

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The term women support women is often associated with the relationship between fellow women. Women will be sensitive to the problems that occur and supported by their people. Therefore, many women's empowerment institutions were created to support fellow women, for example, the *Lembaga Pemberdayaan Perempuan* (Women's Empowerment Institute), the *Komisi Nasional Anti-Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan* (National Commission on Violence against Women). The duty of this institution is to ensure that women are supported and empowered, must go hand in hand, not bring each other down, foster a sense of mutual reinforcement, and show empathy and generosity towards fellow women.

On the other hand, women have a jealous nature. It is said that because they are thirsty for affection, attention, praise, and do not like when other women have something more than themselves. This is what makes women involved in disputes and often compete with other women. They do not like it when other women are more beautiful, smart, successful, and happy than them.

This statement is supported by Nova's (2018) explanation, that through experiencing, viewing, or reading, women are used to perceiving narratives of hostile situations among their own people in order to get men's attention. According to Elizabeth in Kartajaya and Mahatristi (2010), women are more competitive with one another than men. Women constantly beat others and often feel threatened by other women, whether in social circles, work, or where a man is involved.

Rivalry is a condition where there is a relationship between opposition, hostility, to fights. However, the rivalry is not always negative. In certain contexts, rivalry can push one to be the best. Rivalry can be understood as an effort to show the superiority of each. As a result, those involved in the rivalry will try to do better than competitors. As is the case with Mike Krzyzewski's saying, great competition does not have to be built on hatred but on respect for excellence.

In line with the statement above, the researcher will discuss the rivalry of women in the novel *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. This novel tells the story of two best friends named Elena and Lila. The beginning of the story opens with Lila missing without a trace. This prompts Elena to remember their friendship, she narrates how their friendship is born through competition and rivalry. Elena admires Lila's persistent, challenging, fearless, and enigmatic nature. Lila can not be moved by worldly things like discipline. She also admires Lila's dark hair and dark eyes that sparkle more than her blonde hair and blue eyes. At the same time, Lila also feels a sense of rivalry towards Elena. Lila is uncomfortable and afraid that someone else will outshine her. This is a depiction of Elena and Lina's friendship, which is a rivalry. This will be discussed further in this study.

There are two reasons why the researcher discusses the novel *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. First, this novel explores female friendship and rivalry. This discussion relates to the current situation among women. Not infrequently they gossip, compete, and even bring down fellow women. In this novel, Elena and Lila's rivalry is a positive rivalry, and compete academically. Second, this novel gives a lot of moral messages. Among them is poverty must be changed by oneself. An unyielding will can change one's fate. This is illustrated by the life story of Elena

and Lila, who comes from a poor family in Naples, Italy. Owing to their persistence and intelligence, they can change their destiny and become successful.

From all these explanations, the problem of this research focuses on women's rivalry in the novel *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the problem, this research focuses on women's rivalry in the novel *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. There are two problem formulations raised in this study, namely:

1. What are the contents of women's rivalry depicted in the novel?
2. What are the factors affecting women's rivalry in the novel?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the statement of the problem above, there are two objectives of this study. They are

1. To show the contents of women's rivalry in the novel.
2. To explain the factors affecting women's rivalry in the novel.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

To limit the area of study, the purpose formulated for this study is to describe women's rivalry in the novel *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. The researcher uses the theory of women's rivalry put forward by several experts such as Shackelford (2021), Campbell (2004), Bleske-Rechek and Lighthall (2010), and so on. Thus, the researcher hopes that this theory is useful for explaining social conflicts that occur in women, namely women's rivalry. In Chapter IV, the researcher will discuss the contents of women's rivalry and the factors affecting it. These contents

include attractiveness, youth and beauty, physical appearance, and fidelity. Other topics that are not related to the research problem will not be included in the research.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research not only provides practical significance but also theoretical ones. Therefore, the significance of this research is divided into two parts, namely:

- a. Practically, the results of this study provide additional knowledge about women's competition. Also, this research is useful for the researcher as a mandatory requirement to graduate as a *Sarjana Sastra*.
- b. Theoretically, for the researcher and readers, this research can add insight into social problems, especially women's rivalry. This is also expected to be a reference for future researchers who have the same discussion, namely women rivalry.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Sociology of Literature**

Literature in his work is always open. It is willing to accept anything and with any understanding to interpret it. According to Suhariyadi (2014: 26), literature is multidisciplinary, which means that literary theory can be used as a basis for understanding in any field. It can be a basis for thinking from the perspective of sociology, psychology, politics, communication, economics, linguistics, philosophy, journalism, to the theory of religious interpretation. Literature reflects and expresses life in an even more ambiguous way.

Kuntowijoyo in Faruk (1999) states that the function of literature (literary work) as a verbal symbol has a function as a way to understand, communicate, and create. The object of literature itself is the reality of people's lives. Indonesian literary works are an object of the reality of Indonesian lives. If an Indonesian literary work is in the form of a historical event, then Indonesian literary work can (1) try to translate that event into an imaginary language with the aim of understanding historical events according to the level of the author's knowledge; (2) literary works can be used as a means for authors to convey thoughts, feelings, and responses regarding a historical event; (3) literary works can be in the form of re-creating an event according to the knowledge and imagination of the author.

Whereas, Swingewood (1972 in Faruk, 1999) explains that sociology is a scientific and objective study of humans in society, the study of social institutions and processes. Suwardi (2011: 8-9) states that the sociology of literature is a literary approach from the social side. This is a science that utilizes social factors as a literary

builder. Social factors are prioritized to examine literary works. He continued that the sociology of literature is clearly an interdisciplinary science, that pays attention to aesthetic facts and human facts. Literature as an aesthetic fact will reveal the ins and outs of human life. Human life itself is packaged in a fictional context. It is the interweaving of literature and people that is often of interest in understanding the sociology of literature. The sociology of literature as a method that understands human beings through imaginative facts requires a solid paradigm.

Ian Watt (in Golman L., 1981) suggests three kinds of approaches to the sociology of literature, namely (1) the author's social context, (2) literature as a mirror of society, and (3) what society the author aims at.

Literature and sociology both deal with humans in society and their efforts to adapt. This adaptation process is used by the writer as the subject of a literary work. So it can be concluded that literature and sociology are closely related because literature can never be separated from social problems. then the study of the sociology of literature is an alternative method to discuss this relationship.

## **2.2 Women Rivalry**

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, rivalry means conflict; hostility; and competition. Thompson (2001: 557) states that rivalry is a state of two people or groups involved in a lasting competitive relationship. Rivalry is the spirit of "fighting each other" between two competing parties. The relationship itself can also be called "rivalry or competition", and each participant or party is a rival to the other. A person's main rival can be called an archrival.

In this study, the objects and subjects of rivalry are women. Women in the psychic or gender context are defined as traits that are attached to a person to be

feminine. Women in a physical sense are one of the sexes and are characterized by reproductive organs in the form of the uterus, ovum, and breasts so that women can get pregnant, give birth and breastfeed (Roazah, 2020: 11).

Women are gentle creatures but have the strongest will. They will do whatever feels right. Women can also be referred to as the lowest self-esteem human beings. They often feel insecure about themselves and compare themselves with other women. Therefore, in social phenomena in society, fights, disputes, and so on often occur among women. The rivalry between women is obvious. As stated by Elizabeth G in Agustina (2018) women are very competitive with each other. Much more than men. Women are constantly trying to outdo each other and they often feel threatened by other women-wether it is in the workplace, in the social environment, or where a man is concerned). Laidler and Hunt (2001: 656-678) mention that women are more judgmental about the dignity of other women than their male counterparts. Women spend a lot of energy 'bitch-ing' or casting doubt on others' reputations.

Most women prefer to be praised, considered the best, the most hits, the most trendy, the most beautiful, the smartest, the most caring, and most others that make them fly. Women are reluctant to compete with the existence of other women, especially those who have signs that are superior to them. Behind being together with their friends, some women do not sincerely support one another, sometimes looking for gaps in friends to be able to find out weaknesses (Agustina, 2018).

According to Bleske-Rechek and Lighthall (2010: 83), female friendships are time-consuming and emotionally draining. Women assume that their female friends make them feel bad about themselves and compete for the attention of desirable potential romantic partners. Tesser in Bleske-Rechek and Lighthall (2010: 84), states

that individuals feel threatened by having friends who perform better than them on characteristics that are important to their feelings. Therefore friends who are more attractive than these individuals can create a negative contrast to women's perceptions of themselves and force them to assert themselves more.

Benenson (2013: 2) states that there are five competitive strategies carried out by women with other women: (i) avoiding interference competition, (ii) disguising competition, (iii) competing openly only if they have a high rank in society, (iv) enforce equality among female peers and (v) use social exclusion. Girls apply this strategy to their same-sex peers starting in childhood.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that women feel competitive with someone they consider to have more attractiveness such as beauty, success, wealth, fame, and social background. The rivalry between women is a way to cover up anxiety and fear of the advantages of other women.

### **2.2.1 The Content of Women's Rivalry**

Women highly value personal qualities such as attractiveness, beauty, intelligence, sense of humor, social background, etc. Therefore, the researcher will discuss the content of women's competition, and this will be discussed in the subchapter below.

#### **a. Attractiveness**

Bleske-Rechek and Lighthall (2010: 83), the same level of physical attractiveness between female friends is one of the factors underlying female rivalry and friendship. One of the reasons for disagreement is the existence of similar physical attractions and similarities in other dimensions. Fisher and Cox in



Shackleford (2021: 3048) women compete through their attractiveness, whether it is through self-promotion of their own appearance, or degrading the appearance of a rival. Self-promotion aims to get women a partner who is kind, intelligent, and loving.

#### **b. Youth and Beauty**

A young and beautiful appearance is something that women want to maintain and they will compete with each other to achieve it. Women value physical attractiveness, and this is closely related to age. Facial features that reflect youth include shiny hair, unwrinkled skin, large eyes, a small nose, and full lips. Historically, women have used many ways to maintain their youth, such as the use of lead, mercury, lemon juice, egg whites, milk, vinegar, kohl, and dyes to enhance their facial features. Today, women wear make-up designed to correct asymmetry, signal sexuality, and mimic youth (Campbell, 2004: 19).

#### **c. Physical Appearance (body)**

Women compete through physical appearance to meet the criteria of men and to find partners. Most women like a body shape that is a slim waist and medium bust. However, this depends on the culture of the woman. Women use bras, corsets, and surgery to "normalize" perceived size anomalies and to exaggerate visibly narrow waists (Campbell, 2004: 20).

#### **d. Fidelity (sexual reputation)**

This relates to the reputation of women in society. Fidelity provides an opportunity for a woman to get a desired long-term partner. The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior; a woman's past willingness to engage in casual sex

is information that may have considerable weight in determining a partner (Campbell, 2004: 20).

**e. Similarity of interests and values**

This is related to similarity in behavior and appearance. Other tendencies are similar in age, education level, family background, income, religious views, political views and activities they prefer (Bleske-Rechek and Lighthall, 2010: 83).

**2.2.2 The Factors Affecting Woman's Rivalry**

According to Agustina (2018), four factors affect women's competition, namely:

**a. Competing for the hearts of men**

It is like both women and men to look better in the eyes of the opposite sex. However, the problems and efforts to attract the attention of the opposite sex are mostly done by women. Women perceive getting compliments from guys as a source of strength, value, achievement, and identity, and so invite girls to attack or compete with other girls for that compliment.

**b. Lack of attention**

The way women attract the attention of others can be done by prioritizing appearance. Women are more concerned with appearance than men who are more what it is. Women have a higher need for affection (need attention) than men. The need for attention and worry about how others will perceive him is enormous. Therefore women try to look perfect and when they feel there is something more than them that is more capable of attracting the attention of others, they will immediately feel unrivaled.

**c. Lack of confidence**

The desire to look more in everything, in every way has been done without noticing that everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. Actually it is natural for everyone to want to look better than others. However, if we already know our qualities, love ourselves, and believe in every ability we have, then excessive competition will not occur.

**d. Less grateful**

When we are able to be grateful for what we get, then whatever the result will be delicious. The process will not be heavy, and competition will not be the main focus in achieving what you want. In life, competition is normal. Even when we were born into this world, we have gone through various competitions. But in living life, incidentally, women are synonymous with gentleness, and affection, let's support each other for good not compete and bring each other down for the sake of self-reputation.