

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

The patriarchal structure has served as a shield in society. An umbrella that is designated to protect men, who belong to a particular sex class. For men, patriarchy is beneficial to take care of their needs in legitimate fields like social, political, law, and economical fields and to make their goals come to a realization; for men to rule, conquer and dominate the world. To fulfill their legitimate requirements in the social, political, legal, and economic spheres as well as to achieve their goals, men benefit from patriarchy. While males have worked to preserve the system that shields them, another sex group has been oppressed since the system has never been in their favor. It is none other than the women, the females.

Male dominance is a political system (Dworkin, 1993) that men rule and women are required to follow. According to Irigaray (1985a, 1985b) and Cixous & Clement (1986), phallogocentric as a modern patriarchal society that centers around male dominance exclude women, leaving them powerless in shaping the culture and excluding them from legitimate areas such as social, politic and economic (Wesely, 2002). Given the current male-dominated system, it is obvious that many women—both inside and outside of the women’s movement—have gone through gruesome ordeals and are subject to harsh conditions as a result of their gender. Somehow, these feelings are communal for women as a group rather than an individual condition. For

that reason, it is easier for women to be the target of oppression and exploitation in male-dominated society.

For instance, the fairytale that is shown on television or depicted through bedtime story might be used as a tool of propaganda to oppress women when they were girls. The charming prince would always be the rational, critical, and powerful one since they rescue the princesses from the storm of life, but the princesses would have qualities like emotional, nurturing, and weakness (Dworkin, 1974). These depictions of men and women in fairytale is to bind women into practicing their role in the male-dominated society; submission. As we grew older, those fairytales turn into a gruesome ordeal that we call the world of erotica. In erotica, we are introduced to the world of the sex trade industry; the possessing women and how it performs the hatred towards women.

In a phallic society where men owned power, they were entitled to have everything, including sex. Whether they will use it with physical strength, name-calling, or terrorizing they will do it as long as it makes women submit (Dworkin, 1979). As the result, women who works in sex trade industry continue to face oppression since they aren't permitted to acquire or even possess control, power, or even self-respect because each of those qualities is associated with manhood (Dworkin, 1974). This industry puts women at the very bottom of the food chain. Considering their poverty, women sell their bodies or their sex turn to men for support.

In sex trading, money is used as a tool of male power. Through sex trading, patriarchal culture plays a role that forbids women to be rich. When women are

rich and powerful, it signifies that they are independent of men (Dworkin, 1993). The power of money in the sex trade industry is to bind women into poverty so they could lean on men and remind women of their place (p. 4).

Wesely (2002) applied Irigaray and Cixous & Clements feminist perspective in the sex industry because of how the phallic society treated women; as sexual commodities; therefore, they objectified and sexualized their bodies to reclaim authority. However, it is still a hopeless attempt on acquiring authority because the only way for women to gain power is to cater to the male gaze and capitalize on men. Apart from that, it is also a form of exploitation disguised as empowerment for men to subjugate women for them to *freely* use their bodies as a tool of objectification. It proves Dworkin's (1974) theory: the way women acquire power by extending roles as sex objects is a flawed premise. It has only made women more vulnerable to exploitation because it does not fight the patriarchal culture but instead agrees with it.

In a phallic society, exploitation and submission of women can happen at any time, like how it happened to Suzie Samuels, the main character of the novel *My Bare Lady* (2019) written by Piper Sheldon. This novel tells a story about Suzie, a woman in her late twenties who worked as a stripper at the strip club owned by a motorcycle club.

Given the male-dominated society, her job forced her to cater to heterosexual men. As a stripper, Suzie might have control over her own body when and how she will show it to her customers during her performance on stage. However, she

is also vulnerable when it comes to the possession of her own body because her occupation is centered on male chauvinism.

Suzie is sexually objectified both within and outside of her workplace. Her strip club boss always claimed she was safe and protected; however, she was constantly subjected to sexist remarks, name calling, violence assault, battery, and even attempted rape. She was almost got into trafficking, implying that what her boss said was simply deceit hidden in fantasy so he could continue to exploit her for money.

Radical feminist theory explained that in that situation, women are once again the necessary victim and the eternal object, and the prisoner in search of a usable identity as a woman. For that reason, this study will analyze the male dominance and also female exploitation that happened to Suzie in her journey as a stripper using radical feminism theory to prove that when a woman catered to men, she is not and will not be liberated until she left and or destroy the society that hurts them and makes them as a prisoner.

### **1.2. Limitation of the Problem**

The scope of this study is limited on analyzing the male dominance and female exploitation in *My Bare Lady* (2019) by using radical feminist theory.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

Based on the research background and limitations of this study, there come two problems to be analyzed that are followed:

1. How is male dominance portrayed in the story?

2. What kind of treatments are exposed to the main character that is categorized as female exploitation?

#### 1.4. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research aim to answer the two following problems in regard to the research questions:

1. Reveal the portrayal of male dominance in the story.
2. Analyze the treatments that are exposed to the main character that is categorized as female exploitation.

