

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Feminist Approach

It has long been recognized that women who participate in literature are systematically left out of the canon of literature in a culture where patriarchal norms predominate. Women have been marginalized, ignored, and denied the freedom to express themselves or do as they like in a society especially when they want producing literary texts. This is not only occurred in society but women are consistently put in a secondary role in literary works. According to Showalter (1985), women have historically been assigned to supporting positions in literary studies as opposed to leading ones. As a result, she separated feminist critique into two categories in her essays: women as readers and women as writers.

The first category of criticism is focused on the women as readers (feminist critique). A woman who reads takes in all of the literature written by men. It examines how men have portrayed women's experiences, circumstances, and characters. It also draws attention to long-standing myths, sexism, and the marginalization of women in literature, both overtly and covertly. The second category focuses on women as writers, which includes women as the creators of textual meaning as well as the backgrounds, subjects, genres, and literary forms of women writers. She created the name "gynocritics" for this second category, which she borrowed from the French "gyno-critique" Showalter (1985). Therefore, rather than modifying masculine models and theories, the goal of gynocritics is to create

a female framework for analysing women's literature and to create new models based on the study of female experience.

In accordance with that, the struggle for women's rights in society is carried out by women, and this is what is called feminism. According to Dinshaw (2007), feminism is defined as today's social movement ideology for the improvement of women that emerged in the 18th century in Western Europe and the United States; at the very least, not all people know that feminism emerged in the fourteenth century in England and is based on the principles of emancipation in secular society. Thus, feminism is a problem of equality of the sexes that frequently arises in a society, as well as a public perception that males are higher in status than women, making them arbitrary to women's rights and dignity. In the mid-18th century, the socio-cultural debate over gender equality fuelled the emergence of ideas and beliefs about feminist ideology. Then, during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, men formed the definition of women as housewives, having a soft attitude and being dutiful to men, which was then repressed by women (Hannam, 2012).

The feminist movement is entirely focused on having to overcome the problems in society that women experience on a daily basis, such as sexual assault, sexual abuse, family violence, economic inequality in the workplace, and so on. Besides, Walters (2005) stated that the feminism movement is becoming more visible, as evidenced by the existence of new feminism-related social organizations in the 1960s and 1970s with the goal of resisting for women's rights, which include social and political rights, including the right to a suitable education and the right

to vote. Moreover, feminists are further divided into several streams, which are summarized by Tong's (2014) in the book entitled "Feminist Thought", including liberal feminism, existentialist feminism, and others. In addition, feminism has recently drawn attention to itself, which is commonly associated with class and racial politics.

This research focuses on issues that occur in society, especially among women. There are so many issues from the view of society that demean women and regard women as weak people. Some people also think that women should not be ranked higher than men. For example, if women have a higher education, society will argue that women should not have a higher education because they will eventually become housewives, so higher education for women is not necessary. Conversely, if men are highly educated, then they are considered great by society. Things like this must be changed in the mindset of society, so that both women and men have the right to get the same rights both in education and work, as well as in their presence in the public and in the eyes of society.

In addition, de Beauvoir (1956) stated that women who are conscious of their independence will have the freedom choose their own route in life. According to de Beauvoir (1956), women can work and achieve full self-actualization, they can be educated, and they do not have to be concerned about their skills when evaluated through the lens of their biological limits. By examining the numerous streams of feminism that can be researched, the researcher studied the shape of women's struggles and the obstacles they face to achieve their existence in public.

2.1.1 Existentialist Feminism

Existentialist feminism is a way of thinking about the existence of women in society or in the world. Existentialist feminism places a strong emphasis on the fact that women can be themselves and stand as equals with men in public. According to Martin (1962), the existentialist idea as a flow that places a focus on people. People are viewed as existing beings who successfully navigate the world as humans with awareness. Women and men can and should experience existence because it gives them the freedom to do whatever makes them happy. Moreover, Kasimbara (2022) stated that only humans are aware of themselves and understand how to comport themselves in public. Existentialist feminism believes that humans are something lofty whose existence is determined by themselves. According to Warnock (1967), the line separating thought and emotion, reason and feeling, will be blurred by existentialism. Additionally, it will typically preach a type of doctrine that, if accepted, will fundamentally affect a person's life. This kind of doctrine cannot simply be accepted or denied intellectually. Existentialism was originally created by John Paul Sartre and subsequently created the thought of Simone de Beauvoir about existentialist feminism.

According to de Beauvoir (1956), the worlds of men and women will always be connected as proof of men's dominance over women. As certain individuals may be aware, women are frequently viewed as objects and lack autonomy due to the entrenched patriarchal system. Certain regulations have been put in place that prohibit women from working in the same capacities as males. There is controversy over this, particularly with regard to the right to self-determination. From the

standpoint of women, there are undoubtedly serious issues with the constraint of being a topic. As mentioned by de Beauvoir (1956), women should be given the same freedom as men to determine their own lives.

According to Tong (2014), de Beauvoir encourages women to live freely and make their own decisions about their future without receiving any support or guidance from others in her conception of existential feminism. In other words, de Beauvoir (1956) encourages women to be their true selves. Women must be allowed to express themselves freely in all societies so that they share the same rights as men and also expresses her existence as a human being (Tong, 2014). Moreover, Kasimbara (2022) stated realizing their independence will enable women to reach their full potential. Women do not even have to be concerned about their biological limitations in order to be intelligent. Even though they can tempt men, women refuse to be used as objects. In addition, women must fight for themselves to be able to show their existence in the public sphere. This is because the cultural construction created and strengthened by the patriarchy through myths and stereotypes about women causes women to become weak and subordinated parties (Kurnianto, 2021).

2.1.2 Women's Struggles to Achieve Existence

The status of women as the second sex makes it difficult for them to express themselves and determine how they will live. The form of resistance from women also involves the type of politics that concerns the voices issued by women. According to de Beauvoir (1956), women's struggles range from their willingness to be open about who they are in public. Women's passion and persistence drive

them to persevere until they attain their goals. Under the patriarchal culture, women are viewed as second-class individuals and are unfairly treated. Everything else in society is biased towards men. As women are regarded as lesser creatures, males believe that they are incapable of performing all of men's tasks (de Beauvoir, 1956). In truth, women can do men's labour, and economic reliance is one element that forces men to work and earn their families.

Women are limited by their circumstances, but once enough of them fight for their rights, they will be free to move around without restriction. Today, women as well as men may provide for their families financially. According to de Beauvoir (1956), it is important to recognize a woman's identity as both a woman and a human being. Despite this, some women continue to believe that they must behave like men in order to be powerful in the public eye. For instance, in order to be regarded seriously by men, women in politics are more inclined to appear confrontational and wear pantsuits. Given the biological distinctions between men and women, de Beauvoir opposes the notion that women must act like men in order to be treated equally or to assume positions of authority. She cautions women, particularly feminists, against becoming engrossed with the abstract notion that women are human beings.

2.1.2.1 Women Get to Work

Women will explicitly state that they are subjects who actively control the course of their own destiny. de Beauvoir (1956) contends that despite how difficult and exhausting women's work may be, it still offers them opportunities that, if not taken advantage of, they will be completely denied. This is especially true if the

work requires women to work two shifts per day: one at the one at home, the other in the factory or office. According to de Beauvoir (1956), by working like men outside the home, women can reclaim their transcendence or attempt to direct the purpose of human life so that they can live meaningfully. This is particularly crucial for women who want to work and advance in their careers and achieve great things in life. In this day and age, most women can work, and many women are also owners or leaders of a company or institute. This shows that by working, women can show themselves as subjects, not objects. Women struggle to support themselves and their families economically by working outside the home. Women who work can break free from the stereotype that they are weak, submissive creatures who only have children and nurse them.

2.1.2.2 Intellectual

Intellectual ability refers to a person's ability to learn new things and adapt to new situations. When you hear the term "intellect" on social media or in direct conversation with others, it refers to someone who is well-informed, communicates clearly, and is regarded as a wonderful person. Someone is stated to be intellectually intelligent and capable of competing. de Beauvoir (1956) stated that it is hard for males to comprehend the vast scope of social discrimination that appears trivial on the surface but has such profound moral and intellectual consequences in women that it appears to emerge from an original nature. A person's intellectual ability varies from birth to birth, but not everyone can predict whether a woman has the same intellectual ability. An individual's capacity to learn and adapt is referred to as their intellectual capacity.

People with more education will be more valuable intellectually. Because they will serve as their children's mentors, high school girls are not hindered by the subordination of women in today's society. According to de Beauvoir (1956), women who are intellectually aware recognize that they are conscious creatures and that they are subjects, not objects. Because they do not want to fail, intelligent women will try everything more diligently. For instance, women who are intellectual speak out rather than merely listen; they display their opinions and oppose men. To achieve triumph and freedom, they make every effort to outperform men. Intellectual women will make every effort to achieve their goals, even though it looks very difficult to reach out, women are attempting to shift by taking significant risks in order to survive and take care of others around them.

2.1.2.3 Women Reject "Liyan," or Otherness

By identifying with the opinions of the dominant group in society, women might deny their otherness. According to de Beauvoir (1956), women must choose to become women rather than be born that way. Beauvoir's opposition to the unequal relationship between men and women, in which males identify as "the one or the self," while women are viewed as objects and created as "the other or the liyan." de Beauvoir (1956) added that each woman must carefully chart her own course in life. Beauvoir highlights the significance of women's living environments and the societal attitudes that shape them. Obstacles pertaining to law, politics, economy, society, and culture do not restrict women's capacity to determine their own destiny inasmuch as they possess the liberty to do so.

The only way for women to become themselves in society is that women must free themselves from their bodies, for instance, choosing to accomplish something with their time instead of wasting it by doing more creative and service-oriented activities de Beauvoir (1956). Certain aspects are associated with women, such as attractiveness, despite the fact that inner or inner beauty is just as important as physical beauty. One of the ways to refuse others is to be yourself and use the time to do other productive things.

2.1.3 The Obstacles to Achieving Existence

In social fields, women's job is to be brave enough to take on men's responsibilities. Women play an important role in family life, and even heavy chores have been done by women. Women encounter numerous barriers to expressing themselves in society and in public places de Beauvoir (1956). The main thing is society's image of women as mere subordinates who will be relegated to the shadows. According to de Beauvoir (1956), woman is sex-absolute sex, no less to males. A woman is described and distinguished in relation to a man rather than to herself; a woman is incidental, inessential rather than essential.

de Beauvoir (1956) stated that it is the form of female subjectivity that allows women to stand alone in this moment. Women who are able to stand alone are able to make a concerted effort to obtain justice. Women are excluded and undervalued as a result of societal division or grouping. Women have enormous potential and capacity to develop interests in common with men, as many women who have become leaders in the midst of society have demonstrated, so that social justice for all people can be effectively carried out in the current day.

2.1.3.1 Perspective from Society

According to de Beauvoir (1956), a woman is doomed to her fate not because of unchangeable psychological rules or biological truths but rather because of the culture in which she lives. In that society perspective, a woman creates herself through her actions; by assuming a submissive role, she chooses to be subservient to men. Furthermore, cultural components have an impact on society's perception of them. From a cultural standpoint, it also makes it difficult for women to express themselves. As mentioned by de Beauvoir (1956), women's problems have always been men's problems. This argument makes women believe that culture will continue to be a barrier to women entering the public realm. Due to a reduction in cultural understanding that idolizes men in the current period, women are able to manifest themselves in society.

According to de Beauvoir (1956), women's independence and economic power are the key components to their liberation from sexism, injustice, and subjugation. In contrast to the idealized image of the perfect woman, women in society face many challenges. Because of the regulations and legislation that were in place at the time, women did not have equal rights and were subjected to abuse and oppression. Women's need for formal education was not valued by society. Women were therefore uncommon in skilled positions requiring a higher or intermediate level of education. Back then, women were typically expected to be housewives or housekeepers. For example, women are not really the primary source of income due to stereotypes in society. Women do not like the shame associated with providing for the family. Therefore, the subject and object conflict end as a

result of this state since women have attained conceptual independence and equality for their families, according to Beauvoir's existentialist feminism theory.

2.1.3.2 Self-Fear of Society's Perspective

Fear is a basic protection mechanism that is triggered by a sensation such as pain or the possibility of danger. People are generally afraid to try new things and do not want to do something that they have already failed at. Fear is caused by a variety of causes, but the two most important ones are those that come from inside and those that come from outside. When a society is formed, an individual connects with the world and the future and attains a meaningful existence. People inside a culture are said to be impacted by the rules and conventions of the society they belong to, rather than being completely determined by their biological makeup (de Beauvoir, 1956). These traditions mold people's fundamental character and are reflected in their fears and wants. In another perspective, customs and cultural standards play a major role in defining the basic characteristics of people within a community.

For example, the fear experienced by women of violence or domination by men. Some members of society think it is normal because women whose biology and status are below men should obey and not argue. Moreover, when women enter public spaces, they face barriers that increase their chances of being discriminated against. Women's perspectives are at odds with the issue of human portrayal, which reveals that women are only shown as supporters. Furthermore, this barrier leads women to feel that the difficult reaction is a reflection of the hurdles that will persist.

For example, consider the conflict in the country of Syria, where women were subjected to violence from 2011 to 2023. Syrian women were sexually exploited by regime army troops and people in aid centres. Aid workers said that women could exchange food and water in exchange for sexual services. According to humanitarian workers who spoke with the BBC, the exploitation was so pervasive that some Syrian women refused to visit relief centers out of concern that others would think they were donating their bodies in exchange for the needs. Women are afraid of society treating them like slaves and objects, which they can trample on because they think women are weak and it is their nature to be treated like that.

2.2 Previous Research

In addition, after discussing the researcher's theory, the researcher provided numerous past studies to back up this research. The first article by Astuti and Kistanto (2021) discovered how Indian women feel male dominance and female oppression and explains the extent to which women reject male dominance as it is portrayed in Preeti Shenoy's novel. The theory employed in this study is existentialist feminism as proposed by Simone de Beauvoir, and the method employed is a descriptive qualitative study. This analysis demonstrates how the story undermines the idea of males dominating women. The hierarchy of men and women is therefore inverted as a result of the novel's destabilization of the binary opposition between males and females.

The second research was studied by Kusumondanu (2021). The aim of this research was to discover the gender discrimination represented in *The Witcher*

novel. This research employs a feminist analysis that draws on the existentialist feminism theory of Simone de Beauvoir (2010). The qualitative technique was the approach taken in this investigation. According to Beauvoir, the results demonstrate Yennefer's battle against gender discrimination in three different ways. They are the intellectual freedom, self-actualization, and freedom of women to be themselves. Yennefer has demonstrated that she is capable of overcoming gender prejudice and achieving her place in society. She has the ability to realize and persuade others to acknowledge her existence.

The third study by Kurnianto (2021) examined some obstacles women face in establishing their own identities as well as the struggles that the women face while working to dispel prevailing stereotypes of women. In this study, the descriptive method and the existentialist feminist theory was used. The study's findings indicate that poverty, patriarchal traditions in community life, and women's ambivalent personalities are significant determinants of the difficulties women face in establishing their own identities. Some of the strategies used by female characters in the novel to establish themselves include improving the standard of higher education, fighting for self-liberation or being themselves, and generating capital.

The fourth research by Kasimbara (2022) studied how the novel depicts women's struggle for existence as a social phenomenon. The data source for this study was Wendy Wasserstein's "Isn't It Romantic?" In this study, data was gathered using Simone Beauvoir's feminist approach to existentialism theory. In this study, the descriptive qualitative approach was used. The analysis of this study

yielded three basic analyses of the novel: independence over women, decision-making authority, and, finally, the same existence as a human being.

The fifth research by Mali (2022), discovered feminist problems and the forms of feminist representation in “*Dilan*” (1990) novel by using feminist representation analysis, which is depicted through a woman who has intelligence. This research used is qualitative method. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the novel contains women's problems that appear in the novel, such as physical violence, teenage love problems, relationships with friends and society, and relationships with parents. The forms of representation of the problems experienced by women include equal rights and obligations, equal power relations, and the absence of discrimination against women.

The sixth research by Sarah et al. (2023) applies Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory to analyse how women are portrayed and exist in the protagonist character of the *The Queen's Gambit's* story. This study used content analysis and note-taking methods. The study's findings include the following: discrimination against women cannot be prevented in order to deny them equal opportunities in the sports world; in the 1950s and 60s, women's participation in chess was usually underestimated; the major character used determination, faith, intelligence, behavior, and expressiveness of defence to describe women's existence. According to this research, women may fight for their rights in sports, particularly chess.

The seventh, Suhadi et al. (2023), it was found that the goal of the study was to challenge the conventional wisdom that views women as cultural commodities whose independence is restricted in Andera Hirata's book. Existential feminism by

Simone De Beauvoir, is the theory that is applied. A qualitative descriptive design and phenomenological approach are employed in the investigation. The study's findings demonstrate how the main character embodies the existential feminist idea by being capable, wise, and responsible. It has been demonstrated by the research that existential feminism, which is summed up in the statement that women are autonomous beings, is still relevant in exploring the marginalization of women.

The similarities between the seven previous studies were that they used the same feminist approach and the same theory, which is existentialist feminism. This present research also used a feminist approach and applied the theory of existentialist feminism. Then, the previous research and the present research use different data sources. The previous research only examined the women's struggle performed by the characters; however, this present research not only examines the women's struggle but also examines the obstacles represented by the female characters to achieving their existence. This present research explores the struggles of women and the obstacles they faced involving factors such as class, race, or societal norms. In addition, it assesses how society and culture became obstacles for women to gain gender equality and recognition of their existence in the 19th century by analysing the novel "Little Women."

2.3 Theoretical Framework

By evaluating the forms of women's struggles and the obstacles via the novel "Little Women," the researcher intends to offer a succinct justification of the feminist method to answering two questions. The concept of women's existence was introduced through Simone de Beauvoir's theory (1956), which can also be

used to identify the challenges that women confront in achieving their existence, as well as the supported branch theory of feminists by Tong (2014).

