

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature can be any written work, especially artistic or intellectual works. Literature is an artistic and imaginative expression of facts that reveal human life and society through the medium of language and has a positive impact on human life (Mursal Esten, 1978: 9). Like the term literature itself, literature is a term used to describe written or spoken content. It covers a wide range of genres, including novels, poetry, drama, nonfiction, and other forms of writing. Based on this description, we can know that a novel is a literary work in the form of prose.

Novels are long narrative prose works that deal with characters, situations, and settings derived from real life (McDonnel, 1983: 713). The word “novel” comes from the Latin word *novelas* which means “novi” which means new. This word was later adopted into English and the term novel was formed. Novel is a prose essay that is longer than a short story and describes a person's life in detail. According to Wicaksono (2017: 68), a novel is a type of literary work in the form of long prose (consisting of at least 40.000 words, more complex than short stories), and more broadly in novels, the author talks about the struggle of life. In addition to the characters discussed in the novel, events and settings are also presented regularly, and the format is longer than other forms of prose fiction.

Novels are based on personal experiences and contain some fictionalized events that exaggerate real experiences to make them more interesting, exciting, and meaningful (Meredith, 1972: xi).

Novels can help their readers to think more critically because indirectly they will face a conflict or problem and learn how to overcome it. And to overcome this, of course they have to read the storyline in a complex way and understand it. Today, reading novels is considered an intellectual, educational, and even ennobling activity. It is recommended as a form of self-development by Oprah Winfrey's television book club, defined as an essential activity for civic culture by the National Endowment of the Arts in the report *Reading at Risk*, and positioned as a route to knowledge in core curriculum-type programs in schools such as Harvard University, Columbia University, and the University of Chicago. Based on that, what researchers want to try to examine is analysis of the feminism characteristic of the main character in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* 1899 as a feminism study.

*The Awakening* is often seen as a case study of 19th-century feminism. One of the main themes of the novel is self-possession, which refers to a woman's right to control her body and identity, also known as bodily autonomy. In the 19th century, first-wave feminists argued that women could only achieve freedom by rejecting male control over their bodies. They specifically advocated for a woman's right to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband, emphasizing that women should have the

right to refuse sex or pregnancy and to own their own bodies, despite societal expectations placed upon them as wives and mothers.

Edna, the main character in *The Awakening*, yearns for this bodily autonomy. Edna relentlessly seeks authority over herself and rejects her husband's treatment of her as an object. Edna regards her as a precious personal possession. *The Awakening* is a realistic novel about the sexual and artistic awakening of Edna, a young wife and mother who abandons her family and eventually commits suicide. *The Awakening* depicts the local setting and culture of Grand Isle, Louisiana, and New Orleans, following a literary style known as regionalism. Regionalism was born out of realism and romanticism and takes into consideration the local customs and culture of a particular environment.

This research focuses on how Edna's character is defined as a feminism character in the story, and how Edna's efforts to deal with gender discrimination and oppression by her husband, Leonce Pontellier and the Creole community. This is very interesting to analyze because this novel tells about the act of ignoring patriarchy and social restrictions on women, efforts to fulfill one's rights and needs, as well as inner thoughts about freedom and self-reliance. And the feminism approach is the most appropriate method to discuss *The Soul of a Woman* by Isabel Allende.

Gender inequality remains a very relevant issue to discuss today, given that gender inequality is still significant in various aspects of social, economic and political life. Although progress has been made in recent

decades, gender inequality is still evident and affects various sectors of society. Discussions on gender inequality are important to understand the challenges and promote more equitable change. An example of current gender inequality is in social and cultural norms. Gender stereotypes and social norms still influence individual opportunities and rights. In some countries, traditional cultural norms limit women's participation in higher education and professional careers. For example, in some parts of South Asia, social norms may limit women's access to education and formal employment.

Feminism is a movement for women's emancipation, advocating for improved position for women and rejecting differences in treatment between men and women (Mary Wollstonecraft in "The Rights of Woman," 1792). The main goal of feminism is to strive for equality and justice for women in all aspects of life, and to create opportunities for women to have equal access to resources traditionally dominated by men. It challenges the patriarchal system that subjugates women and restricts their freedom and autonomy. Feminism seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination and stereotypes, and promote gender equality in all areas of life. Consequently, feminism encompasses a wide range of fields, including the examination of women's history of oppression and methods to overcome "authorial anxiety" by establishing their own literary canon. Feminism is an organized movement that advocates for the rights and interests of women. If women have the same rights as men, it signifies that

women are as free to determine their own destinies as men have always been (Geoff, 2005:61).

## **1.2 Statements of the problems**

1. What is the characterization of the main female character?
2. In what ways the main character experiences gender inequality?
3. How is Edna's attempt to deal with gender discrimination and oppression by her husband, Leonce Pontellier and the Creole community?
4. Why did Edna have an affair and commit suicide?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To describe the characterization of the main female character.
2. To explain the ways the main character experiences gender inequality in the novel.
3. To find out how Edna's efforts are against gender discrimination perpetrated by the people around her.
4. To find out the reason why Edna had an affair and ultimately committed suicide.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study discusses the analysis of the main character, Edna. As stated in the title, Analysis of the Main Character in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) As a Feminism Study. The discussion is limited to how Edna's character is depicted in the story as a feminism character and how Edna's efforts in dealing with gender discrimination perpetrated by her husband and Creole community. The researcher focuses on showing how Edna's feminism character is reflected in the story and shows Edna's gender discrimination in the novel.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to describe the characterization of the main female character in the novel. This study identifies data and shows forms of gender concern for women in a patriarchal system as experienced by Edna in her married life in Kate Cophin's *The Awakening* (1899). The researcher tries to explore what causes gender concerns in the story and how the main female character solves this problem. Furthermore, this research provides the view that women are entitled to the same position as men in social life and invites women to fight for their rights. Women are no longer restricted in private or public spaces, and are entitled to make their own decisions. All human beings, regardless of sex and gender, have the right to develop their personal abilities, pursue careers and make choices without rigid stereotype boundaries about gender roles. By fighting for gender equality,

we can eliminate law enforcement, sexual violence and other crimes based on gender equality.

### **1.6 Approach of the Study**

The research methodology employed in this study is classified as descriptive qualitative. This method involves a thorough examination of real-life situations, objects, or groups of people without manipulating any experimental conditions. The primary aim is to create a detailed and accurate depiction of the subject under study. As per Sugiyono (2019, p. 18), qualitative research methods are based on the philosophy of postpositivism and are utilized to investigate natural object conditions, where the researcher themselves becomes the main instrument in the study. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation within its natural context.

According to Walidin & Tabrani (2015, p. 77), qualitative research is a method used to understand human or social phenomena by creating a comprehensive and complex portrayal that can be described in words. It involves collecting detailed perspectives from informants in a natural setting. Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and typically uses an inductive analysis approach, emphasizing the process and meaning based on the subject's point of view (Fadil, 2020, p. 33).

The descriptive nature of qualitative research means that the research aims to systematically, accurately, and factually describe the

facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena being studied. As stated by Nazir (2014, p. 43), the descriptive research method involves examining the current status of a group of people, an object, a condition, a system of thought, or a class of events with the purpose of systematically, factually, and accurately describing the facts, properties, and relationships between the phenomena under investigation.

In analyzing the novel entitled *The Awakening*, the researcher uses the right approach to analyze the topic, namely the feminism approach. This approach helps researchers to analyze the oppression of women caused by male domination in the private sphere. Specifically, we used Kate Millet's Radical Feminism theory. Kate Millet theorizes that women's subordination to men is socially constructed, not biologically. This theory challenges the notion that inequality between women and men is normal. She was one of the first writers to address the intrusion of institutionalized patriarchy into all aspects of life, including personal roles within the family. This principle became the foundation of radical feminism and can be summarized as "the personal is political". Her best-known work is "*Sexual Politics*", published in 1970 as a follow-up to her doctoral dissertation at Columbia University. She tries to show patriarchy, in all its forms, as a political institution. Millet writes on class, education, psychology, philosophy, relationships, and mythology in the chapter entitled "*Theory of Sexual Politics*". Millet also tries to explain how sexism is internalized and institutionalized. More specifically, she defines



"*intercolonialism*" as the way women internalize their inferiority and subordinate position. In analyzing the novel, the researcher collects data using the method by reading the novel carefully. Researcher read papers and journals as references to obtain data from previous studies. Furthermore, researcher also uses the internet to collect data and information for research. The researcher arranges the data into some information based on its classification and develops the data provided. The researcher then analyzed the data using a feminism perspective, and identified the data based on the problem formulation.

### **1.7 Organization of the Paper**

This research will be organized into 5 chapters, as follows:

- a. Chapter I contains an introduction to the research. It contains the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, and the organization of the paper.
- b. Chapter II contains a synopsis of the novel *The Awakening* (1899) and a biography of Kate Chopin.
- c. Chapter III contains a review of related literature. It contains previous studies, popular culture, the description of the novel and its classification, the intrinsic elements of the novel, general and specific explanations of feminism according to Marry Wollstoncraft.

- d. Chapter IV contains the findings and discussion thoroughly which are the analysis of the object using the theory of feminism.
- e. Chapter V contains the conclusion of the study that has done and the suggestion to the reader and further research