

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A.1 Background of the Research

The Diary of Ma Yan is a non-fiction autobiographical book by Ma Yan and Pierre Haski, first published in 2002. It reveals the hopes of a 13-year-old girl in China. She suffers the hardships of poverty; however, she has the determination to continue her education. Ma Yan has two younger brothers and must end her school because their parents prioritize the boys' education. Ma Yan yearns for an education, and eventually, her mother recognizes this and wants to do something for her.

According to one critic, the book includes a Chinese schoolgirl's ideas and observations, as well as explanatory inserts from the book's creator, photographer, and journalist Pierre Haski. Ma Yan and her family reside in Ningxia, a drought-stricken region considered uninhabitable by the Chinese government. Three million people live there, whether it's uninhabitable or not. The only way out is via knowledge. Ma Yan's enormous pressure to excel in school, as well as her family's poverty, is vividly documented on every page. (Streeter, 2005).

The researcher has one relevant previous research study that supports the research. The research was conducted by Tiana (2015) entitled *An Analysis of Characterization in the Diary of Ma Yan*. This study examined Ma Yan, the main character, and her parents to better understand the

characterization technique using figurative language toward them, which was based on Albertine Minderop's theory, and how the characterization method may help construct the topic of the autobiographical book. According to the findings, Ma Yan is a sensitive, enthusiastic, and hard worker. Moreover, she used the terms "sweat and blood" to depict her parents' hard labor. Furthermore, the autobiographical novel *The Diary of Ma Yan* discusses the struggle to survive in the face of adversity. This study only focuses on finding the characterization method through the figurative language of the main character. However, the study about finding women's condition in rural China in the *Diary of Ma Yan*, the way Ma Yan's struggle for education, and the result of Ma Yan's struggle for education, analyzed and criticized using the liberal feminism theory, has not been conducted.

Education for women is such an important thing nowadays. Women are free to pursue their education as high as they can. Women who have degrees look smart and dignified. Despite this, there is still an opinion that women should not study at too high a level for several reasons. Such as, It will be difficult to find men who do not feel inferior to their educations, unnecessary because after becoming a wife and mother, women must stay at home to do household chores and take care of the children.

Those reasons shaped by entrenched patriarchal beliefs, combined with an economic issue or poverty, are becoming the cause why women cannot get an education is getting worse. In a relatively poor area of the

country, many daughters are unable to go to school. In a specific case, parents prioritize their son's education. The daughter must sacrifice herself to either help her parents with domestic work or getting married. Parents are not capable of providing the same educational rights for both their sons and daughters.

This research aims to reveal the actions of two main female characters, Ma Yan and her mother, when they are struggling for education. Since society at that time thought that boys are more deserved to get an education during financial problems. Ma Yan does not want to give up, and her mother fights for her. A form of protest, Ma Yan expresses her dreams to continue her education through a letter to her mother. Ma Yan's words become a way to fight back. Her mother realizes how important education is for her daughter. She finds ways to support her learning by working as fa cai harvester. Both Ma Yan and her mother fight for education, but in different ways: Ma Yan writes and studies hard, while her mother tries to change their reality by challenging traditions and poverty.

The grand theory that will be used to analyze the topic is liberal feminism by Mary Wollstonecraft. The supporting theories are feminism by Betty Friedan. Both are pursuing equality between men and women. Friedan saw education as the key to wide women's horizons and encouraging all those women blinded by patriarchal thoughts to improve their roles as mothers.

A.2 Problem of the Research

As stated in the research background, the purpose of this study is to answer the following question:

How does *The Diary of Ma Yan* represent the issue of women's education seen from the feminist point of view?

A.3. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are to answer the above-stated research questions and to reveal the representation of *The Diary of Ma Yan* to the issue of women's education from a feminist point of view.

A.4 Significance of the Research

There are two significances of this research. Those are explained theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research is expected to give a positive contribution to the development of the theory in literature, especially in the study of feminism. In addition, the research can assist the readers to understand and apply the theory.

Practically, the research is hoped to result in such new information, knowledge, and support for the readers concerning the study and analysis of liberal feminism in the diary, and the research is expected to serve as an additional source for those who are interested in doing similar research.

A.5 Limitations of the Research

Regarding the problems, this research will reveal the representation of *The Diary of Ma Yan* to the issue of women's education from a feminist point of view. The researcher will focus on two lead female characters in the diary, Ma Yan and her mother. To get a deep analysis, it will apply liberal feminism theory.

A.6 Definition of Key Terms

To clarify the key terms used in this research, some definitions are put forward:

1. *The Diary of Ma Yan*

The Diary of Ma Yan is a non-fiction autobiographical book. Ma Yan, the primary character, is a teenage girl around thirteen years old. She is the oldest child in her family. She resides in Ningxia village, northwest China. Her mother gives the diary to Pierre Haski, a journalist who visits Ningxia. Then he printed an extract from Ma Yan's diary in a French newspaper. Afterward, he turned the diary into a book, which has been translated into 14 languages. Twenty-five percent of the revenues from *The Diary of Ma Yan* go to Ningxia children who have the same ailment as Ma Yan.

2. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is a particular approach to achieve equality between men and women that emphasizes the power of a person to alter discriminatory practices against women.

3. Women's Education

Women's education refers to every form of education that aims at improving the knowledge and skills of women and girls. It includes general education at schools.

A.7 Organization of Research Report

a. Chapter I – Introduction

This chapter covers the background of the research, problems of the research, objectives of the research, significance of the research, limitations of the research, definition of key terms, and organization of the research report.

b. Chapter II – Review of Literature

This chapter consists of two parts: a theoretical framework and a review of related research.

c. Chapter III – Research Method

In this chapter, there will be a detailed description of the method used in the research. It includes the type of research, data and source of the data, method of collecting data, technique of collecting data, and method of analyzing data.

d. Chapter IV – Data Analysis

It consists of four parts: data description, women's condition in *The Diary of Ma Yan*, Ma Yan's struggles for education, and the result of Ma Yan's struggles for education.

e. Chapter V – Conclusion and Suggestions

This section is the final part of the contents of the research report, which consists of two parts:

1. Conclusion

It contains direct answers to questions in the problems of the research.

2. Suggestions

It consists of suggestions that can be given for the future researcher who may have an interest in the theme of the research.

