

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A.1 Background of the Research**

Movie is a powerful medium for delivering information and serves as a tool to communicate messages to the public. Along with the times, the movie industry continues to grow by presenting increasingly diverse genres and themes, following the needs and interests of the audience. In recent years, many movies have not only focused on entertainment but also integrated moral messages through dialog and scenes. This makes movies an educational tool capable of providing audiences with a new understanding of social, cultural and moral values (Saputri et al., 2025).

Movies provide a medium for moral exploration and education, allowing audiences to engage with characters and themes that reflect the values of society (Miftahuljanah & Saraswati, 2024). In this way, movies function not only as entertainment, but also as social criticism. Strong narratives and interesting visuals provide space for movies to convey important messages related to social issues. Besides entertaining, movies can educate and inspire, encouraging audiences to think critically about moral values and real-life issues (Lu, 2023).

One common issue in everyday life is how power operates in relationships between individuals or groups, known as power relations. According to Cheng et al., (2013), power relation is an imbalance of authority in these relationships that often leads to injustice, as those in power can control, lead, and influence others.

This concept can be seen in various contexts, ranging from family relationships, the workplace, to society.

In the workplace, power relations are evident in the interactions between employers and employees. Employers have the authority to shape employees' professional paths, while employees are often expected to comply with their superiors' directives. However, power relationships are not just limited to the vertical relationship between superiors and subordinates, but also appear in horizontal interactions among colleagues (Drake & Mitchell, 1977). Power can be seen in the form of senior coworkers' influence over juniors or informal hierarchies formed among fellow employees. This aligns with Foucault's (1990) concept of power, which suggests that power is not confined to individuals but is dispersed throughout society, present in every human interaction.

According to Foucault (1972), power exists everywhere, not because it encompasses everything, but because power comes from everywhere. Foucault argues that power can be embedded in institutions and social interactions, shaping individuals and the structure of society. Rather than being confined to explicit acts of domination or authority, power works through subtle mechanisms such as social norms, discourses, and everyday practices that often go unnoticed. These mechanisms influence behaviors and reinforce societal structures that uphold power dynamics.

One such structure is patriarchy, a system where power is unequally distributed between genders, privileging men over women. Bashir (2018) argued

that patriarchy is systematically a set of rules in which men dominate women in all aspects of life. It perpetuates inequality by normalizing women's subordination and legitimizing male control. This relationship between power and patriarchy shapes gender-based hierarchies and leads to various forms of social injustice.

Such social injustice can manifest as violence resulting from the abuse of power (Andrews et al., 2023). This violence can take many forms, including physical, verbal and emotional abuse, all of which contribute to the suffering of the oppressed individual or group. Furthermore, this abuse of power is often reinforced by social norms that permit or even justify the actions of the power.

One movie that critically examines the abuse of power stemming from power relation is the American movie *Bombshell*. Directed by Jay Roach with a script by Charles Randolph, *Bombshell* was released in the United States on December 20, 2019. The 109-minute movie depicts the sexual harassment scandal at Fox News, a popular news television network in the United States, with a focus on its CEO, Roger Ailes, who abused his position of power to exploit female employees. The movie *Bombshell* centers on three prominent women at Fox News, Gretchen Carlson, Megyn Kelly, and Kayla Pospisil, each facing various forms of abuse of power and harassment in the workplace. Gretchen Carlson was a senior anchor who felt her career was stunted because she refused Ailes' sexual demands. After being abruptly fired, Gretchen sued Ailes for sexual harassment. This lawsuit is the beginning of the movie's story that reveals unfair actions against women.

The second character is Megyn Kelly, a prominent journalist at Fox News who was initially reluctant to get involved in Gretchen's case. Despite her strong position as an anchor at Fox News, Megyn felt pressure to remain silent and wanted to maintain her position. However, Megyn eventually realized that she had also been a victim of harassment by Ailes earlier in her career.

Lastly, a fictional character, who doesn't exist in real life like Gretchen and Megyn, is Kayla Pospisil. Kayla, a young producer, represents many young women at Fox News, and is an ambitious new hire. She was sexually harassed by Roger Ailes for a new program. Her character illustrates that people who are new to big jobs are often targeted and lack the knowledge to respond effectively.

Ailes' slogan in movies, "... to get ahead you got to give a little head," which is directed at one of the harassment victims in the movies, expects something sexual in return for promoting employees to higher positions or promising bigger work programs. Ailes abused his position of power by sexually harassing women in the workplace. Similar patterns of harassing women also occur in real life. In one such case in 2017, Harvey Weinstein, a prominent movies producer in Hollywood, used his power to exploit and abuse young actresses who wanted to work for him (Nikolova, 2021). For over two decades, Weinstein relied on confidentiality agreements to shield himself from legal responsibility regarding allegations of sexual harassment and assault (Farrow, 2017). This case became the impetus for the global #MeToo movement, which opened a space for victims of sexual violence to voice their experiences. The movement also serves to expose

patterns of sexual violence and abuse of power that occur in various industry sectors (Nuraddin, 2018).

The movie *Bombshell* (2019) comes amidst the momentum of the #MeToo social movement. The movie presents a conflict centered on the actions of the CEO, Roger Ailes, who represents the patriarchal system in the workplace. He uses his position to influence women's careers through sexual harassment, manipulation, and intimidation. Ailes is surrounded by male colleagues who remain passive or complicit in his behavior, including Bill Shine, a top executive at Fox News. The patriarchal system at Fox News operates in the movie not only through the actions of individuals like Ailes, but also through the corporate structure that perpetuates this power imbalance.

Set against the backdrop of the highly competitive 2016 United States presidential election, *Bombshell* presents a topic related to politics. The election was marked by Donald Trump representing the Republican Party and Hillary Clinton for the Democrats. The setting of this movie, Fox News, is a cable news channel aimed at conservative viewers and is a popular news source in the United States (Wanta, 2008). Fox News has an important role in shaping public opinion, especially with its political views that often align with the policies and ideologies of the Republican Party (Arceneaux et al., 2015).

Although Fox News tends to favor the Republican Party, an anchor is still responsible for asking critical questions of all candidates, regardless of their political affiliation. In the movie *Bombshell*, the Republican debate featured a

moment when Megyn Kelly challenged Donald Trump over his demeaning comments about women in the media. Trump's response, which attacked Megyn Kelly personally, demeaned women with power in the public space in reaction to criticism.

The organizational structure at Fox News has hierarchies and control mechanisms that influence the behavior and decisions of individuals within it. CEO Roger Ailes utilizes his position to maintain his dominance through promises of promotion or threats of dismissal against female employees. Not only that, the employees who work at Fox News also allow this abuse of power. This situation creates a work environment where women are vulnerable to harassment and discrimination, which is part of the power dynamics and patriarchal culture in the organization.

Movie *Bombshell* is frequently used as a research study because it is rich with social issues for analysis. Several studies have utilized *Bombshell* as primary data. For instance, Cahyaningtyas & Candraningrum (2022), examined the theme of gender equality in *Bombshell* through the lens of liberal feminism, noting that the female characters exhibit various motivations for addressing gender inequality, including fear, resilience, and a quest for justice. This study emphasizes their solidarity and strength in confronting adversity.

Similarly, Abiet & Prastiwi (2022) explored the theme of resistance to sexual harassment using liberal feminist theory. Their analysis draws attention to Gretchen Carlson's courage in formally reporting Roger Ailes's misconduct.

Meanwhile, Megyn Kelly is portrayed as resisting verbal sexual harassment, particularly in the way she challenges Donald Trump's misogynistic comments during a televised debate. Moreover, Kelly's actions inspire other survivors to come forward with their experiences of Ailes's predatory behavior.

Building on these perspectives, Lestari et al., (2023) approached the movie from an existentialist feminist framework, drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as "the Other." The study reveals how the female characters are often objectified and positioned in subordinate roles. It identifies three primary dimensions of this objectification: the unequal status of women compared to men, experiences of gender-based violence, and instances of sexual harassment. In response, the women in the movie express resistance through four key strategies: demonstrating their professional competence, asserting their intellectual capacity, engaging in social change, and challenging societal limitations imposed upon them. The study ultimately underscores both the persistent gender discrimination depicted in the movie and the characters' efforts to resist marginalization.

In addition, Adyaga (2019) focuses on the portrayal of sexism in the movie. This research emphasizes the role of existentialist feminism in empowering women to resist sexism and harassment, ultimately liberating them from objectification. The analysis demonstrates that women can be self-reliant and resist being used as pawns for men's benefit.

Based on these previous studies, the researcher is inspired to analyze the movie *Bombshell*. The researcher is interested in conducting a study titled "Power

Relations and Patriarchal Structures in the Workplace: An Analysis of Movie *Bombshell* (2019)” using Michel Foucault’s power theory and Allan G. Johnson’s theory of patriarchy. This research employed Foucault’s concept of power to analyze the dynamics of workplace relationships and Johnson’s theory to contextualize these dynamics within a patriarchal framework. The study focused on the connection between power relations in the workplace and patriarchal culture, as depicted in the movie, and the influence of these intertwined structures on the work experiences of women.

#### **A.2 Problems of the Research**

1. How are power relations in the workplace portrayed in the movie *Bombshell*, and what ways are they influenced by patriarchal culture?
2. What are the impacts of patriarchal power relations on the professional experiences of female characters in the movie *Bombshell*?

#### **A.3 Objectives of the Research**

1. To analyze how power relations are represented in the workplace as depicted culture in the movie *Bombshell* and examine how these dynamics are shaped by organizational culture.
2. To analyze the impact of patriarchal power relations on the professional experiences of female characters in the movie *Bombshell*.

## **A.4 Significances of the Research**

### **A.4.1 Theoretically**

This research is expected to contribute to the development of studies on power relations and its relation to patriarchal structures, particularly within the context of the workplace. The study provides insights into how power is distributed and kept in situations dominated by male authority by means of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations alongside Allan G. Johnson's theory of patriarchy. By examining the movie *Bombshell*, the research also aims to improve gender studies debates by showing how systems of control function and how women react to those systems in several ways—that is, through different kinds of resistance.

### **A.4.2 Practically**

This research can serve as a foundation to raise awareness about the abuse of power relations related to the patriarchal system in the workplace. By revealing how power relations and patriarchy can create unsafe conditions for women, the findings of this research can serve as a reference for companies, policymakers, and gender activists in designing more inclusive policies and strategies. This research can also motivate victims of workplace violence to be more courageous in reporting their cases while encouraging the creation of a safer and more equitable work environment.

## **A.5 Limitations of the Research**

This research is limited to a study of the movie *Bombshell* as source material, specifically its depiction of patriarchal power relations and how these

impact workplace dynamics. The research does not extend to a study of actual events beyond what appears in the movie or include empirical evidence and interviews with individuals who have been impacted by such power relations within the workplace. Rather, the study points out how power structures and patriarchy are created, reinforced, and challenged by the movie's dialogue.

#### **A.6 Definition of Key Terms**

To minimize potential misunderstandings in terminology usage, it is essential for the researcher to offer precise definitions for key terms, which are outlined as follows:

##### **A.6.1 Power**

Power, according to Foucault (1982) understood as a network of interactions between individuals or groups of people. Power is a relationship in which one person or group is able to influence the actions of another person or group to achieve their goals.

##### **A.6.2 Power Relation**

Power relations refer to how power is distributed and exercised within social contexts. According to Foucault (1995), power is not merely a top-down force imposed by a dominant individual or group, but is diffuse and embedded in all social interactions, shaping relationships across society.

### **A.6.3 Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold more power than women. According to Sultana (2012) patriarchal ideology amplifies the biological distinctions between men and women to reinforce male dominance and female subordination. This deeply internalized belief system often enables men to gain the compliance of the women they oppress.

### **A.6.4 Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence that exists on a continuum, including behaviors such as bullying, sexist language, harassment, and rape. (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). It infringes on an individual's dignity and can foster a hostile, intimidating, or offensive atmosphere. This type of harassment can happen in numerous environments, such as workplaces, educational institutions, public areas, and online platforms.

### **A.7 Organization of the Research Report**

To explain this research clearly, the researcher divided this research into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the research by providing an overview that includes the background of the research, problem of the research, objectives of the research, significance of the research, limitation of the research, definition of key terms, and ends with organization of research report. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding the research's focus. Chapter two, literature review, provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical framework used to analyze

the movie, focusing on power relations and patriarchy as key concepts. This chapter examines Michel Foucault's theory of power relations and Allan G. Johnson's theory of patriarchy, to explore how power operates, is resisted, and intersects with patriarchal structures in workplace settings. In addition, the chapter reviews relevant literature on power relation, identifying gaps that this study addresses by focusing on *Bombshell* as a cultural text representing these themes.

Chapter Three, Research Methodology, provides a detailed explanation of the methods utilized in this study. This chapter outlines the research design, including the theoretical approach and analytical framework employed to analyze the movie *Bombshell*. It explains the selection of the movie as the primary data source, justifying its relevance to the study's focus on power relations and patriarchal culture. It also details the data collection process, explaining how specific scenes, dialogues, and character interactions were identified and categorized for analysis.

Chapter four is the result and discussion. This chapter gives a detailed analysis of the movie *Bombshell* by examining the portrayal of power relations, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault, and their interplay with patriarchal structures, as defined by Allan G. Johnson. These discussions aim to address the research questions by linking power dynamics and patriarchal culture to the experiences of women in the workplace as depicted in the movie.

Chapter five is the conclusion and suggestion section. It is a summary of the study's most significant findings with clear answers to the research questions regarding the relationship between power dynamics and patriarchal culture in the movie. The chapter offers suggestions for potential avenues for further research and highlights the study's contributions to the academic discourse on power and patriarchy.

