, there is an operational definition that defined the important research term key.

The second chapter is a theoretical description that explaines the conceptual of sexism, the conceptual of the movie, and the research of relevance. All of the explanations are the writer's basis for the ground theory that was used to conduct this study. In this chapter, various definitions from experts related to this study are elaborated. Next, this chapter presented relevant research that integrates findings from previous studies. Lastly, the writer outlined the unique characteristics of this study that set it apart from previous research.

The third chapter is the methodology of the research, which provides about the method of the research, the procedure of the research, the technique of the data collection, the technique of the data analysis, and the data source. In the method of the research section, it is established what methods the writer was used to do this study, such as time, place, and kind of research. Then, the procedures of the research are presented, including

how to prepare, implement, and finish this study. The technique of data collection and analysis explained the process of gathering data for research and the process of analyzing the data. At the end of this chapter is the data source, which detailed the source from which this research was taken.

The fourth chapter is the analysis data, which shows data description, analysis data, and interpretation. In this chapter, the writer discussed and explained the objectives of the research. It focused on investigating sexism, interpreting sexist attitudes that appeared from the scenes, and examining the impact of sexism on Bella Baxter in the Poor Things movie as the object of this research. The writer gave a detailed explanation based on the scenes in the movie.

The fifth chapter is a conclusion and a suggestion. This chapter is the part to highlight the new knowledge that has contributed to the field of research, as well as recommendations or improvements for concerns based on the findings of this research. In the conclusion section, the writer shared a summary of the results of the discussion that has been discussed in the fourth chapter. Next, the writer offered a recommendation to the next researcher focus on significant aspects of the previous research and to the society. This last chapter is the final part of the study.