

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are five sub-chapters discussed in this chapter. Among them are the background of the study, statements of the research questions, objectives of the study, significances of the study, and scope and limitations of the study. These five things need to be explained because they can provide important information about this research.

1.1 Background of the Study

The issue of gender inequality generally refers to acts of sexism. Sexism is generally experienced by women and tends to lead to acts of discrimination. Sexism is a condition that has long existed in various circles, carried out by a group of people who do not recognize the existence of gender equality which is still common today.

According to Bates (2014:6), sexism is a dangerous act that often occurs around us, therefore it takes full awareness to avoid it so that we can fight the act of sexism. The act of sexism is often experienced by women in everyday life. This is a patriarchal culture that is strongly attached so that it is considered natural when treating women as second sex. Acts of sexism are not only experienced by women but can also be experienced by men, although until now most acts of sexism occur and are experienced by women.

In various aspects of life, women often experience discrimination so that it is difficult to get the same opportunities and positions as men to achieve equality. So from there, women often experience various problems related to acts of sexism, which are not only experienced by adult women but also can be experienced by various groups regardless of age.

The act of sexism is often experienced by women, which can happen anywhere and anytime, regardless of the physical factor or the age factor of a woman, regardless of whether the woman is a teenager or old who has had children (Bates, 2012). Victims of acts of sexism often prefer to remain silent for a number of reasons, even though it may have long-lasting effects on themselves.

The act of sexism is not something that just happens because of circumstances or momentary desires. This is also driven from various aspects, such as the imbalance of power, where men tend to hold the highest position of power in all aspects. Even in fields dominated by women, men are more likely to be supervisors.

Similar to the explanation above about the act of sexism, it also happens to the female characters in the novel entitled *Women Talking* by Miriam Toews which was published in 2018. The characters in this novel are August Epp, Agata Friesen, Greta Loewen, Ona Friesen, Mejla Loewen, Maritche Loewen, Peters the Bishop and Salome Friesen. The novel discusses the act of sexism, but not the whole story describes the acts of sexism, acts of sexism occur when Bolivian women are in an unconscious state, they often feel excessive headaches, body bruises and scars on their genitals when they wake up. The existence of this incident makes women in Bolivia finally report the incident to the chairman there, but the reports of the women in Bolivia were not believed, and they were instead accused of only making up a story to cover up the act of sexism with a man whose status was not their husband.

One night there was an attack by a Bolivian woman against a man suspected of committing an act of sexism, so the police finally investigated the case and it was true that sexual harassment was found that night. The leaders there ask the female victims in Bolivia to forgive and forget the incident so that the problem of sexism does not spread and make their colony's name bad in the eyes of the community. Women in Bolivia also threatened if they did not do what the leader and the colony said they would be expelled. Cases of acts of sexism by women in Bolivia are still common in the colonies even though the perpetrators have been jailed and given punishment.

Miriam Toews is a well-known novelist, where she is a Canadian writer and grew up in Steinbach, Manitoba, where she has written several popular books and several novels, of which the novel *Women Talking* is the seventh novel she has written. Miriam Toews has won several literary awards, namely: Governor General for Fiction, Libris Award for Fiction Books, Rogers Author Fiction Award and author award Trust Miriam Engel/Timothy Findley. Miriam

toews is known as a writer with a unique ability to come up with heartbreak stories, bringing life's dark moments to life with quick wit.

This novel is published a true story that took place between 2005 and 2009 in a small Mennonite settlement in Bolovia, where female characters in Bolivia experienced sexism by the Mennonite colonists. The influence of sexism and how sexism is experienced and described by female characters in the novel is very interesting to be investigated further. According to Tong (2004:46), sex is a politics, where the relationship between men and women is the paradigm of all power relations. Tong also argues that sex is an oppression of women embedded in a patriarchal system, where patriarchal ideology magnifies biological differences between women and men to get a dominant masculine role so as to get approval for their oppression (Tong, 2004:73).

The author found several previous studies that used the same theory as this research, namely the theory of Sexism. The first research used the theory of Sexism written by Octria Tirafiah with the title "*Sexism In Okky Madrasari's The Year Of The Voiceless*" (2013). In this study, researcher analyzes women's equality in the novel *The Years of the Voiceless*, where researcher used sexism in their research. The main character of this novel is a woman named Marni. Marni struggles to take part in domestic activities and her wider reach makes her fall back and forth against men and rulers who are biologically exploited.

The second research is written by Andra Septiawati with the research title "*Handmaid As The Object Of Sexism in Gilead society*" (2014). In this study, writer analyzes acts of sexism in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* through the female slave character. Where in the novel In this case, female characters are used as objects as female slaves from acts of sexism in Gilead society.

Then, the same research is written by Stella Rose with the tittle "*Black Feminist Spirit Against Racism and Sexism As Reflected In Sula*" (2010), The purpose of this research is to find out sexism in the form of patriarchal values that have made women surrender and always depend in men.

The last research, written by Heriska Ayu Prananing Tyas with the

research title “*Sexism in C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narni*” (2019), in this study the researcher used the theory of sexism related to the female characters in the novel. Where Sexism is used to analyze the character of women because it explains that women are often treated negatively in society differently from men. In the novel *The Chronicles of Narnia*, female characters play a major role in the story, they are not allowed to fight directly in the battle. However, they become supporting figures in battle, such as Lucy who is a healer who heals people who are injured in battle with friendly magic.

Four previous studies used the theory of Sexism to analyze problems contained in data, such as in novels, films, and also in real life today. The writer will also use the same theory that will be used to identify the sexism experienced by the main female character depicted in the novel *Women Talking* by Miriam Toews.

In the previous research, the researcher only focused on the act of sexism, while the novelty in this study, the researcher explains in more detail about sexism, why sexism is experienced by the female characters in the novel, and the writer explains in detail the classification of the distribution of sexism itself. In this study, the writer also explains the impacts experienced by the female characters in the novel with the act of sexism itself.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

1. How is sexism described in the novel “*Women Talking*” by Miriam Toews?
2. What are the effects of sexism experienced by the female characters in the novel “*Women Talking*” by Miriam Toews?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

3. To find out how sexism is described in the novel “*Women Talking*” by Miriam Toews
4. To find out the effect of sexism experienced by the characters in the novel “*Women Talking*” by Miriam Toews

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study expected to provide two advantages, namely theoretical significance and practical significance. The advantage of theoretical significance, the writer hopes that this research can broaden the knowledge and understanding about the problems contained in each novel, especially in the novel *Women Talking* by Miriam Toews. The author uses the theory of feminism to analyze this novel, so that the writer also hopes that readers who reads this thesis can get deeper information about what is meant by radical feminism theory.

As for the practical significance, the author hopes that this research can open the public's insight to be more aware and open-minded that all humans have the same position and rights.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The author of the study uses a woman talking novel entitled *Women Talking* as the main data source. The researchers uses the theory of feminism to analyze the novel *Women Talking*, to find the acts of sexism experienced by the female characters in the novel "*Women Talking*". This research only focuses on conversations and narratives related to the problem.