

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Film is a vital medium within mass communication that significantly influences public perceptions. Throughout history, films are produced based on specific realities, showcasing a wide variety of narratives that reflect societal issues. They communicate messages effectively through both verbal and non-verbal forms, enabling audiences to gain fresh perspectives on various themes and interpret societal values. This capability of media to represent ideas in distinct ways is essential. As McQuail (2005:32) points out, film embodies a long-standing tradition of entertainment, presenting stories, shows, music, drama, humor, and specialized inventions for the enjoyment of the public.

Little Women is a classic literary work written by Louisa May Alcott, first published in 1868. The novel tells the story of the lives of four sisters: Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March, who grow up in mid-19th century America, a period marked by strong patriarchal values. In this context, Alcott explores the dynamics of power and gender identity, where women are often placed in subordinate positions. The latest adaptation of the novel, the film *Little Women*, releases on December 25, 2019, and is directed by Greta Gerwig. Gerwig adds depth to the original story by incorporating modern elements, ensuring that the relevance of the themes resonates with contemporary

audiences.

From a hegemony perspective, *Little Women* sharply critiques the social norms that dominate society at that time. Patriarchal hegemony reflects the expectations and aspirations society has for women, who are bound to domestic roles and marriage obligations. The character Jo March, portrayed by Saoirse Ronan in the film, becomes a symbol of resistance against traditional gender norms. Jo aspires to be a writer, a dream that contradicts societal expectations that require her to marry and become a housewife. Through Jo's character, the film illustrates how women can challenge and oppose the hegemony that places them in powerless positions.

Each character in *Little Women* has a unique way of resisting and navigating the existing power structures around them. For instance, Meg March, played by Emma Watson, initially becomes enamored with a lavish lifestyle and social status. However, as the story progresses, Meg develops a deeper understanding of what love and happiness truly mean, choosing to value sincere relationships over the pursuit of material wealth. On the other hand, Amy March, portrayed by Florence Pugh, uses her intelligence and creative skills to navigate social expectations while remaining committed to her ambition of becoming an artist, even when she is often underestimated.

The film also successfully depicts the changing societal views on women's roles, especially toward the end of the 19th century. Although the main characters live in a rigid patriarchal society, they find and create space for themselves to explore their aspirations and dreams. This creates a rich and

complex narrative, highlighting how processes of resistance can occur within oppressive power contexts.

Thus, *Little Women* is not merely a story about the lives of supportive sisters but also a profound exploration of how individuals can resist the limitations imposed by those in power. Gerwig successfully brings these themes to life with sharpness and relevance, making *Little Women* a work that not only reminisces about the past but also invites audiences to reflect on ongoing issues of gender and power that still exist today.

In the film *Little Women*, there is a pattern of relationships between those who hold power and those who do not, both across different genders and within the same gender. This issue reflects complex power dynamics that are worth exploring further. Therefore, the researcher analyzes the film using Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which helps to understand how power and dominance are formed and maintained within social and cultural contexts, providing deep insights into the interactions among the characters in the film and how they negotiate with the existing power structures.

1.2 Limitations of the Problem

This research analyzes the film *Little Women* (2019) as the main material object. It specifically focuses on the practices of hegemony experienced and enacted by all characters, particularly the main characters, and examines how societal norms and power structures influence their identities and aspirations.

1.3 Research Questions

The main focus of this research is to examine hegemony analysis. As a result, this research addresses the following questions:

1. How are characters and characterization of the film *Little Women*?
2. How do hegemony and counter-hegemony occur in the movie?

1.4 Research Objectives

The goal of this research can be summarized as follows:

1. Analyze the elements of characterization in *Little Women* to understand character development techniques and their relationship to the main theme. Explain how the main characters reflect the social and moral values of the era.
2. Identify patriarchal, cultural and economic representations of hegemony in the film's narrative and explore the counter-hegemonic strategies used by female characters to challenge dominant norms. Assess how this power conflicts shape the dynamics of the story.