

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the introduction. It contains five parts that are the background of the study, the statement of the research problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope, and the limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Nowadays, gender issues are the most discussed topic in society. There are many cases of gender issues such as gender inequality. Gender inequality is the difference in function and roles between men and women (Agency, 2016). The society believes that men are superior to women. Men have more power than women. Men have to be strong, so they work hard and show society that they are physically stronger while women are considered gentle creatures. The differences between men and women arise because there is limited space for women in society. Women are considered second class in society and only can follow the decision while men are decision-makers and a leader in many positions. These positions like chairman, government, and judge must be filled by a male. While women do not deserve to be in that position. The view of society of men and women is very different. Women are considered weak, do not need to be highly educated, cannot work outside the home just become a housewife, and cannot have an important role in public or have a high social status. Therefore it causes gender inequality in society.

Gender inequality is a form of discrimination based on sex / gender. The reason is because one sex / gender is considered special from the others. Understanding gender is different from understanding sex. Sex is a biological part of humans that comes from God. This concept of sex differentiates between men and women in terms of body anatomy. This tool is owned by men and women from birth and is attached to them and its function is irreplaceable. While gender is a term

used to define the social differences between men and women. Gender is a system, roles and relationships between men and women which are not differentiated because of biological differences but rather through social, political and economic differences (Juhana, Qalbi, & Arfani, 2021). In other words, gender is the result of social construction created by society such as women being considered weak, soft and emotional, etc. While men are considered strong, rational, etc. This misunderstanding in interpreting gender is what causes differences between men and women. So that gender-based inequality must be eliminated because it is very detrimental to oneself, the social environment and the welfare of the country. Gender equality must be upheld because it is a fundamental right that every individual has, a human right that cannot be contested.

Gender Inequality is often depicted in literary works. Literary work is a work that expresses the feelings, ideas, emotions, or thoughts of the author in the form of writing. Literature is a mirror of life because literature is a type of work of art, creative and imaginative as human expression (Wellek and Warren, 2017). Literature is the result of human works which describe human life through language. There are several forms of literary works such as a poem, short stories, dramas, films, and novels.

In this study, the writer analyzed *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel by Delia Owens. This novel tells about the life struggle of a 6-year-old girl named Kya Clark. She lives in the marsh with her father (Pa), her mother (Ma) and her four siblings. She is a girl who lives on the outskirts of town, in a swamp, and the local people look down on her because she is poor. She was judged, ridiculed, and bullied. Over the years she was nicknamed by the townspeople "dirty", "marsh girl", and "marsh scum". The townspeople also threatened her freedom since she was a child, forced to go to school and adapt to the city lifestyle. Pa has bad characters who were an abusive and drunkard man. Since childhood, she experienced physical violence perpetrated by her own father against her and her mother. Because of this, her mother ran away from home with her siblings. In the course of her life, she was also left by her father alone in a marsh. She is trying to support herself by selling

shellfish so she can get money and can eat. She had difficulty getting a job. The wages for selling shellfish are also very small. This is very different from city residents who can easily find work, have a good position at their job, and get a large salary too. Due to economic difficulties, she never went to school. She only went to school once in her life because her friends made fun of her because she could not read. Living in the swamp makes Kya isolated from outside life. People looked at her strange and like to make fun and bother her because her appearance is different from the others. When she grows up, she met Chase Andrews who was also violent towards Kya and sexually assaulted her. She was accused of murdering a famous young man in his town, Chase Andrews which found dead in the marsh. However, his death made the police confused because no fingerprints or footprints were found on the marshland. Everyone paid attention to Kya because she was in a relationship with him. Then, the police arrested and detained her without any defense and she was sentenced to prison for two years. Eventually, she fights for herself and prove her innocence.

The novel was published in New York in 2018. The writer chooses this novel because the novel becomes number 1 on The New York Times Fiction bestseller of 2019, The New York Times Fiction bestseller of 2020, #1 This Week-Amazon Charts, Indie Book Awards 2020, Page Turner of the Year at British Book Awards 2022 and the book has sold over 15 million copies. Therefore, this novel has been adapted into a film directed by Olivia Newman with the same title in July 2022. Besides that, this novel teaches us patience, a spirit of life, never giving up, and the willingness to learn from the life story of the main character. Moreover, the writer chooses this novel because this novel contains gender inequality issues that are interesting to analyze. After all, this phenomenon still exists in society and makes women look in a lower position than men.

There are several studies using this novel to analyze. The first study is “Kya’s Individuation Process in Delia Owens’s *Where The Crawdads Sing*” written by Fajar Swastika. This research applied Jungian Psychoanalytic Theory and discussed the individuation process of Kya’s character (Swastika, 2021). The

second study is “ Kya’s Struggle Against Violence In Delia Owen’s *Where The Crawdads Sing*” written by Marwah Lailatussyifa. This study applied Johan Galtung’s Concept of violence to examine the kinds of violence experienced by Kya (Lailatussyifa, 2021). The third study is “Nature and Women Empowerment Depicted In The Delia Owen’s *Where The Crawdads Sing*”. This research focuses on the forms of abuse through the female protagonist and the response of patriarchy and nature relation using the Ecofeminism theory by Greta Gaard (Gale, 2021). None of them analyze the novel from the issue of gender inequality from Walby’s theory. “The Awakening” novel focuses on forms of gender inequality and the resistance by the main character applied Walby theory (Krismawati, 2021). Then, in “Dreams Of Trespass” novel analyze Gender Inequality issue using Socialist Feminism Approach from Mandell’s theory (Utomo, 2011).

It can be known that the previous research and the present research have similar issues but applied different theories and different source of data. This research uses Socialist Feminism theory because it is suitable with the issue that the oppression of women is caused by patriarchy and economic aspects. This research will analyze Gender Inequality using Feminist Literary Criticism toward Socialist Feminism by Nancy Mandell to examine the form and the resistance of gender inequality faced by the main character in *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel by Delia Owen.

1.2 Statement of Research Question

Based on the research background above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What kind of gender inequality is experienced by the main character depicted in the *Where The Crawdads Sing* ?
2. How does the main character struggle against gender inequality in *Where The Crawdads Sing* ?

1.3 Objective of The Study

Related to the research question above, the objective of the study is to discover the:

1. To identify the form of gender inequality experienced by the main character in *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel.
2. To describe how the main character against gender inequality in *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel.

1.4 Significance of The Study

This study describes gender inequality in the novel *Where The Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owen. This study has theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this study can enrich the knowledge about the theory of feminism and feminist literary criticism in analyzing literary works, to apply feminist literary criticism theory in uncovering forms of gender inequality against women. Practically, this study gives an understanding to the reader, especially in *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel, increasing the knowledge of the reader of how gender inequality happens in society. Furthermore, it can be useful for the next researchers to develop the studies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is focused on analyzing gender inequality in *Where The Crawdads Sing* novel by using socialist feminism theory. Meanwhile, the study is limited to only analyzing the main character to find the form and the resistance of gender inequality which the data are the character's utterances and the author's narrations.