

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Character identity in Disney animated films has been the focus of many English literature studies, particularly regarding gender representation, social roles, and character transformation. As one of Disney's iconic works, *Cinderella* (1950) is often analyzed from the perspectives of traditional feminism, social justice themes, or fantasy representation. Previous studies generally portray Cinderella as a passive character who relies on external forces to achieve happiness. However, there remains a lack of research examining how Cinderella constructs her identity through a combination of resilience and the ability to act intentionally within a rigid social structure (social agency).

As stated in previous research on conflict and identity (Susilawati, 2020; Sriwanti in Timbayo, 2023), family and social environment play important roles in shaping an individual's personality. In the context of *Cinderella*, an unsupportive and even restrictive environment not only creates internal and external conflicts but also serves as a foundation for the character to develop unique ways of building a strong identity without compromising her values. This is significant as it provides a new perspective on how characters perceived as "weak" or "passive" actually possess hidden strategies for constructing self-identity.

1.2 Research Questions

Most studies on Cinderella focus on:

- (1) Criticism of gender representation deemed passive and dependent on men;
- (2) Analysis of magic and destiny themes;
- (3) Comparisons with the original folk tale versions.

The research gap to be explored: There has been no in-depth study examining how Cinderella's identity construction process is shaped through resilience (the ability to recover from adversity) and social agency (the ability to influence one's social environment through intentional action), as well as how these two elements work together to form a sense of self-worth that is not dependent on social status or external assistance. This study will also focus on how Cinderella uses existing social norms as a tool to build her identity, rather than merely viewing them as constraints to be resisted.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. How is Cinderella's identity construction process shaped through resilience in facing family and social pressures?
2. How does Cinderella demonstrate the ability to act intentionally (social agency) to construct her identity within a rigid social structure?
3. What is the meaning of Cinderella's identity, formed through the combination of resilience and intentional action, for the representation of female characters in classic Disney animation?

1.4 Significance of the study

This research was conducted with the hope of providing significant benefits, both in theory and practice. One of the expected benefits of this research is as follows:

1.4.1 Theoretical Benefits

Theoretically, it is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to insights and knowledge in the study of literature and film, particularly in relation to cultural representation and the formation of character identity in animated films. This research is also expected to deepen the study of Polynesian culture and how these cultural values are presented through popular media such as the film *Moana*. In addition, the results of this study can be used as a reference for future research discussing the themes of culture, identity, and female leadership in films.

1.4.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To reveal the process of Cinderella's identity construction through resilience in facing adversity.
2. To describe how Cinderella uses intentional action to construct her identity.
3. To interpret the meaning of Cinderella's identity for the representation of female characters in classic Disney animation.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses solely on the main character Cinderella in Disney's animated film Cinderella (1950). The analysis concentrates on dialogue, scenes, and character actions related to identity construction through resilience and social agency. The theories used are social identity theory, psychological resilience theory, and the concept of social agency

1.6 Significance of the Study

1. Provides a new perspective on the character of Cinderella, who is often seen as passive.
2. Adds to the body of English literature research on character analysis in Disney animated films.
3. Serves as a reference for future research on identity construction in literary works and popular media.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1. Identity: A concept of self formed through interaction with the environment and personal experiences, encompassing an understanding of values, roles, and one's place in society.
2. Resilience: An individual's ability to adapt well in facing stress and adversity, and to maintain emotional balance and self-worth.
3. Social Agency: An individual's ability to take intentional action that can influence themselves, others, or their social environment.