

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains of five main parts. Those are the background of the study, statement of the problems, the objective of the study, the scope of the study, the significant of the study, the approach to the study, and organization of the paper.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Literature might be described as an individual's expression and phenomenon in human life. To reveal 'what literature is' turns into a difficult matter. There are numerous meanings of literature, but it does not have any exact meaning. Lizbeth Goodman in her book titled *Literature and Gender* stated, "Literature can be defined as a body of writing that aims to be creative. It includes poetry, prose, fiction, and drama." (Goodman, 1996). This is also supported by the statement of Dr. Totawad Nagnath Ramrao. He stated that literature is a written communication whether in poetic shape or dramatic or fiction. It always communicates human experiences and employs devices of narrative. (Ramrao, 2016). By his assertion, it can be presumed that literature is not only about a composed work, but it includes many works to assist with interpreting the value of the literature itself.

One of the literature works can use these days is drama. Drama shows were first played in front of many people and now can be enjoyed at any time through cable television shows and online platform such as Netflix, WeTV, and IQIYI.

Drama is exceptionally engaging nowadays. America, the country who releases numerous movies, presently ought to be compete with South Korea who produces many fascinating dramas. Not only romantic genre, but South Korea additionally have feminist, thriller, mystery, horror, action, and law genres. Longenecker and Lee in their journal entitled *The Korean Wave in America: Assessing the Status of K-pop and K-drama between Global and Local*, stated that the popularity of K-drama has become so widespread that it has caught the eye of some major American media corporations. (Longenecker & Lee, 2018). Moreover, a few Korean drama have won awards because got the most elevated worldwide positioning and it makes everyone knows how popular Korean drama. According to Serene Sarah Zachariah in her paper titled *A Feminist Perspective on Korean Drama and Its Influence on the Youth in India*, she stated that, “Indian youth was impacted by these Korean shows.” (Zachariah, 2019). By her statement, it can be concluded that the Indian youth loves seeing Korean drama and it affected in India, the country who has many television ‘soaps’ and drama. Not only in India, but it impacted globally. It is supported by the article titled *Promising Results from the Use of a Korean Drama to Address Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors on School Bullying and Mental Health among Asian American College-Aged Students* from Environmental Research and Public Health, they argue that the global popularity of Korean drama lends itself as a useful social marketing tool to promote social and behavioral health. (2020, p. 3). This indicates that Korean drama is very popular among the world and it has its unique sense. In fact, it lends as a useful literature work.

Korean drama became popular in early 2000 with the best Korean drama named “*Autumn in My Heart* (가을동화)” and “*Full House* (풀하우스)”. These two Korean dramas were accessible on the national television and has a large viewers. Especially for women who love seeing Korean drama which displays many romantic scenes and love how male character treats woman better than in the reality. Romantic and lovable scenes will comfort women as a viewer. Unconsciously they also want to get the same treatment from a man and will start expecting the same feeling as they seen in Korean drama. They expect these kind of things because they have not gotten it in real life. In point of fact, as a result of some dramas—such as *Autumn in My Heart*, *Full House*, *Playful Kiss*, *Boys Over Flowers*, *Princess Hours*, etc.—mostly, women have the same type for their future boyfriend or husband alike in Korean drama because these men know how to love and treat their partner. Thus, some women lower their standard and start chasing men to love them as they seen in some Korean dramas. However, from 2016, Korean drama slowly changes. It is not only contain romantic scenes, but there are many dramas that have genre and scenes who will support and eliminate discriminatory impressions against women. The most drastic changes from characters in Korean drama is that most of the female characters become police officers, entrepreneurs, successful CEOs, doctors, web-hackers, detectives, and much more. The messages contained in the drama from 2016 until now have become more diverse and it will influence viewer especially for women. If people see Korean drama from 2010 until 2015, the female characters have cheerful, soft, and sincere characteristic. Contrasting with Korean drama in the early 2016 until now. These things are shown from the various dramas

that have been aired, such as *Descendants of the Sun*, *While You Were Sleeping*, *Sisyphus*, *Start Up*, *WWW*, *Mr. Sunshine*, *Itaewon Class*, *Hospital Playlist*, *Memorist*, *Awaken*, *The Devil Judge*, *My ID is Gangnam Beauty*, and many other dramas. Those dramas attracting most viewer.

One of the best Korean drama with bold feminist genre is *Itaewon Class* (이태원 클라쓰), directed by Kim Sung-yoon. This drama is adapted from a webtoon by Gwang Jin with the same name. *Itaewon Class* is talking about Park Sae-ro-yi, a main male character, who is ambitious to open a bar-restaurant in Itaewon, a big area in Seoul, South Korea, with the purpose of expanding it into a franchise and defeating CEO Jang's food company Jangga Co. His bar-restaurant named DanBam. Unluckily, Park Se-ro-yi had failed in several trials. He had failed in terms of bar-restaurant opening, marketing, and promotion. He has no customer and he is confused about how to get customer. Until a girl came in his bar-restaurant, offering to be a manager. Her name is Jo Yi-seo or simply called Yi-seo. Yi-seo is a multitalented and intelligent girl with an IQ of 162. She moved from New York to continue her studies in South Korea. She is also famous on social media as a power blogger and social media internet celebrity. Yi-seo is an independent girl. She earns money from being an influencer on social media and she is a typical brave girl, a supportive person, and clever. She has the principle that women can do anything what they want. Women can put off to get married but not with their dreams and what they want to do. She only has her mother by her side but her mother does not want her to be a young manager in DanBam, a small undeveloped restaurant. Her mother does not agree with Yi-seo because she

believes that woman in Yi-seo's age should be study and get the best university after graduated. However, Yi-seo finally be the manager of DanBam bar-restaurant after win argue with her mother.

Her lack of empathy and callous behavior has many people believe she is a sociopath. According to Timothy J. Legg, sociopath is a term used to describe someone who has antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) and people with ASPD cannot understand other's feelings. (J. Legg, 2018). Even though she is a sociopath, Yi-seo does end up caring for her DanBam coworkers.

The writer analyzes the characteristic of Jo Yi-seo, a girl who can make a bar-restaurant into a big company who has several franchises. Therefore, the topic from this research that had been chosen because the writer wants to find out liberal feminism seen through main female character, Jo Yi-seo, in one of the best Korean drama titled *Itaewon Class*. The reason why the writer choses this topic is that *Itaewon Class* Korean drama represents the writer's opinion of being a girl. As a girl, we can do whatever we want, financially independent, speak up anything, build business or company, and we can stand with our own foot. This paper also aims to tell to the reader as a woman about the message contain in *Itaewon Class*.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, these are formulation problems for *Itaewon Class* Korean drama in this research:

- 1) How Jo Yi-seo's struggles to be independent were portrayed in liberal feminism?

2) What challenges did Jo Yi-seo has to face to reach what she wants?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

According to the background of the study, the writer puts these two objectives of the study. The first objective is to portray the main character's struggles to be independent seen from liberal feminism. The second objective is to explain challenges done by the main character to reach what she wants.

The object of this study is the main female character of *Itaewon Class* Korean drama which was directed by Kim Sung-yoon and released on January 30, 2020. *Itaewon Class* Korean drama adapted from a webtoon by Gwang Jin with the same name. *Itaewon Class* can be reflected by a popular place in South Korea, Itaewon, a place that have so many restaurants to go but hard to build a restaurant in there from zero.

When Jo Yi-seo and Park Sae Ro-yi trying to build a bar-restaurant and looking for a way how to get many customers in Itaewon, their competitor—Jangga Company—exerts effort to stop the bar-restaurant, so they will never get the customers in Itaewon. Which means it will make Jangga Company stay in number one in South Korea, especially in Itaewon, as the best bar-restaurant that has many franchises.

Jo Gwang-Jin, an author of *Itaewon Class* webtoon and and also a screenwriter of this drama creates Jo Yi-seo as the main female character who has strong personality and appearance. Jo Yi-seo from her appearance is not like a normal girl in her age. She has two tone hair colors: blonde and black. Her hair is

short and her bangs look strange. Jo Gwang-Jin makes this character look strong to live in that kind of place. It is far from many Korean dramas nowadays that put a girl will be pretty, has black long hair, has good skin, and light skin tone. It is also deliver to the audience, especially for women, that beauty is not only about having a pretty face but also a good attitude and strong principle.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This research focuses on liberal feminism in the Korean drama, *Itaewon Class*, analyzed using the liberal feminist theory to find out Jo Yi-seo's characteristics portrayed in liberal feminism. The author uses liberal feminist theory to focus on that theory and not by other feminist theory.

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

This research was written to provide one of the feminist theories using liberal feminist theory uses in Korean drama. The researcher hope that this research can contribute generously to the analysis of liberal feminism, especially for researchers, fellow students, and other researchers. This allows researchers to apply their insights to the liberal analysis of feminism, written to help friends enrich their experience, and the researchers also hope that the results of this research can inspire future researchers to direct further research.

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

The writer will use liberal feminism approach based on Betty Friedan. She stated that women cannot live their dream, which wants to be more than a wife or a mother. Unfortunately, they have to give up those kind of dreams. According to

Kristina Wolff in *Liberal Feminism, The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, “Liberal feminism is one of the earliest forms of feminism, stating that women’s secondary status in society is based on unequal opportunities and segregation from men” (Wolff, 2007). From her statement exemplify that women should be equal with men.

This research applied the liberal feminism approach to deal with the main character Jo Yi-seo that she can face the struggles and challenges as a woman to be independent. Even though she is a woman, Jo Yi-seo can achieve her goals and fulfill her dreams. This approach is truly suitable for this research because the focus of this research and it discusses about liberal feminism portrayed in *Itaewon Class* Korean drama.

To collect the data, the writer uses qualitative study. In collecting data, the writer uses some steps as follows:

1. Watching *Itaewon Class* Korean Drama
2. Analyzes the main female character in the drama and the challenges she has to face
3. Analyzes the main female’s struggles using liberal feminist theory