

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with introductory explanations regarding the research which include the background of the study, the research question, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the research methodology, the clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

What was considered as reality or something real had been an issue for a long time. Constructivism believed that instead of being discovered, reality was invented by human beings (Watzalwick, 1982, cited in Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1984). Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1984) stated that rather than passively observing reality, humans were involved in the construction of meaning that formulated and organized their perception and experience of life. This led to an idea that human's understanding of reality was representation or a re-presentation, not a replica, of what was out there.

Since reality was constructed through language, the work of fiction could be one of the examples of its realization. As explained by Waugh (1984), "If our knowledge of this world is now seen to be mediated through language, then literary fiction (worlds constructed entirely of language) becomes a useful model for learning about the construction of 'reality' itself" (p. 3). Bruner (1991) also noted the importance of language in reality construction by saying that "language and other symbolic systems mediate thought and place their stamp on our representations of reality" (p. 3).

In relation to this, men and women possessed different characteristics or values when it came to constructing reality. Gilligan (1982, cited in Hoffman, 1990) stated that while men valued the system of independence, autonomy, and control, women tended to show a contrasting aspect of values which are relationship and

connection. These characteristics appeared to produce different versions of reality from both genders since they had different focus of value in life.

In literary works, different values that tended to influence the points of view between men and women could be found in multiple narrative perspectives used in contemporary fiction. Koss (2009) stated that “today’s multiple narrative perspective novels are characterized by multiple voices, narrators, points of view, structures, and perspectives” (p. 74). The emerging trend of multiple perspective challenged what he said as the traditional linear, chronological, and single-voiced nature of narrative fiction which is usually delivered from the main character’s first-person point of view or written in third person focusing on the main character (Koss, 2009). Furthermore, Itkonen (2012) explained that fictional text produced a social reality that could only be accessed by the reader through the influence of the perspective he or she was allowed within the narrative since the external consciousness of the reader put him or her in the outsider position. Therefore, this multiple narrative perspective could lead to a different way of reality construction in fiction that would also influence how the reader interpreted the reality in the novel.

*Gone Girl* was a work of fiction exemplifying the use of multiple narrative perspectives. The story was told from two points of view which were Nick Dunne’s and Amy Elliot Dunne’s. The novel was a New York Time Bestseller written by Gillian Flynn and first published in 2012 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson. It had also been adapted for a movie with the same title and was directed by David Fincher. Itzkoff (2012), in a New York Times article, described the novel as “arguably the year’s biggest literary phenomenon”. Thus, it could be said that *Gone Girl* was a popular literary work read by many people worldwide. The complexity of the novel evoked wide aspect of issues to explore and the current study focused on the reality constructed by the male and female central characters. Amy and Nick Dunne were given the position as the first-person narrator which led to two different versions of reality offered in the novel.

*Gone Girl* indicated the difference between men and women in a number of aspects including the way they viewed certain events and issues considered as reality

constructed in the novel. Both Amy and Nick had their own ways of thinking, behaving, and responding to a situation that oftentimes led to conflicts and disagreements between them. Thus, this study focused on these different values between Nick and Amy and how these triggered conflicts which influenced the versions of reality constructed in the novel.

## **1.2 Research Question**

The study was aimed at addressing the following research question:

- How do the male and female central characters construct their versions of reality through conflicts in the novel?

## **1.3 Purposes of the Study**

The study was aimed to examine the conflicts that influenced the male and female central characters, Nick Dunne and Amy Elliot Dunne, in constructing their versions of reality in *Gone Girl* by focusing on the different values held by both characters.

## **1.4 The Scope of Study**

The focus of the current study on how the versions of reality were constructed in the novel was limited around the central male and female characters, Nick Dunne and Amy Elliot Dunne since both were given the position as the narrators in the novel. Other characters might be presented briefly to support the analysis of the central characters and therefore were not included as the focus of attention in the study.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Generally, the result of the study was expected to give a contribution to the critical analysis of prose. In particular, the result of the study was expected to give an insight towards the issue of gender and how it influenced the construction of reality in a popular literary work.

## **1.6 Research Method**

This study was intended particularly to examine the conflicts between the male and female central characters that influenced the construction of reality in the novel. In doing the analysis, the study employed a qualitative descriptive method. Sandelowski (2000) described qualitative descriptive designs as a typically eclectic but reasonable combination of sampling, and data collection, analysis, and re-presentation techniques. Qualitative descriptive study was the method of choice when straight descriptions of phenomena are desired. It offers a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events (Sandelowski, 2000). The qualitative descriptive method was employed by collecting the data from the novel that were considered significant, conducting document analysis, and re-presenting the result of the analysis. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen in this study since it was the most suitable method to serve the purpose of revealing the conflicts in detail and how it related to the construction of reality in the novel.

### **1.6.1 Data Collection**

The data were taken from a novel entitled *Gone Girl* which was written by Gillian Flynn and first published in 2012. In this study, the novel used was the paperback edition published in 2014 by Phoenix. The first step in collecting the data was by doing an intensive close reading.

Then, the most relevant textual evidence was highlighted with regard to some considerations: (1) from whose point of view a conflict was narrated; and (2) the setting in which a particular conflict occurred.

This textual evidence was later on categorized into the table consisting of conflicts based on Bartley, Blanton, and Gilliard's (2005) three aspects of marital relationship: (1) decision making; (2) gender roles attitude; and (3) division of household labor. However, due to the close relationship on the idea of gender role attitude and division of household labor, the current study combined these two aspects into one category which was the attitude towards gender roles and stereotypes.

### **1.6.2 Data Analysis**

The collected data on the conflicts that occurred in the novel was analyzed by focusing on the different values of the male and female central characters that triggered the conflicts particularly in the process of decision-making and their attitude towards gender roles and stereotypes. Later on, this analysis on conflicts was used to reveal how the male and female central characters constructed the versions of reality in the novel.

### **1.6.3 The Clarification of the Key Terms**

In order to avoid any form of misunderstanding, below are the clarifications of terms:

1. Reality construction in fiction

Social construction of reality was a concept that believed knowledge and people's belief of what reality was were socially constructed. It came from the notion that meaning was embedded in society and the interaction between people or groups in a social system created the conception and belief of what reality was (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

2. Multiple narrative perspective

Multiple narrative perspectives was a technique used in fiction characterized by multiple voices, narrators, points of view, structures, and perspectives (Koss, 2009).

3. Marital power in decision-making

Marital power was defined as the ability possessed by one partner to impose his/her will on the other spouse that was manifested particularly towards the ability to make major decisions (Blood & Wolfe 1960 as cited in Mirowsky, 1985).

4. Gender roles attitude

gender role attitude was defined as the different attitude regarding roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women (Fischer & Arnold, 1994).

5. Division of household labor

There were two types of division of household labor which were traditional female-completed tasks and traditional-male completed tasks or, as other researchers defined, low-control and high-control tasks (Bartley et al., 2005)

6. Marital conflicts

Marital conflict was defined as competitions between for power and control of resources between two persons in a marriage through negotiation, bargaining, and conflict management (Sprey 1979 as cited in Bartley et al., 2005).

#### **1.6.4 Organization of the Paper**

This paper will be composed in this following organization:

1. Abstract

This section functions as summary of the paper presenting brief information about the content that is elaborated further in the next sections.

2. Introduction

This chapter deals with background of the study explaining what drives the writer to analyze the chosen topic, the purpose or personal intention of the writer in writing the study, the significance of the study describing what will be the study's contribution in an individual or a society, and presentation of research questions.

3. Literature Review

This part of the study examines the bases of theories (theoretical framework) used in the study and also what other researchers have found in the earlier studies.

4. Methodology

This section presents the methods used in the study and also the details such as: who are involved, where the data are obtained, and how the data are collected.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter deals with the findings when the study or analysis is finished. The findings are analyzed, and finally discussed to answer the research question.

## 6. Conclusion

This section sums up all the information from the chapters and conclude an idea as the result of the analysis. In this section, suggestions for further research are also presented.