

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer were explain several points. The points consist of the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study and scope and limitations. This point will support the topic of this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Hoffarth and Hodson (2017), a person's sexual identity is the social label that defines their attraction to other people on a romantic and sexual level. There are various categories of sexual identities, including heterosexual, gay, lesbian, asexual, and bisexual. People typically do not like to talk about their sexual identities because they are private and delicate topics. Talking about one's sexual identity is frowned upon by some, mainly if that identification differs from what society has established. Many people have been trying to talk about who they are lately. People who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) or who think of themselves as different have long been present in society and across all social classes. People who identify as different from others try to speak up in the 1960s. They continue to battle for their rights to social acceptance even now.

In 2015 the United States Supreme Court finally declared that the government ultimately allowed same-sex marriage nationally in 2015, according to a ruling by the US Supreme Court (Liptak, 2015). The LGBTQ community enthusiastically embraced this proclamation. Following this declaration, the community voiced its rights and existence more intensely. It is undeniable, however, that some individuals continue to find it challenging to acknowledge the presence of this community because they subscribe to the social construct that heterosexuality is the ideal identity. Some of them even assault this group physically or verbally as a way of expressing rejection.

In a sense, the labels homosexual and heterosexual shaped this society. The public often views homosexuals negatively. It is among the causes of people's difficulty accepting environmental variances. When someone feels emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to someone of the other sex, they are said to be heterosexual (The American Psychological Association, 2008). On the other hand, gay refers to a person who identifies as a person of the same sex (Samelius & Wagberg, 2005). Thus, some people in our culture still struggle to define and feel uncertain about their own "identity," particularly within the LGBTQ community.

According to Vivienne Cass (2014), all people move their identity through stages to gain a self-identity and move to a fully integrated self. The homosexual identity formation model commences when males and females acknowledge to themselves that their behavior is congruent with being a gay male or lesbian according to Cass theory. There are six stages of homosexual identity formation from Vivienne Cass, which are identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis.

The first Identity confusion is when individuals recognize a difference in their behavior from the dominant heterosexual norm and question that behavior as being that of a lesbian or gay male (Cass, 2014). There is a disconnect between previously considering oneself as a heterosexual and the current perception of oneself. The second Identity comparison is a vacillation between acceptance of a possible homosexual identity, "I may be a gay male or lesbian," and complete denial, often concluding with acknowledging that one's identity as a gay male or lesbian is probably true to self (Cass, 2014). One is faced with feelings of alienation as distinctions between self and heterosexuals become clear.

The third Identity tolerance is the individual now moves to the acknowledgment of a gay male or lesbian identity with the sexual identity not being entirely accepted (Cass, 2014). One can fall into three groups: those who find this desirable, those who consider it undesirable, and those who feel partly positive about themselves by accepting the probable statement. As individuals begin to make more friends or contacts with other gay males or lesbians, they increase self-esteem and reduce alienation. The fourth Identity acceptance continues to include interaction with gay males and lesbians (Cass, 2014). The

individual's identity is apparent, and the individual has a more positive self-image as a gay male or lesbian and develops greater security in the gay male or lesbian role. Involvement in the gay male or lesbian subculture and the network of gay and lesbian friends increases and becomes more frequent.

The fifth Identity pride is when individuals exhibit feelings of pride toward their gay male or lesbian identity and are loyal toward gay male and lesbian groups, creating a sense of belonging (Cass, 2014). Individuals become consumed with gay and lesbian culture and literature. To promote the validity and equality of gay males and lesbians, anger about society's stigmatization of gay males and lesbians leads to disclosure and purposeful confrontation with heterosexuals. The sixth Identity synthesis is the final stage; personal and public sexual identities are synthesized into one image, and a sense of oneself as a gay male or lesbian fully develops (Cass, 2014). The gay male or lesbian identity is viewed as an essential part of the individual, but it is not looked upon as the sole identity of the person. Anger, alienation, frustration, and pride from stage 5 (Identity Pride) are evident but are more controlled. The development process is complete, and one can combine a gay male or lesbian identity with all aspects of oneself. In this final stage, self-disclosure becomes automatic and a nonissue, with heterosexual interactions becoming rewarding (Cass, 2014).

Since the story of gender identity in *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel, individuals are labeled right after their birth as, it's a girl or it's a boy. This binary system of women (girl) and men (boy) continues to have a default setting of that women should align with her gender that is feminine, while men should be masculine. The presumption of the default alignments also intersects to the expectation of individual sexuality, that is heterosexual. The situation in turn dichotomizes people into the categories of normal and not normal.

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe is a come-of-age young adult novel by American author Benjamin Alire Saenz, which was published on February 21, 2012. It tells a story that focuses on two teenage boys, Aristotle and Dante, who discover they will learn the most essential truths about the universe, love, and the kind of people they want to be. Teenage Aristotle is

irate, and his brother is incarcerated. Dante is a conceited individual with a peculiar perspective on the world. They appear to have nothing in common when first meeting in the swimming pool. However, when lonely people come to know one another, they find a unique friendship that transforms people and endures a lifetime. Ari and Dante will discover the most significant truths about who they are and the kind of people they want to be via this friendship.

Some previous studies applied the Homosexual Identity Formation theory to analyze the issues and six stages in literary works. The first is from Irmgard Papilya et al. The title of the study is *The Analysis of Zach's Homosexual Identity in Shelter* (2007). The study analyzes six stages of identity formation from Cass's theory. The second is from Sadaf Ashraf Talpur et al. The title of this research is *Analysing Homosexual Identity Development in E.M. Forster's Maurice: A Study from the Perspective of the Cass Identity Model* (2024). The study analyzes six stages of identity formation from Cass's theory. The third is from Ratih Melur Dwi Purnamasari et al. The title is *The Influence of Father's Involvement Towards Aristotle Mendoza's Personality Development Portrayed in Saenz Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* (2018). The study is analyzed using *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel.

The fourth is from Diah Handayanti et al. The title is *Femininity Portrayed in Dante Character in Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe Novel* (2021). The study is analyzed using *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel. The fifth is from Jude Munarriz Barandiaran. The title “We do not have to go through this alone”: facing trauma through human connection in Alire Saenz *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* and Chbosky’s *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2022). The study is analyzed using *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel. The sixth is from Putri Manarina Sabila et al. The title of this study is *Representations of Sexual Identity Struggle in Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* (2022). The study is analyzed using *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel.

The same is compared in many literary studies that analyze literary works using Cass's theoretical model, and some previous studies used the same

novel. *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* represent two boys as the main characters and the third person seeking their happily ever after ending for each other. This study aims to identify the homosexual identity formation in *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel society, to give insight into how the two main characters perform their gender within the identity formation norms in the novel, and to draw a conclusion if the two main characters are conforming or non-conforming to the homosexual identity.

1.2 Research Questions

In research analysis, we must provide some questions based on the background. Research consistently has questions to support the topic related to the theory. In this research question, the writer has two questions for this proposal thesis. There are

1. How does Aristotle represent six stages of homosexual identity formation in the novel?
2. How does Dante represent six stages of homosexual identity formation in the novel?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To find out identity stages of homosexual identity formation experienced by Aristotle in the novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz
2. To find out identity stages of homosexual identity formation experienced by Dante in the novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the academic realm as the source of information about a study of sex or gender identity performance in the specific novel of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe*. This study is also expected to provide information about how *Aristotle and Dante Discover the*

Secret of the Universe's main characters perform their gender. In addition, this study is expected to provide insight into how the characters are performing their gender in ways that might be conforming or non-conforming to the identity performance of gender.

The reason why the writer chooses this topic of analysis of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novels is that this study will be helpful for the readers to know more about the types of homosexual studies, precisely gender recognition, by focusing on character development and character struggle to help a reader know the main characters as well. The writer hopes that this study can give a better understanding to the reader about the identity formation stage for how the main character becomes homosexual. This study also helps someone who will make some study or analysis of the form of gender identity.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is based on the identity formation stages, especially the stages of how the character becomes homosexual. Vivienne Cass wrote the theory to analyze the novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe*, published in February 2012. The analysis of this study finds six stages in identity formation: confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, and synthesis. The limitation of this study is that it used the theory of Vivienne Cass, 2014. The source of data is *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* novel. The data are utterances transcribed in written text. The limitation of this study is the utterances of the main characters denoting homosexual issues.