

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As social beings, people inevitably need and depend on each other in daily life, regardless of whether they share the same or different sexes. Biologically, sex is categorized into two types: female and male. Sex refers to the biological differences determined either biologically or by divine decree, making it a permanent or universal trait. Over time, the term “gender” was introduced by sociologists to clarify the distinctions between women and men, highlighting that these differences are shaped by cultural or social construction. One of the key figures who discussed issues related to gender discrimination is Simone de Beauvoir, a French feminist who explores the social constructions that define femininity. According to Beauvoir, women’s identity is largely shaped by societal circumstances rather than solely by inherent biological disparities between men and women (1949:293). To become a woman is an absolute necessity tied to their identity as someone who must embody femininity, which is a gender perception initially socially constructed by humans. However, society reflects significant differences between the two genders regarding gender roles, which some feminists view as discrimination. The society is organized in a manner that benefits men and disadvantages women, leading to gender discrimination. The existence of gender discrimination is indisputable since men and women rely on one another throughout their lifetimes.

With the development of time, society has come to value men’s position over women. It is believed that men are less emotional but more logical and rational than

women, and because of this reason, they should be regarded with greater respect. Things like these cause some women to experience the feelings of injustice in various aspects of life, such as in education, employment, and within the household, where women are perceived as being secondary creatures to men in both public and private spheres. It leads to a situation where each man occupies a dominant position while each woman occupies a subordinate one. According to Beauvoir, men constantly try to oppress women by enforcing the norms they have created, making women dependent on them and in turn more prone to male domination which leads to the loss of their freedom and creates oppression (1949:77). The domination of men is common throughout the global community, despite major developments in the democratic, political, economic, and social aspects of life. It is a societal structure in which men rule, oppress, and exploit women in numerous ways.

In addition to gender discrimination over women's rights and voices in daily existence, men act as if what they did is natural and appropriate for women to feel an overwhelming sense of control; they isolate, take over, humiliate, degrade, monitor, gaslight, and create an environment of confusion, contradiction, and tremendous threat. Men do not mistreat women because society teaches them it is acceptable, they do it because society tells them that they are entitled to power. As in several previous generations, gender views are influenced by customs and culture reinforcing society to believe that men's positions are superior to women. Therefore, it arouses gender discrimination in society.

The phenomena of gender discrimination are also reflected in literary works since literary works reflect reality in social life. One of the literary works that

reveals about gender discrimination is a short story collection entitled *Life and Other Shortcomings* by Corie Adjmi. Corie Adjmi is the best-selling, award-winning American author of the short stories collection *Life and Other Shortcomings*. The rapid amount of gender discrimination that causes women to struggle in many areas has influenced numerous authors to narrate the circumstances in a literary work, such as a short story. Short story is a brief work of prose fiction that is shorter than a novel (Abrams, 2013:364). A short story can be anything between 1,000 and 20,000 words in contemporary fiction. Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings* consists of twelve short stories in the collection and the characters are linked between them. The writer of this research thesis focuses on six short stories from the book, it narrates actual women's difficulties over men in daily existence and depicts the situation women find themselves in for hopes, dreams, and wishes in a patriarchal society. The story centers on the female characters; Callie, Willow, Iris, and June, who face discrimination as women in their daily lives. Callie is one of the strong female protagonists who is married to a dominant man named Dylan. Callie is depicted as a mother and wife who must fulfill all the traditional criteria of a woman. Growing up in a patriarchal family, her father enforced the belief that "the husband works and the wife must handle all household matters." Callie has a close group of friends called "The Sixers", including Dana, Marisa, Peter, Eric, and Dylan, and they often gather at a restaurant in New York City. She also has a childhood friend, Willow, who lived next door to her in New Orleans. Other female characters related to Callie include Lori, a friend of The Sixers, and June, Lori's sister. There are also

characters not associated with Callie, such as Iris, a housewife married to Morris, a devout Jewish man. Being a wife and mother causes the female characters to encounter difficulties that are sometimes belittled by men simply because they are women. The discrimination experienced by the female characters in each short story is depicted through different backgrounds, which helps the readers better understand the challenging situations women face.

The phenomena of gender discrimination are not new. It is crucial to be aware that the consequences of excessive power imbalance where men hold dominant positions over women in various aspects of life can affect someone's life. Society needs to understand that male dominance in any situation can be detrimental to inferior individuals because men sometimes believe that they must be superior in the form of positions in the family, career, and marriage. The topic of gender discrimination is important to be discussed since it can aid a lot in raising awareness of the issue of patriarchal society. Related to this research thesis, the writer will analyze the cause, the types, and the effect of gender discrimination on female characters based on Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the causes of gender discrimination that the female characters experienced in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*?
2. What are the types of gender discrimination that the female characters experienced in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*?
3. What are the effects of gender discrimination that the female characters experienced in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*?

1.3 Purpose of the Research

1. To analyze the causes of gender discrimination experienced by the female characters in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*.
2. To analyze the types of gender discrimination experienced by the female characters in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*.
3. To analyze the effects of gender discrimination towards the female characters in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*.

1.4 Scope of the Research

The scope of this research thesis includes the intrinsic elements such as the character, the characterization, and the conflict in the story. The extrinsic elements in this research thesis include the causes, types, and effects of gender discrimination with the concept of patriarchal society, violence against women, and the sociological and psychological impacts as reflected in Corie Adjmi's *Life and Other Shortcomings*. Therefore, gender discrimination, driven by patriarchal society and societal norms, manifests in numerous forms including stereotypes against women and violence against women, with significant sociological and psychological impacts.

1.5 Previous Studies

The writer has not found any previous studies that have the similar object to the research thesis because *Life and Other Shortcomings* by Corie Adjmi is relatively new and is a collection of short stories, that not many people have analyzed it.