

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the way the study is conducted. It also deals with the research method, the stages of the research, technique of data collection and data analysis, and subject of the research. They are presented in the following.

3.1 Research Method

The study employs a qualitative method with the aim of observing and analyzing a novel entitled *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994 cited in Creswell 1998:14), qualitative research is:

multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

Taking from the definition above, the qualitative method is chosen in this study because of its capability in understanding the phenomena and involvement in the various empirical materials such as visual texts.

Furthermore, in line with the idea above, Bogdan and Biklen (1992 cited in Ratna 2009) also mention that there are at least five characteristics of qualitative method: a) the research is in a natural setting; b) the researcher is the key instrument in the research as the data collector which involve directly with the

respondent; c) the research is in descriptive and the data is in form of words rather than numbers; d) the process is more important than the outcome; e) the meaning as the main purpose in the research; f) the research tends to be inductive.

Therefore, the qualitative method is the most appropriate approach for the study since all the characteristics mentioned above are employed in this study. It includes the object of the study is in form of words; which is literary work. Then, the researcher is the instrument and the research is in descriptive data in form of written words.

Along with using the qualitative approach, the study also employs a descriptive method. Creswell (1994) argues that the descriptive method of research is to gather information about the present existing condition. The aim of descriptive research is to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current situation of the research. This method is also used to describe the nature of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the causes of particular phenomenon. Thus, descriptive method is considered relevant to this study since it has a purpose to describe the existing phenomenon in the novel *Life in the Fat Lane*.

Finally, the method used in this study is an approach of feminist literary criticism to analyze the novel. According to Goodman (2001 cited in Sofia, 2009:20) that “feminist literary criticism is an academic approach in literary studies which apply feminist theory and thought in analyzing the literary texts”. The model of literary analysis proposed by Showalter called *gynocriticism* is used

in this study as a study “of women as writers provide critics with four models concerning the nature of women’s writing that help answer some of the chief concerns of feminist criticism” (cited in Bressler, 1994;105). The four areas of investigation in this model of literary analysis covers: (1) the presentation of female body image in a text; (2) the language of female; (3) the psychological situations of women and the relationship to the writing process; and (4) the cultural forces around women that put emphasis on how society shape women’s understanding of themselves, the society, and the world around them (Bressler, 1994:109). Therefore, this study only focuses on the presentation of female body image in a text and the cultural forces around women.

3.2. The Stages of the Research

The technique of this research will engage through the following steps:

1. Reading the female images in relation the concept of beauty in the novel entitled *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett.
2. Locating the concept of beauty in relation to body image the novel.
3. Conducting library and internet research to collect and comprehend references which are related to the study.
4. Formulating research questions.
5. Finding the connection between the characters, encounters, and ideas in the novel.
6. Making the table of content analysis which describes the character’s encounters with the other characters, events or ideas in the novel about the

issue occurs in the novel. This table consists of columns named *characters*, *portrayal*, *encounters*, *excerpt*, and *analytical note*.

7. Finding some textual evidences through the table which are related to the research question.
8. Analyzing the data related to feminist literary criticism and feminist issue.
9. Discussing the findings and drawing conclusions.

3.3. Technique of Data Collection

This study uses novel as the source in taken the data in order to answer the proposed research question. The data is taken in the form of textual evidences in the novel by reading page by page. To arrive at this, the writer reads the text thoroughly and carefully for an in-depth analysis. Locating the concept of beauty which are related to the point of view of the characters in portraying their body image are chosen. The issues arouse in the novel then will be categorized and assessed in relation to the study.

3.4. Technique of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the writer frames the analysis on one of the approaches in the feminist literary criticism called *gynocriticism* with particular focuses only on the presentation of female body image in a text and the cultural forces around women. The first things that will be analyzed are the characters and characterization. After that the characters and their encounters with the other characters, ideas or events are analyzed. Those steps are taken in order to obtain

the aim of the study, how women portray themselves in terms of industrial body image.

The way of analyzing the portrayal of women in this study is by revealing their characterizations and their descriptions based on textual evidences found in the novel. This analysis of the novel elements are employed to gain the valid information and to arrive at the comprehensive understanding of the issue in the novel. After analyzing all the textual evidences collected from the novel, the writer analyzes those findings based on the related theories proposed in the previous chapter.

3.5 Subject of the Research

The subject of the research is a young adult novel entitled *Life in the Fat Lane* written by Cherie Bennett. To be more comprehensive in the novel, the synopsis and the author are explained in the following.

3.5.1 The Synopsis

Lara Ardeche, a popular sixteen-year-old student in Nashville high school is chosen as a homecoming queen, just like her mother when she was young. She often wins the beauty pageants since she was in the third grade. Lara always thinks that her family is perfect, because her mother and father are youthful and attractive. She's be friend with a girl named Molly an opposite character to Lara, she is fat, funny, nervy and brave, even though none of her friends like her but with Molly she could be herself.

After crowned as the homecoming queen, weeks later she begins to gain weight rapidly. She is diagnosed with a rare disease called *Axell-Crowne syndrome* which makes her body keeps on gaining weight. Most of her friends abandon her; however, Molly and her boyfriend Jett stay faithful and try to maintain a relationship. But no matter how hard Lara and Jett maintain their relationship, Lara could feel that he doesn't love her the way she was when her body is slender. Finally she makes a decision to break up with him.

Lara's family starts to fall apart. Her father has been having an affair with the younger woman. In order to resolve their problem, they decide to move to Michigan to get a new life. But still the affair continues, moreover Lara is treated cruelly in her new school because of her overweight body. Lara's life turns miserable but it changes after she meets her piano teacher who shares the same interest in music.

From that moment, Lara learns to think differently about her life and tries to deal with her overweight body. Her perception about slenderness body as the key to happiness changes slowly by the time she gets along with her piano teacher; Suzanne. Later on, Suzanne is introducing Lara to the jazz club where she meets a lot of new and different kind of person who do not judge people from their appearances.

3.5.2 The Author

Cherie Bennett was born in 1960 in Buffalo, New York. Before writing novels for teens, Cherie Bennett works as an actress since she was taken a musical theater major in Wayne State University and then the University of Michigan. Nowadays, she is known as the novelist, playwright, newspaper columnist, and television writer.

Some of her famous works are including book series Dawson's Creek (seven original novels), novels for young adults such as *Turn Me On*, *Girls In Love*, *Zink*, *Life In The Fat Lane*, *A Heart Divided*, *Anne Frank & Me*, and *Searching for David's Heart*. Since her focus of writing is around teens and their life, Cherie Bennett achieves some of the awards and nominations for the best book for young adults and one of them is form the American Library in 1999. (http://Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherie_Bennett)