

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The persistence of patriarchy has shaped women's lives across generations, dictating rigid roles within family, society, and culture. From the late 19th century to the present day, women have continually struggled to claim autonomy and redefine their identities beyond the constraints of traditional expectations. Betty Friedan, refers to this confinement as *the problem that has no name*, describing the silent dissatisfaction women experienced when their worth was confined to domesticity and servitude to male authority (Friedan, 1997:57). This issue, though articulated decades ago, remains relevant in contemporary feminism movements such as #MeToo, which exposes systemic gender-based violence and power imbalances in workplaces, politics, and cultural institutions worldwide. Harvard International Review, states feminism movement underscores the continuity of women's struggles against structures that perpetuate inequality and highlight the urgency of examining how literature reflects and critiques these systemic oppressions (Kundu, 2024).

Literature has long served as a mirror to societal realities, capturing the tensions between individual desires and social constraints. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* stands as a landmark text in feminist literature, portraying the main character, Edna Pontellier, as a woman caught between societal expectations of marriage and motherhood and her awakening sense of individuality and sexual

freedom. At the turn of the century, women in America were subject to rigid patriarchal codes that valued them primarily as wives and mothers, with little room for personal or professional fulfilment (Tong & Botts, 2024:14). Edna's journey exemplifies the conflict between these imposed roles and the pursuit of self-definition, making her story a poignant case for examining the intersection of gender, identity, and resistance.

The decision of the writer to analyse *The Awakening* lies in its enduring relevance to both historical and modern contexts of feminist resistance. Edna's confrontation with patriarchy mirrors contemporary struggles where women continually renegotiate their agency in environments that attempt to silence or control them. By applying feminist frameworks, particularly Friedan's critique of liberal feminism, this research situates Edna's experience not only as a narrative of individual emancipation but also as a broader commentary on structural inequalities that persist across eras and cultures.

Therefore, the researcher investigates two interconnected aspects: the causal mechanisms of patriarchy that shape Edna's reality and the mechanisms of the resistances she faces against the patriarchy. Employing Betty Friedan's liberal feminist critique as the primary analytical tool, this study aims to deepen the understanding of women's resistances within patriarchal societies. In doing so, it underscores *The Awakening* not only as a historical artifact of early feminist thought but also as a timeless narrative that continues to challenge readers to confront the subtle yet pervasive forms of oppression that shape women's lives.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the background discussed above, the study will address the following questions:

1. What are the causal mechanisms of patriarchy does Edna Pontellier face in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*?
2. How does the mechanism of Edna Pontellier's resistance against patriarchy in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In response to the research problems, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify and categorize the various causal mechanisms of patriarchy that Edna Pontellier encounters in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.
2. To describe the mechanisms of Edna Pontellier's resistances against the patriarchy in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the portrayal of Edna Pontellier's resistant against patriarchy in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. The analysis is limited to exploring the intrinsic aspect, character and characterization, setting, conflict, and analyzing the main issues using Betty Friedan's Liberal Feminism theory. This study examines how Edna's journey reflects the realities of patriarchal oppression and the mechanisms of her resistance.

1.5 Previous Studies

Previous studies are the review of existing literature provides a foundation for this study, highlighting previous analyses of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and related feminist themes. These works establish a context for the current research.

The first study is a journal article entitled *Edna Pontellier's endeavours as the main character in Kate Chopin's The Awakening in the nineteenth-century liberal feminism* (2021), written by Devi Hellystia. It is analysed the struggle of Edna Pontellier faced liberal feminism era. The results of this study show Edna's struggles to pursue her desires through Mill and Taylor's 19th-century liberal feminism theory. She wanted to get the same political rights, economic opportunities, and education that men get.

The second study that is an undergraduate thesis entitled *Understanding Life and Death Meaning through the Character of Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's The Awakening* (2023), The writer is Elin Eprilin Fitriani Miela Putri. Investigated the character development of Edna's and also changes the point of view of life and death of Edna's character. Its used psychological approach, the results of the study concluded that the main character, Edna Pontellier's personality has changed and developed throughout the story. The development of Edna's character in story is also causing her decision to end her life.

The Third, Afifah et al. (2025), journal article entitled *the struggle of women's character against patriarchal tradition in Queen Charlotte by Tom Verica*. examine women's resistance in *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story* through intersectional feminist theory by Kimberle Crenshaw. Their study reveals

how race, class, and gender intersect to shape women's negotiations of power and autonomy in a patriarchal monarchy.

The fourth, Zahra (2024), undergraduate thesis entitled *Female Characters' Struggle Against Patriarchy in Meg Elison's The Book of Flora*, applies Walby's theory of patriarchy to analyse multiple layers of oppression in a dystopian setting. Her findings highlight how women resist systemic control by creating spaces for agency and identity.

The difference between the previous studies and this study is multifaceted. Firstly, while existing analyses of *The Awakening* have employed liberal feminist theory by John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill (Hellystia, 2021) and psychological theory (Putri, 2023) frameworks, none have specifically applied Betty Friedan's liberal feminist critique. Secondly, studies that do engage with patriarchal theory, such as those by Afifah et al. (2025) and Zahra (2024), examine different literary contexts and thus do not address the specific societal structures within Chopin's novel. This study offers a unique contribution by using Friedan's distinct theoretical lens to present a focused analysis of the causal mechanisms of systemic oppression and the mechanism of resistance in *The Awakening*.

1.6 Writing Organization

This thesis is structured into four main chapters. Each chapter is designed to guide the reader through the study, from the initial problem to the final conclusions, followed by a list of references.

1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter establishes the foundation for the research. It presents the background of the study, research problems, states the objectives, reviews previous studies, and delineates the scope of the study.

2. CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHODS

This chapter details the conceptual and analytical tools used in this thesis. It explains the relevant theories that inform the analysis and describes the specific methods employed to examine the novel.

3. CHAPTER III: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the core findings of the research. It examines character, conflict, and setting as intrinsic elements and defines Friedan's Liberal Feminism theory breaks down into two parts: the causal mechanisms of patriarchy and Edna's mechanisms of resistance.

4. CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the analysis of the Chapter three by the writer.

REFERENCES

This compiles the sources cited and consulted throughout the thesis is provided at the end of the document with APA 7 style.