

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are five sub-chapters that are discussed in this chapter. Among them are the background of the study, statements of the research problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study. These five things need to be explained because they can provide important information about this research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Currently, the issue of gender is one of the interesting topics to be discussed in social life. There are still many people who do not know what sex and gender are. Some think that the two are the same. Unlike Butler's opinion (1990), gender is an action that is produced all the time and is repeated. Therefore, gender does not exist from the start, but is formed over time.

In the reality of people's lives, we realize that there are so many people with various backgrounds. Not everything is about white and black, and neither is gender. Not all of them have masculine and feminine gender identities. Many people do not know that there are also gray people, in other words people who have a minority gender identity, whose gender identity is not equal to their sex. This makes minority gender identities considered deviant which are then marginalized and not considered.

Based on Oakley (1972), the term gender implies that gender is not biological and is not a nature ordained by God because it is not innate. Based on Oakley's explanation, gender and sex are two different things. Sex is the biological sex based on the potential for reproduction from birth, while gender is the result of social elaboration of biological sex (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Sex is a natural gift of God to humans, which is innate from birth, namely women and men. Gender itself is a behavior that belongs to men and women, which begin to form due to cultural and social factors. Gender is also not a gift from God and begins to develop over time.

Gender identity refers to an individual's self-perception as male or female (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2009). Psychologically, gender is used in a broad sense, meaning any mental or behavioral trait associated with masculinity and femininity and perhaps distinguishing men from women (previously called sex characteristics or differences) (Norimbetov & Yusupov, 2021). People who have a normal gender identity will have gender or behave according to their biological sex, while for those who have gender abnormalities they will have behavior that is inversely proportional to their biological gender that has been given by God. If they have a normal gender identity, those who are male will behave, dress, and speak according to their gender, which is masculine. Likewise, with women normal will behave, dress, and speak according to their gender, which is feminine. However, for those who have gender abnormalities, their behavior will automatically be inversely proportional to what it should be. If normal women have a feminine soul, those with gender abnormalities will have a masculine attitude.

The same thing occurred to Melissa, who uses the name George in the novel *George* by Alex Gino, which was released in 2019. Similar to the above description of gender abnormalities. Due to the fact that this work is about gender identity, there is no sexual activity shown throughout the plot. George is a 10 year old boy who has a big secret. George is a child with gender abnormalities likes to be called by the name Melissa and has a large collection of women's magazines, which is one of his secrets.

Melissa, also known as George, aspires to be himself, but he lives in a world that is dominated by gender binary. Externally, everyone believed he was George, a fourth-grade student, but George is very conscious that he is really a female. The public sees him as a male, not as a girl, as he believes himself to be. Where an environment that only recognizes two genders, namely men and women.

Hiding who he really is is painful for George and making the world think he's a boy is incredibly frustrating. George's character is always uncomfortable

when entering the boys' bathroom. He is eager to reveal to the world his true self. George makes various attempts to reveal his identity.

The title of the novel is *George*, and the main character is confronted with challenges with his mother, friends, and teacher, as well as the social stigma against his gender identity. George's attitude and social response as he tries to reveal his identity is very interesting. It is because the novel is written according to his age and the need to understand George's position and attitude to reveal his gender identity when he is 10 years old and as a member of society.

The issue of gender identity in *George* is very interesting to discuss by using the gender performativity theory proposed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*. Butler argues that gender can be constructed socially and culturally (Butler, 1990). Butler also argues that gender is not a stable identity, because the identity that is formed is weak in time, institutionalized in outer space through the repetition of stylized actions (Butler, 1990).

The writer finds numerous earlier studies using the same approach, gender performativity theory. The writer also found a previous study that used the same novel as a data source, but using a different theory. The first writers are Alfisyahrin Fitriani, Dyah Sunggingwati, and Nasrullah, from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Mulawarman University, with the title *Gender Performativity in Chainani's The School for Good and Evil Novel* (2021). This study aims to identify the gender construction in the novel and identify how the two main female characters in this novel represent their gender regardless of the existing social construction.

The second writer is Admiral Indra Supardan, from the English Department, Faculty of Languages, Universitas Widyatama, with the title *Gender Performativity in Stieg Larsson's The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo* (2020). The purpose of this study is to identify challenging boundaries in terms of how gender is presented and felt by Larsson about Lisbeth Salander.

The third writer is Nolen, from the English Department, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universitas Putera Batam, with the title *Performativity of Main Character Identity in "The Color Purple" By Alice Walker: Feminist Approach* (2020). The purpose of this study is to explain gender performativity and aspects of the formation of gender performativity in the main character in Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (1982).

The fourth writer is Rizka Wigati and Lastiko Endi Rahmantyo, from the English Department, Airlangga University Surabaya, entitled "*Representation of Gender Performativity in Patrick, a Character in Neil Jordan's Breakfast on Pluto (2005)*" (2014). The purpose of this study is to analyze the gender performativity of Patrick, a character in Neil Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto*.

The last writer is Widdad 'Ulya, from the English Study Program, Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta, entitled "*Gender Dysphoria as Seen Through George's Character in Alex Gino's George*" (2020). The purpose of this study is to understand George's psychological state and its causes.

The five previous studies used the theory of gender performativity to analyze the problems contained in the data, such as in novels, films, and also in real life today. Four of them use the same theory, namely Gender Performativity. One of them uses the same data source, namely *George* from Alex Gino, but the writer of this study uses a different theory and a different research focus. The writer will also use the same theory, namely the theory of gender performativity which will be used to identify the main character named Melissa as known as George in the novel entitled *George* by Alex Gino.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

1. How does George perform his gender identity in the novel *George* by Alex Gino?
2. How does George's school and his family respond to his gender identity in the novel *George* by Alex Gino?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To know how George perform his gender identity in the novel *George* by Alex Gino
2. To find out George's school and his family respond to his gender identity in the novel *George* by Alex Gino

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide two advantages, including theoretical significance and practical significance. With the advantage of theoretical significance, hopefully this study can enrich the reader's understanding of the hidden problems in each novel, especially in the novel *George* by Alex Gino. This study also aimed to give more information about what is the theory of gender performativity proposed by Judith Butler in her book entitled *Gender Trouble*.

As for the practical significance, the writer hopes that this study can open up people's horizons to be more aware and open-minded that all humans are the same, and it is also okay to be different.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study uses the theory of gender performativity as the main focus in the analysis. The researcher considers the scope and limitations to make the study more focused and structured so that it does not go out of the scope of the discussion. In this study, the writer only focused on the character's utterances and the author's narrative related to George's appearance in presenting his gender identity and how his social environment responded to his gender identity in the novel *George* (2015) by Alex Gino.