

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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

Women have been fighting for equality up until this point for a very long time. The feminist movement has made equal treatment of men and women in every aspect of life almost mainstream. Feminism is commonly used to refer to “all those who seek, no matter on what grounds, to end women’s subordination” (Jaggar, 1983:5). The goal to end that subordination of women is also referred to as gender equality. The United Nations (UN) defines gender equality as giving men and women the same opportunities, rights, and responsibilities. Equality does not imply that men and women will become the same; rather, it means that women’s and men’s opportunities, rights, and responsibilities will not depend on their gender, whether they are born male or female.

The history of the feminist movement is extensive. Malinowska (2020:2–6) asserts that cultural critics categorize the development of modern feminism into four distinct waves. Between the early 1800s and the early 20th century, the first wave developed. This movement has its roots in social movements that voiced displeasure with women's restricted access to employment, education, property, reproduction, marriage, and social agency. The second wave, which focused on women's work and family environments, started in the early 1960s and lasted until the late 1980s. It posed

concerns regarding women's sexuality and gender roles. Utilizing the advantages of technological advancement, the third wave emerged with the advent of the internet at the start of the 1990s. It highlights the prospects brought about by women's contributions to the development of technology and the rise of cyberspace. The fourth wave of feminism emerged in the 2010s. It demonstrates interest in fundamental feminist ideals and emphasizes how crucial women's participation in media democracy is in helping to overcome class barriers and take full advantage of the accessibility afforded by internet technologies.

Among lots of scholars who have participated in the growth of feminist movements, Simone de Beauvoir is one of the most influential figures. In her book titled *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir talks about how men are always viewed as the self or the subject in society, whereas women are always perceived as the other or the object. It makes an argument for gender equality, stating that men and women are either the same or different. She discovers that it is unfair and dishonest to use sexual distinctions as justification for women's subordination. It is implied that women are subordinate because of their lower status, restricted access to resources, and lack of decision-making authority.

Here, the writer will analyze Joseph Kosinski's latest movie, *Top Gun: Maverick* which was released in 2022. It presents the sequel to Tony Scott's 1986 movie *Top Gun*. The narrative centers on Maverick, a thirty-year veteran of the Navy who is now confronting his past by leading the *Top Gun* graduates on a crucial mission to stop the

establishment of an illegal uranium enrichment factory. The film began to depict the acceptance of female characters in the military, specifically, because of the appearance of a woman pilot character named Natasha Trace who goes by the call sign Phoenix.

Because women from all social groups are now usually permitted to participate in public life, the writer is drawn to write about the theme of women's equality. In addition, the writer becomes increasingly interested in the movie, particularly because of the military background. It demonstrates that, despite their smaller number than that of men, women are now welcome to exist in the military. Furthermore, in the first movie, *Top Gun* (1986), women are still viewed as men's sexual objects whose function is to satisfy their desires. However, in *Top Gun: Maverick* (2022), Phoenix is portrayed very differently. She is not viewed as a stereotypical woman who should fulfill the demands of society to be a good wife and housekeeper but as a pilot.

In the production notes, Kosinski also observes that there is no female pilot in the cockpit. "Because there weren't any female fighter pilots in the middle of the 1980s, but the culture began to change in the late 1980s and early 1990s." In 1993, the US Armed Forces lifted the ban on combat. A few decades later, women began to pursue pilot careers in the same manner as males. There is now less of a gender gap between men and women because "female pilot" is now simply referred to as "pilot." Phoenix's role in the movie is hailed as a ground-breaking effort to represent women in the military cinematic representation.

The writer breaks down the discussion of equality into three main sections: first, by using the feminist film concept to look deeper into Phoenix's intrinsic characteristics; second, by using Simone de Beauvoir's feminist literary concept to explore further into the extrinsic elements; and third, by looking for connections between the two viewpoints. The writer describes Phoenix as the feminist equalizer in the military film *Top Gun: Maverick* using the qualitative method. The author hopes that both theoretical and practical benefits will result from the research presented in this undergraduate thesis. In theory, it will incorporate feminist literary theory into the film from a cinematic viewpoint, and practically, the film may be viewed as an amusement or a pleasure to watch.

## **1.2. Research Question**

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulates the problems of the study as stated below:

1. How is Phoenix characterized as a pilot in *Top Gun: Maverick* movie?
2. How is Phoenix characterized as a feminist in *Top Gun: Maverick* movie?
3. How is Phoenix's characterization as a pilot and as a feminist related to each other in *Top Gun: Maverick* movie?

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Based on the problems stated, the researcher formulates the objective in conducting this research as mentioned below:

1. To identify the characterization of Phoenix as a pilot in *Top Gun: Maverick* movie.
2. To examine the characterization of Phoenix as a feminist in *Top Gun: Maverick* movie.
3. To determine if Phoenix's characterization has represented gender equality in *Top Gun: Maverick* movie.

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

This study will have a narrower emphasis to produce a more effective analysis. Its main point is Natasha "Phoenix" Trace, a character from the *Top Gun: Maverick* movie. Character, characterization, and setting are the primary intrinsic features that will be used to explain the analyzed figure's characterization in regard to the feminist film concept. In addition to her inherent qualities as a pilot, Phoenix will be demonstrated to be a feminist through the use of feminism as the extrinsic aspect of the study. Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory will be applied in this instance. According to Simone de Beauvoir's perspective, women are viewed as the other or objects in society, whilst men can be seen as the self or subjects. There are some strategies that Beauvoir's feminism implied, mainly women can work, they can be intellectuals, they can bring about social

change in society or choose to make their own decisions, and they can reject their otherness by identifying with the dominant group in society. The relation between the two aspects will determine whether or not Phoenix has achieved gender equality with men and the representation of Phoenix as a feminist equalizer in the movie.

### **1.5. Review of Previous Studies**

After looking into several sources, some prior research will be noted here. "The Empire Cannot Die: Propaganda and Immortality in *Top Gun: Maverick*" by Donato Loia (2022) is the first initial work. Due to empires' enduring inability to cede their dominance, the research examined how missionary metaphors and languages were used in the film. Given its propaganda-heavy subject matter, the film illustrates how an empire might fall if it did not believe in the concept of eternal youth. The writing conveys the burden of the American empire's damnation, immortality, or delusion of forever (Loia, 2022).

"Semiotics of *Top Gun: Maverick* Film as an Inspiration for Indonesia to Rise from the Covid-19 Pandemic" by Yuniar et al. (2023) is the second previous study that still refers to the same movie. To communicate the filmmaker's messages to the viewers, it places a strong emphasis on a semiotic analysis of *Top Gun: Maverick* as an expressive art study. The development of leadership values and moral messages in the film demonstrate the significance of the spirit of war against an enemy and are viewed as an inspiration for recovering from the COVID-19 condition in Indonesia after a structured analysis of the characterization, scenario, soundtrack, and cinematography.

The third previous study that the researcher found is titled “American Dream Portrayed in Maverick as the Main Character in *Top Gun: Maverick* (2022)” by Sukmajati (2023). This research defines how Maverick as the main character in the movie represents the value of the American dream through the intrinsic aspects, characteristics, and how he achieves it. The American Dream values that can be pictured in Maverick’s character are hard-working and individualism and because of it, Maverick has become a better person by fulfilling his dream.

Lastly, the fourth previous study is judging the reality of the air power or Navy in the United States and the depiction of it in Hollywood movies. Taking *Top Gun: Maverick* as the greatest example, “Hollywood and Airpower: Myths and Realities” by Hamourtziadou and Jackson (2023) examines how narratives on state powers are constructed and propagated through a grandeur and glorious image, while it usually conceals the reality of its weakness, decline, and risk-free wars. It is found that the portrayal of aerial combat depicted in *Top Gun: Maverick* is indeed glamorous and ideal only for cinematic enjoyment. In the real war, it is dark and less than accurate to be referred to as a state and power narrative.

The study that the writer will write is different from the topic of the several studies that have been noted. This study will explore the representation of women or gender equality portrayed by a woman character from the movie. It also shows the representation of women in the military world which has not existed in some previous studies mentioned.

## **1.6. Method**

### **1.6.1. Data and Sources of Data**

Data become crucial to scientific research since they contain all the details on the research subjects. Primary and secondary data are two categories of the actual research data. Original records and objects referring to the immediate results of an experience or event are known as primary data (Lune and Berg, 2017:161). The primary data will outline the information and data that must be processed, evaluated, and obtained to meet the study's objective. Additionally, there exists secondary data. The data used to support the primary data's conclusion is known as secondary data. These are textual works or materials made by other people that are connected to a particular study issue or topic of interest. Secondary data are passed down and will serve as the study's framework.

The data that will be shown and described in this analysis are also divided into two main sources, namely primary sources and secondary sources. The primary data are the movie *Top Gun: Maverick* which was released in 2022. Image, visualization, and script will be used to reveal the findings about gender equality that are shown through Phoenix's character in the movie. Meanwhile, the additional resources or secondary data that the researcher used in this writing were from theses, articles, papers, books, and websites that are related to the movie or the topic to support the findings.

### 1.6.2. Data Collection Method

The qualitative research method is the method of choice for this research. Cited from Lune and Berg (2017:12) qualitative research refers to the meanings, notions, descriptions, traits, illustrations, symbols, and depictions of things. It properly seeks answers by examining various social settings and the groups or individuals who inhabit these settings. The interpretations that society makes of things and occurrences are based on qualities. A thing's what, how, when, where, and why, as well as its essence and ambiance, are referred to as its quality. Qualitative research frequently uses words, pictures, and descriptions to evaluate an object's quality. Therefore, to determine Phoenix's representation of gender equality, a qualitative study was undertaken using the feminist theory.

The researcher also employs close reading and note-taking strategies in analyzing the data. Close reading entails reading carefully to ascertain what the text expresses directly and to derive logical conclusions from it. On the other hand, taking notes is done as a method for gathering knowledge from various platforms and sources by summarizing the material and relieving the mind of needing to remember everything. Other than close reading and note-taking, the transcription process is also done. Transcription refers to the process by which audio is converted into written text or transformed the audio data into readable text-based data.

The information is gathered through a variety of methods, chiefly by intensely watching the film *Top Gun: Maverick* (2022). The next phase is to choose the

conversation and scene that best illustrate equality through close reading, and then the final step is to use the note-taking technique and transcription process to record the information that has been gathered and identified.

### **1.6.3. Method of Approach**

The writer's method of approach is an objective one that identifies text in isolation. This method can be used to explain the narrative components of the discovery as it regarded text as an object in itself. The objective approach relies on solitary analyses of the text as cited in Abrams "Objective orientation regards the work of art in isolation from all the external points, analyses it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its intrinsic relations" (1953:26). When a literary work's, including movie, internal instruments—such as its story, characters, thought, and language—work cohesively or in harmony, it is viewed as an abomination in and of itself that operates independently and follows its own set of rules.

Furthermore, the analysis of the extrinsic elements will use the feminist approach. The feminist perspective describes how women have had to fight for equality with men since, in the late 20th century, social norms and domestic legislation only permitted women to obey males and forbade them from living as they pleased. Thus, women are mostly underestimated and treated as 'other' in society. Here, Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory's intention or aim will be discussed.

## **1.7. Organization of the Study**

The writing of this study will be divided into four sections, mainly introduction, theoretical frameworks, discussion, and conclusion.

### Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter includes the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, scope of the study, previous studies, method of the study, and lastly organization of the study.

### Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter will include all of the theories that will be used in the discussion section. The intrinsic and the extrinsic theories will be explained here.

### Chapter 3 Discussion

Here is the main chapter that will review all of the analysis found by the writer. The intrinsic and extrinsic of the movie will be served here.

### Chapter 4 Conclusion

This chapter is the summary of the previous chapters.

### References