

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **A. Background of The research**

Gender equality is one of the most discussed issues towards the end of the 20th century in the world. Based on Harien (2013), gender is the difference between men and women in roles, functions, rights, responsibilities, and behaviours that are shaped by social values, culture and customs of community groups that can change according to time and local conditions. The term gender was originally used to propose a conceptual framework for thinking about the social segregation of people into different categories based on their presumed biological sex categories and about how this segregation affects social life (Samovar et al., 2016).

Gender is a social construction that distinguishes the identity between men and women in economic, political, social, and cultural terms in family, community and nation life. Gender conceptions are used to determine the position of men and women in the family and society, which include; roles, positions, relationships, and responsibilities. In the development and social dynamics, gender as a social and cultural construction is often used as a reference for specialisation and categorization for the distribution of activities and production activities (Muttaqin, 2010).

Although it has received a lot of attention from various circles in the world, in fact, gender inequality in society is still happening. The differences between men and women that have been constructed socially and culturally have given rise to various gender issues which until now are believed to be detrimental to women, this is because the system of values, norms, labelling/stereotypes, and gender ideology have long been seen as one of the main causes of discrimination. Factors that affect the position and relationship of women with men, or with the environment in the social construction of society. Pilcher & Whelehan (2020) explain that traditionally, for generations, women are placed in a disadvantaged position, which is only

focused on household activities or domestic affairs where there is an assumption that women do not need to go to school or have higher education because in the end will be married and have children and take care of children and husband. This has indirectly been internalised to every generation in society so that it becomes a value or consensus that applies in society so that it places the position of men higher than women.

Gender inequality is a condition of inequality or difference between men and women (Mansour, 2000). Gender inequality if there is discriminatory or different treatment between women and men. This treatment is accepted not based on his wishes so that it is detrimental to one of the sexes. Gender inequality against women occurs in several countries in the world. Gender inequality in the form of restrictions on space is grouped into three ideologies, namely seclusion, exclusion and feminism (Afshar, 1989). Seclusion is an ideology that limits women's space and freedom to interact. Exclusion is an ideology that limits women to work and activities in public spaces, while feminism is a social construction that a good woman is a woman who is polite and obedient (Stemberger, 2008).

In the perspective of feminism, gender injustice is also experienced by many married women. Women must always obey their husband, although basically women have worked all day taking care of the whole house and its contents. Sometimes they also have to take care of their husband when he comes home from work. This is different from the men who only work to earn a living for their families. This issue was also represented in Sam Mendes' 2008 film entitled *Revolutionary Road*.

*Revolutionary Road* is an American romantic drama film. The film is 119 minutes long and was released on January 23, 2008 in the United States. The screenplay for the film was adapted from the novel of the same name by Richard Yates. The film is directed by Sam Mendes and the screenplay is written by Justin Haythe. The film was distributed by Paramount Film Vantage in 2008 with total sales of \$22,877,808. This film also received many positive comments and won various awards such as the Golden Globe

Award, where Kate Winslet became the actress who won the best lead actress award in a drama. Michael Sahonnon was nominated for an academic award for best supporting actor for his role as John Giving and Leonardo DiCaprio received an award for best actor. Sam Mendes also received an award for best director, in the film *Revolutionary Road*.

*Revolutionary Road* tells the story of a couple; Frank Wheeler and April Jonshon. Frank works as a dockworker with a dream to become a cashier, while April wants to become an actress. Frank does not like April's job and dreams of being an actress. He preferred that April just stayed at home and took care of their kids. April and Frank have different opinions about April's job. April said that her job was good and she liked it very much. Meanwhile, Frank had the assumption that working in entertainment was a bad job. April was very upset when Frank said that, because she was not satisfied with her life. She was bored with her daily routine as a housewife and taking care of her children. She thought that it was not an interesting activity. That was her reason for wanting to get a career. Meanwhile, Frank no longer enjoyed his job as a marketer at Knox Business Machine.

At one point where Frank felt bored with his stuck career, April sparks the idea to move to Paris so that their lives will be better. Frank agrees with the idea, he feels happy and starts to work hard. However, their plans fail because April was pregnant with their third child and Frank got a promotion in his office with a higher salary. This made their relationship unharmonious. This is exacerbated by Frank being caught having an affair with one of his co-workers. The conflict escalates when April intends to abort the pregnancy. The two also had an affair. With all the complexity, the story of both ends tragically.

Based on the background above, the author is interested in knowing how April's struggle against gender inequality in the household is, therefore the author conducted a research entitled "*Gender Inequality in Sam Mendes' Revolutionary Road: A Feminist Analysis.*" The author also wants to

examine what the positions of women and men are in a household relationship.

## **B. Problem Statement**

Based on the background of the research above, the formulation of the problem in this research are:

1. What are the main indicators of gender inequality reflected in Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road* based on Feminist Analysis?
2. How is gender inequality depicted in Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road* based on Feminist Analysis?
3. Why did Sam Mendes raise the theme of struggle for gender inequality in *Revolutionary Road*?

## **C. Objectives of the research**

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the objects of this research are:

1. To identify the main indicators of gender inequality reflected in Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road* based on feminist analysis.
2. To describe how gender inequality is depicted in Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road* based on feminist analysis.
3. To reveal the reasons of Sam Mendes in raising the theme of struggle for gender inequality in *Revolutionary Road*.

## **D. Benefits of The research**

The benefits expected from this research are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefits

This research is expected to provide contributions and information for the wider community, especially in literary studies about gender inequality in films.

2. Practical Benefits

This research is expected to make the reader better understand human existence in literary works, especially for English Department students who are interested in the psychological conflicts of main

characters in films using an individual psychological approach. In other words, this research can be a source of comparison for further research.