

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the research; it consists of the background of the study, the research question and the aim of the study. It also includes the scope and the significance of the study. Moreover, this chapter also clarifies the key terms of the study as well as provides an overview of the research design and procedure.

1.1. Background of the Study

Gender has largely been seen as a problem of and for women (MenEngage cited in Chowdhury & Patnaik, 2010). For instance, women are often portrayed as inferior to men, meaning that women are in a lower position than men, and that women have less power than men (De Beauvoir, 1949; Epstein, 2007; O'Reilly, 2010; Sultana, 2012). Additionally, women have less access to resources than men and have a little chance to make decision. This condition is referred to women's subordination (Chowdhury, Patnaik, 2010; Sultana, 2012; Epstein, 2007).

Women's subordination can be found in literary works, such as films, poetry and novels. *Major League II* (1994), produced by David S. Ward, is one of the films which portray women's subordination. The subordination here refers to a condition where women's position in the society is dominated by men. In this film, women are portrayed as selling their bodies in advancing their careers. Meanwhile, women's subordination depicted in poetry can be seen in Sylvia Plath's poems entitled *The Beekeeper's Daughter* (1960) and *Full Fathom Five* (1958). The subordination in the poems was done by a father to his daughter, who is the speaker of the poems. The father character in *The Beekeeper's Daughter* (1960) imposes his will on his daughter, one of which is forcing his daughter to marry him. Meanwhile, in *Full Fathom Five* (1958), the speaker presents her two contradictory feelings, which are admiration and hate, towards her father. Both of these poems show how the speaker resist and try to end their subordination. Novels, however, become the most common

literary work to portray women's subordination (Fadillah, 2013), and a novel entitled *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) written by Margaret Atwood is one of the most frequently discussed novels that raise this issue. This novel shows that women are subordinated mainly because of their biological factor related to child-bearing. One of the more recent works to address the issue of women's subordination is a novel entitled *Wither* (2011) written by Lauren DeStefano.

Wither is a dystopian novel that tells about a condition where there is an epidemic virus which causes women to have only 20 years of life span and all men with 25 years to live. In order to save human existence, all young women are kidnapped and chosen by the 'Gatherer' or people in a higher position to be a polygamous bride along with other women (DeStefano, 2011). *Wither* was published in 2011. This novel is the first book of *The Chemical Garden* series written by a New York Times bestselling author, Lauren DeStefano. The fact that this novel is recently published gives a possibility to see the picture of women's subordination from the point of view of an author of the present age. The issue of women's subordination in the novel occurs in a dystopian world, which means that even in the future women are still assumed as being subordinated to men.

The women's subordination is also caused by the dystopian world itself, in which the world's downfall forces women to marry men in order to maintain human existence. This condition implies that even though times have changed, the subordination of women persists due to the biological function of women to produce children. All these situations in the novel and the fact that *Wither* is written by a New York Times bestselling author (Fever, 2013) and is recently published have intrigued the researcher to analyze the portrayal of women's subordination in the novel.

This research is expected to contribute to the study of women's subordination in literary works, especially in relation to the genre of dystopian science fiction. Most of the previous studies on the topic analyzed the same work, which is *The*

Handmaid's Tale (1985) by Margaret Atwood. Therefore, the study on *Wither* helps to contribute to the existing literature of the above mentioned genre. Furthermore, the previous studies examined women's subordination by drawing on the theory of radical feminism, which insists that patriarchy is the one that controls and oppresses women (Wang, 2004), and a concept of body politics by Rousseau (1987). This research, however, analyzes the portrayal of women's subordination in a dystopian science fiction novel entitled *Wither* using Juliet Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory.

1.2. Research Questions

This research focuses on answering the following questions:

1. How is women's subordination portrayed in the novel *Wither* (2011)?
2. How is women's subordination in the novel compared to real life?

1.3. Aims of the Study

The research aims to demonstrate the following problems:

1. How women's subordination is portrayed by the author in the first book of *The Chemical Garden Trilogy* entitled *Wither*.
2. How women's subordination in the novel is compared to the real life.

1.4. Scope of the Study

The analysis of the portrayal of women's subordination in *The Chemical Garden Trilogy*, a dystopian novel series written by Lauren DeStefano, is limited to the first book of the series entitled *Wither*.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to contribute to the study of women's subordination in literature, especially in the genre of dystopian science fiction. Additionally, the study

will also give a picture of how women's subordination emerges through a patriarchal system in the society.

1.6. Research Method

The research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach and textual analysis in examining the portrayal of women's subordination in *Wither*. This method is considered suitable since the study deals mainly with descriptions in the analysis. Additionally, this method is appropriate considering that the aim of the study is to describe and interpret the portrayal of women's subordination in a novel.

1.7. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data are collected through several steps, which are close reading of the novel, writing down questions, and taking notes of the relevant data. The data are in the forms of sentences, words or phrases indicating women's subordination in *Wither*. The data are then presented in a table, consisting of five columns, which are event, textual evidence, literary element, social structure, and analysis. The data are analyzed using Mitchell's theory of socialist feminist, which considers four different social structures: (1) production, (2) reproduction, (3) sexuality, and (4) socialization. The descriptions and the analyses of the data are then used to reveal how women's subordination is portrayed in the novel.

1.8. Clarification of Key Terms

1. **Women's Subordination:** Women's subordination refers to the situation where women's position is generally inferior to men. The access to resources for women is less than it is for men. In addition, women are less likely to be a decision maker in the society (Chowdhury, Patnaik, 2010; Sultana, 2012; Epstein, 2007). In line with this, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argue that throughout history, men always have political and social control over women. Women are discriminated and considered powerless, and it induces to the lack of self-esteem and self-confidence of the women (Sultana, 2012).

2. ***Wither***: *Wither* is a dystopian science-fiction novel written by Lauren DeStefano. This novel takes place in Manhattan and Florida after world war three. The war results in America as the only left country. This situation becomes worse when there is a failed genetic experiment which causes women to live until they reach the age of twenty, and men with twenty five as the maximum age (DeStefano, 2011).
3. **Socialist Feminist Theory**: Socialist Feminism is a theory which analyzes women's subordination in four different social structures: production, reproduction, sexuality, and socialization (Mitchell, 1966).

1.9. Organization of the Paper

Chapter I: Introduction

This is an introductory chapter which presents background, aim and scope of the study, research question, significance of the study, research method, data collection and data analysis, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides theoretical frameworks as well as literature reviews as the base of the study.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

This chapter deals with several procedures which are taken in analyzing the data. It includes research design, data collection, data analysis, and data presentation.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the research. The findings and discussion are explained in details by the writer in this chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions

This is the last chapter which provides the conclusion of the research as well as the suggestion for further research.