1.1. Background of the Study

Stereotypically, women are known to be the weak and powerless creatures. Women tend to be more dependent on men financially and mentally. Meanwhile male adopts the character “masculine” and female adopts “feminine”. For instance, males are more interested in performing physically tough activities like, working in heavy industries while females perform tasks like raising children, cooking, sewing and so on.

Males predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property; and, in the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children. It implies the institutions of male domination and entails female subordination. Many patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, meaning that property and title are inherited by the male lineage. In the familial sense, the female equivalent is matriarchy.

Apparently, this image of men having more power than women tends to bring an inequality in gender. Not a few men take the advantage to control women as they like concerning their own satisfaction. Speaking of which, sexual exploitation and abuse tend to happen among women society during the old days and even until now. Women are oppressed by the abusive acts done by those who have more power like individuals, institutions and social.

In the most basic sense, feminism is the movement for social, political, and economics of women. A feminist advocates or supports the rights and equality of women. Feminists believe are an oppressed class. They believe to break the
oppression is to liberate women. This can mean different things, from issues like equal pay and equal access to jobs, to providing child care, money and equality in the social security system.

Feminism can be based on many aspects, but in this study the movement is seen based on literary works. Feminist literary criticism is literary criticism informed by feminist theory or by the politics of feminism more broadly. It can be understood as using feminist principles and ideological discourses to critique the language of literature, its structure and being. This school of thought seeks to describe and analyze the ways in which literature portrays the narrative of male domination in regard to female bodies by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embedded within literature.

Nevertheless, women oppression seems to becoming an ongoing issue around the world since earlier centuries when almost every woman was horribly treated as slaves. During the time, women were not able to get better education which became their biggest consequence for them of not getting good jobs to support their living. Moreover, their lack of experience in outside world made men look down on women which are still believed until now. Regarding this issue, literary writers started to take the chance to sound the issue in their works; may it be fiction or non-fiction. Many literary works talk about how women oppression is going around the world with concerns.

There are two novels which the writer finds similar in motif reflecting the issues above. One is from America entitled, *Celia, A Slave* by Melton A. McLaurin and another one from Egypt, *Woman At Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi. The use of these two novels helps the writer to look at women oppression from different countries with similar motif. Both novels portrayed oppression on women physically
and mentally. The novels show how men took control of their lives which turned them into someone different. Therefore, the analysis will involve comparing how the novels are similar and different from each other which is part of the *Comparative Literature*.

The novel *Celia A Slave* is an American novel which talks about a girl named, *Celia* who was sexually exploited by her Master, Robert Newsom. After purchasing Celia in a neighboring county, Newsom raped her on the journey back to his farm. He then established her in a small cabin near his house and visited her regularly (most likely with the knowledge of the son and two daughters who lived with him). Over the next five years, Celia bore Newsom two children; meanwhile, she became involved with a slave named George and resolved at his insistence to end the relationship with her master. When Newsom refused, Celia one night struck him fatally with a club and disposed of his body in her fireplace. Her act quickly discovered, Celia was brought to trial. She received a surprisingly vigorous defense from her court-appointed attorneys, who built their case on a state law allowing women the use of deadly force to defend their honor. Nevertheless, the court upheld the tenets of a white social order that wielded almost total control over the lives of slaves. Celia was found guilty and hanged.

Apparently, by 1850, when knowledge of Celia begins, Missouri had already been at the center of the national slavery debate for more than a quarter of a century. The author of the novel, Melton A. McLaurin is a professor emeritus of history at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He is author of eight books, including the award-winning *Separate Pasts: Growing Up White in the Segregated South*. Melton McLaurin's interest in race relations started in seventh grade when he went to
work at his grandfather's store in Wade, a village near Fayetteville. It was 1953 when he witnessed the complete different world between the whites and blacks those days.

Woman at Point Zero (Emra'a Enda Noktat el Sifr) is a novel by Nawal El Saadawi published in Arabic in 1975. The novel is based on Saadawi's encounter with a female prisoner in Qanatir Prison and is the first-person account of Firdaus, a murderess who has agreed to tell her life story before her execution. Firdaus describes a childhood of poverty and neglect and recounts being circumcised by her mother. After being orphaned she is sent to secondary school, where she excels, but upon graduation she is forced into an arranged marriage with Sheikh Mahmoud, a disgusting man who is emotionally and physically abusive. After a brutal beating she leaves and eventually becomes a high-end prostitute, encountering abusive and manipulative men throughout. When a man named Marzouk forcibly becomes her pimp, she resists his control. When Firdaus decides to leave, and Marzouk pulls a knife to prevent her escape, she stabs him to death. She later confesses the murder and is imprisoned. Firdaus concludes that all men are criminals, refuses to submit an appeal on the grounds that she has not committed a crime, and goes to her death a free woman, without fear or regret. The novel explores the issues of the subjugation of women, female circumcision, and women's freedom in a patriarchal society.

Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian feminist writer, activist, physician and psychiatrist. She has written many books on the subject of women in Islam, paying particular attention to the practice of female genital mutilation in her society. In 1972, she published her first work of non-fiction, Women and Sex, which evoked the antagonism of highly placed political and theological authorities and led to a dismissal at the Ministry of Health. Other works include The Hidden Face of
Eve, God Dies by the Nile, The Circling Song, Searching, The Fall of the Imam and Woman at Point Zero.

The two novels show how the main characters are struggling to get away from the men who took control of their lives. Shown in both novels, oppression is the motifs of the novel. Clearly, in Celia A Slave, the main character was sexually exploited by her Master and struggling to find a way to fight back risking her own justice at the end. Similarly, Firdaus, the main character of Woman At Point Zero is sexually exploited by her close people and becoming a high-end prostitute as her protest to the men harassing her body freely. Her struggles against the men in her life ended after she killed a pimp. Though she failed to seek for justice, she died in her own satisfaction. Both novels reveal the injustice experienced by Celia and Firdaus due to certain social institutions.

1.2. Problems of the Study

In doing this study, there are the problems that are going to be discussed as follow:

1. How is oppression on women portrayed in Melton A. McLaurin’s Celia, A Slave and Nawal El Saadawi’s Woman At Point Zero?

2. What are the similarities and differences of women oppression portrayed in both novels?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Regarding to the problems of this study, here are the guidelines of the objective:

1. To find out how women are oppressed in Celia, A Slave and Woman At Point Zero.
2. To find the similarities and differences of women oppression in *Celia, A Slave* and *Woman At Point Zero*.

**1.4. Scope of the Study**

It is important to focus on the objective in this study in order to make it easier in figuring out the problems. Within this thesis, the discussion will concentrate on how the women in the two novels are oppressed by the people around them, especially man. Oppression can be done by anyone and be seen in several ways, however, in this thesis the writer looks at women oppression by man through the levels and types which are: *individual oppression*, *institutional oppression* and *collective oppression*. This study deals with comparing two novels from different countries with similar motif. Therefore, this study is restricted to discuss the similarities and differences of motif portrayed, specifically to identify the oppression to the main characters of both novels.

**1.5. Significance of the Study**

In writing this, the writer hopes to give significances as follow:

1. This study can be useful to enrich knowledge about literary works from different nations.
2. This study can help readers to know more about Comparative Literature.
3. This study can help readers to explore kinds of oppression within women society.