

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background of The Study

Mass media and movies heavily influence people's thoughts and attitudes toward the environment. With the advent of the digital revolution and the widespread use of screens, movies have indeed come to play a crucial role in influencing our worldviews. Popular movies can shape our collective perceptions and attitudes about important racial, class, gender, and other issues. Movie characters actively contribute to creating symbolic role models by reflecting on and sustaining their circumstances and choices in contemporary society and culture (Kord, 2005; Bednarek, 2015). Therefore, as a form of mass media, movies also influence how viewers view gender issues and stereotypes.

A stereotype is described as a general perception or assumption of the qualities or traits held by, or responsibilities that are or ought to be fulfilled by, people in a particular group by Cook & Cusack (2010, p. 9). This definition states that a group membership automatically entails that they will act in a specific way or have certain traits. Thus, gender stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about the characteristics and roles of gender in individuals and groups, as well as the distinctions between them, according to UNESCO (2011, p. 6). The qualities of the individuals within a group may or may not be accurately reflected in these generalizations. Stereotypes can be based on traits like color, gender, nationality, religion, or occupation and frequently result from cultural, social, or historical reasons.

Some stereotypes exist in society, including religion, age, race, class, and sexual preference or gender, such as femininity and masculinity. For instance, seeing women in the home (cooking or caring for the kids) and men in positions outside of the home (pursuing a career) transforms these actions into norms, leading to the stereotype that views women as communal and men as agentic (Bakan, 1966). Doing housework does not make one any less of a man.

Given that the formation of femininity and masculinity is a component of the prevailing ideology, Hermes (2007: 191) and McQuail (2011: 131) argue that we must comprehend how the media portrays gender. We can comprehend how stereotypes made by the media, especially movies, are perceived by the audience by understanding how gender is constructed. Research about gender norms in the media indicates that women are portrayed differently and in fewer numbers than men in films. According to Carter and Steiner (2004), women are typically represented as having shorter and lower professional statuses due to their youth and appearance. In contrast, men are typically shown as possessing higher and longer-lasting job statuses based on their accomplishments. These stereotypes still exist occasionally. Even though gender studies suggest that gender affects both masculinity and femininity, it is uncommon for both perspectives to be expressed simultaneously. The feminine perspective and the representation of women in the media are the main topics of gender studies. Rarely is the excellent representation of women highlighted; instead, it mainly concentrates on the negative. Seldom does it consider the representation of males. It is stated, if at all, but not simultaneously. Moreover, the field of gender and media is vast and continuously

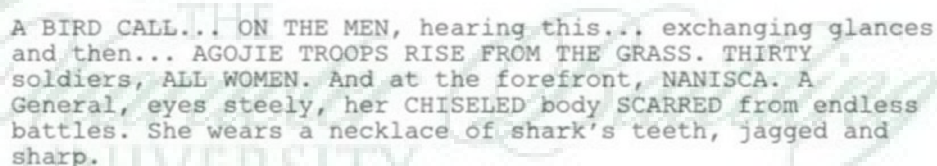
generates new data that may be collected and examined in various ways. Movies are produced in enormous quantities every year. Since the media may convey what is socially acceptable, it is an essential field of research (Carter & Steiner, 2004).

The movie *The Woman King* (2022) is a fascinating piece of cinema that has lately caught the curiosity of spectators and academics and reveals the phenomena of gender stereotypes. The two heroines in this movie, portrayed by the well-known actors Viola Davis and Lupita Nyong'o, battle to overcome obstacles in a time of conflict and gender discrimination. This movie was chosen as a research topic because it offers a unique chance to explore how gender stereotypes are depicted in the media, particularly in the setting of a compelling historical tale.

Many viewers might not be aware of some African history explored in the intriguing movie *The Woman King*. Storyline: Set in the Kingdom of Dahomey (modern-day Benin), this 18th-century film centers on two female commanders who lead a legendary army of women who drive out French invaders. Through the analysis of this narrative, academics can investigate the historical representations of gender stereotypes, which significantly impact how people see gender in modern society. The lead female character in this movie, Nanisca, is shown as a fearless and strong fighter. She is neither a weak nor a male-dependent woman. Instead, she was a fierce leader committed to defending her people from the repressive French regime. The movie portrays Nanisca as a fierce fighter, dispelling the myth that women are not fit to be commanders or soldiers.

The Woman King is a powerful example of how media, especially movies, can challenge gender norms and provide women significant representation in demanding and prestigious roles. This movie helps combat unfavorable preconceptions of women in the media by featuring strong, independent female leads. *The Woman King* is a significant contribution to the global movement for gender equality, encouraging women to follow their aspirations unhindered by outdated gender stereotypes, thanks to its gripping narrative and strong ensemble of characters.

The Woman King is a movie that openly depicts women in various challenging and significant roles, potentially challenging gender stereotypes. By presenting strong, independent female characters, this movie contributes to the struggle against derogatory media portrayals of women. *Female King* dramatically increases gender equality by encouraging women everywhere to pursue their dreams without being limited by outdated gender stereotypes through its gripping story and diverse characters. *The Woman King* movie script contains the following examples of sentences that defy gender preconceptions.



A BIRD CALL... ON THE MEN, hearing this... exchanging glances and then... AGOJIE TROOPS RISE FROM THE GRASS. THIRTY soldiers, ALL WOMEN. And at the forefront, NANISCA. A General, eyes steely, her CHISELED body SCARRED from endless battles. She wears a necklace of shark's teeth, jagged and sharp.

Figure 1.1 Preliminary Data

The script's words characterize Nanisca as a General with a robust build and battle scars from numerous engagements. Gender preconceptions in the tale are broken by the writing, which presents powerful and influential female characters

in roles often associated with men. This dispels the myth that only men possess great physical strength or are suitable for leadership roles in the armed forces. This sentence shows gender stereotypes based on physical characteristics.

Gender stereotypes have been the subject of numerous studies. Several earlier investigations inform this research. The first is titled "Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Movies" and was conducted in 2016 by Seema Manzoor, Dua-e-Rehman, and Samina Rauf. This study addresses the societal structure, emphasizing the value of a well-balanced framework based on ethics and customs. Sighing with dismay at the unfavorable portrayal of women in the media, it laments how impossible it is to achieve this equilibrium in contemporary society. The typical portrayal of women in films as commodities and sex objects exacerbates their underrepresentation and the spread of harmful stereotypes. Using content analysis and library research, the study sheds light on these challenges by focusing on how women's images are warped when portrayed and used as commodities in movies.

Another relevant study is "Gender Stereotypes in Hollywood Movies and Their Evolution over Time: Insights from Network Analysis" by Arjun M. Kumar, Jasmine Y. Q. Goh, Tiffany H. H. Tan, and Cynthia S. Q. Siew (2022). This study thoroughly examines over 180,000 sentences from seven decades of movie narratives. This study emphasizes how gender stereotypes are portrayed in popular culture, particularly in Hollywood movies. The study illustrates how gender stereotypes are dynamic and multifaceted through network analysis and an innovative approach to story trope identification. Interestingly, it discovers that

whereas male characters are connected to various subjects, female characters are primarily associated with the romance theme. More evidence of the changing stereotype associations across time is provided by the analysis, which shows that female characters are increasingly associated with sexual interactions and marriage and less with physical beauty and marriage.

Similar to the two studies above, which raise the issue of how gender stereotypes are depicted in movies, this study also aims to describe gender stereotypes but focuses on breaking gender stereotypes in *The Woman King* movie. This movie was chosen as the study subject to examine and pinpoint the various breaking gender stereotypes that are portrayed in it, as well as their various facets.

1. 2 The Problem of The Study

Based on the background of the research, the problems of this research were formulated as follows:

1. What types of gender stereotypes are found in *The Woman King* movie?
2. How do the female characters struggle against the gender stereotypes in *The Woman King* movie?
3. In what contexts do the female characters struggle against gender stereotypes in the ways they do?

1. 3 The Objectives of The Study

Related to the problem of the study, the objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the types of gender stereotypes found in *The Woman King* movie.
2. To elucidate how female characters struggle against gender stereotypes in *The Woman King* movie.
3. To evaluate the contexts of resistance to gender stereotypes in *The Woman King* movie.

1.4 The Scope of The Study

The research scope is limited to the gender stereotypes in *The Woman King* movie script. The researcher will use the gender stereotype theory from Sandra Bem's BSRI (1974) and theory of gender performativity from Butler (1999). The evidence will be obtained from journals, PDF books relevant to the subjects, and textual evidence in a movie script.

1.5 The Significance of The Study

The findings of the study are expected to give theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretically, the findings of the study are expected:

1. To enrich theories of literature specifically that in movies.
2. To become references for further studies of cinematography.

Practically, of the study are expected:

1. To make a valuable contribution towards advancing literary studies, especially for those interested in them. This research may be one of several comparable ones that address gender stereotypes.
2. To inspire readers to challenge gender norms in their daily lives and to comprehend the masculine roles portrayed by the female character, ultimately leading to the realization that *The Woman King* is, in fact, a flawlessly feminist movie.



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