

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **A. Background of the Study**

Every people in the world have dignity and worth. People should recognize and respect other's human rights. That's how we acknowledge and appreciate their fundamental worth. Human rights are essential rights given to every people, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or other status (Saputri, 2020). Human rights are a set of principles relating to justice and equality. They protect people in making life decision and developing people's full potential as human beings. It is all about the right to life, freedom of discrimination, harassment and other cruel treatments, freedom of religion and speech, equality in education, health, and other social facilities.

Yet, discrimination still occurs in society. One of the most common kinds of discrimination is gender inequality. Gender discrimination, also known as gender inequality, is different or unequal treatment between men and women which occur in many aspects, such as social, political and cultural (Jha & Nagar, 2015). Gender inequality becomes global issue for years because women deserve the same rights as men. It is including in education, health, politics, infrastructure, profession, and others. Gender equality can be reached only when men and women are treated equally in society.

Discrimination based on gender has occurred in many spheres of life, including in the workplace. Gender discrimination in the workplace can take various forms, but it typically refers to an employee or job applicant being treated differently or less favorably because of their gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. These differences include wages, salaries, promotions, involvement, decision-making, and other aspects of treatment between male and female employees (Tiwari et al., 2018). Women received fewer job interviews and offers than males who applied for the same positions (Chang & Milkman, 2020). It is because male applicants are more likely to appear competent and hireable than female applicants. In addition, sexual harassment of female employees, which includes both physical and verbal actions, persists in the workplace.

Gender inequality in the workplace has become one of the most discussed issues in recent years. One of the movements fighting injustice, particularly sexual harassment, is the *Me Too* or *#MeToo* movement. The slogan "Me Too" has a long history dating back to 2006. Tarana Burke, a civil rights activist, adopted it as a support for sexual assault survivors (Fortado, 2018). *Me Too*, as a movement centered on "empowerment through empathy," aims to assist survivors in gaining personal strength and "feeling complete." Burke describes empathy as "the emotion of sharing an experience, of being in the same shoes as another person," (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). Women are able to share their experiences regarding to sexual harassment and abuse through this campaign. The *Me Too* movement helps other people who are experienced sexual harassment that they are not alone.

The *Me Too* Movement is still making headlines in the news and in popular culture. *Bombshell* (2019) is one of several TV series and films that are digging into the issues and impacts of the *Me Too* movement. This film was released in 2019. Jay Roach was the one who directed this film. The film portrays the story of a woman's struggle for gender equality in the workplace.

Nicole Kidman plays Gretchen Carlson, who attempts to expose her CEO, Roger Ailes, as the perpetrator of several cases of sexual harassment. At the end, she sues him in 2016. In the film, women were not only subjected to physical sexual violence in the workplace but also verbal sexism. In total, more than 20 women claimed to have been harassed by Ailes. Then, all of the victims are united to sue him.

In the film, the culture of hatred against women occurs in the workplace. Senior male employees abuse their powerful position to female employees. Women are pressured and frightened into accepting unwelcome sexual approaches by promises of promotion or else, they will lose their job. Ailes' slogan which says "to go ahead, you gotta give a little head," shows how he abuse his power as CEO. It means, when female employees want to be promoted, they have to do whatever Ailes asks them to do. This is when Ailes harassed them in his office.

Gender equality as well as the fight for gender equality are shown in this movie when the female characters strive for justice after being sexually harassed by their CEO. They try so hard to speak up to the public about the mistreatment they get in the workplace. These women work together to make other victims to

come forward about their own experiences in the office. Furthermore, Gretchen Carlson risked her career only she just wanted this behavior to stop. She is never going to be quiet about the issue even it means she will be fired from the office. She, then, files a sexual harassment suit against Ailes.

The movie also explores how women who remain silent about their own experiences of harassment might unknowingly or intentionally contribute to the continuation of the culture by failing to call perpetrators accountable. The reason they never speak about the issue is that they are bound by a non-disclosure agreement that prohibited them to tell anyone about anything negative in the workplace. The movie depicts how difficult it is for a single person to disclose such violations. They frequently fail even with the help of others' support.

The researcher is interested in discussing the movie *Bombshell* for several reasons in this study. Character, theme, and message are all present. The first reason has to do with character. Gretchen Carlson is an outspoken American television journalist who won't keep quiet when something has to be addressed. It can be seen when she sued her CEO, Roger Ailes, for sexual harassment. Another character is Kayla Pospisil. She is a young and ambitious employee, but she is innocent. It can be seen when she has an opportunity to get a job promotion so she comes to Ailes office. She is asked by Ailes to stand up and give a quick spin, then lift her skirt in order to assess her visual appeal for the performance. Even though she is uncomfortable, she is still doing it in the hope that she got the promotion.

The second reason is because the movie's theme is incredibly fascinating. This movie presents the struggle for gender equality in the workplace. It is shown when Gretchen Carlson files a sexual harassment suit against Ailes. She was the first woman to speak up about what is really going on in the office. After that, a lot of women come forward and tell their experiences as well.

The third reason is the messages contained in the movie. The media industry which we know to be a dazzling world turns out to have a dark side. Power abuse, sexism, sexual harassment, and other mistreatment occur in the movie. Women have to fight for justice. The taking down of one of history's most powerful network leaders, Roger Ailes, opened the door for women to express their rights in getting justice. A movie like *Bombshell* is critical in raising awareness of the negative impacts of sexism in the workplace and ensuring that the battle for gender equality continues.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is intended to conduct further research on the *Bombshell* movie directed by Jay Roach. To discuss the problem above, the writer raises it into the form of a thesis entitled **“THE STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY REFLECTED IN *BOMBSHELL* (2019) MOVIE BY JAY ROACH: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE.”**

## **B. Problem Statement**

The following are the research's problem statements:

1. How is the depiction of the struggles for gender equality reflected in *Bombshell* (2019)?
2. Why did Jay Roach raise the theme of the struggle for gender equality in *Bombshell* (2019)?

## **C. Objectives of the Study**

Based on the problem statements above, the research objectives are as follows:

1. To describe the depiction of the struggle for gender equality reflected in *Bombshell* (2019).
2. To know the reasons behind Jay Roach's choice of the struggle for gender equality as a theme in *Bombshell* (2019).

## **D. Significance of the Study**

### 1. Theoretical Significance

The study is expected to develop the body of knowledge to give a contribution, particularly for the literary studies on *Bombshell* (2019) by Jay Roach.

### 2. Practical Significance

The study enriches the writer's understanding of the struggle of the women characters in fighting for gender equality in *Bombshell* (2019) by Jay Roach.