

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Gender equality is one of the issues in human live to improve the quality of life and create prosperity in society. Gender equality is the concept used to describe the roles and relations of male and female in the society. Gender can be defined as the characteristics of an individual. Voice of Youth, The Organization of UNICEF has noted that "masculinity and femininity are not traits we associate with depending on sex, but instead depending on the character".

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), gender is the construction of society and it varies in each society. Thus, it can be concluded that Gender refers to the characteristics of men and women such as behaviors, attitudes, norms, and roles which are formed by society and it is not related with sex. In general, gender is often considered into two, Male (Masculine) and Female (Feminine) (Richards, Christina et al., 2016). Gender stereotype theory states that men are generally considered more masculine than women while women are more feminine (Kachel et al., 2016). According to Socialization theory, Gender identity is the consequence of the process of socialization which begins in childhood. This framework means that Masculinity is often characterized by assertiveness, brave, independence and being action-oriented and lively, whereas femininity is understood as passive, emotional, gentle, and cooperative (Ashraf, 2018).

As a product of Society, gender is generally categorized into two, masculine (male) and feminine (female) or it can be called as gender binary. The term gender

binary is an assumption that gender and sex traditionally seen as binary, opposite forms of masculine and feminine (Morgenroth et al., 2020). The word 'binary' traces from Latin *bini* which means 'two by two'. Since traditional gender is generally categorized as male and female. These two genders can be called as Gender Binary. Gender binarism expects each individual to fall into the male (masculine) or female (feminine) gender identity, which is clearly determined according to the sex and the chromosome (Ferrari, Imperato, and Mancini, 2021). However, we actually cannot assume that people in this world only identify as either male or female (Cochrane, 2016).

There are some individuals who do not specifically consider their gender to be male (masculine) or female (feminine). They are usually called as non-binary. The term 'non-binary' is used to represent someone who feels that they do not belong to any gender (Ferguson, 2022). Someone with a non-binary gender can identify themselves as a male and female at the same time (*bigender*), can be male or female (*genderfluid*), or not gendered (*agender*) (Adinda, 2020). Non-binary is a term that commonly used and an umbrella term of genders which have already mentioned (Transequality, 2018). The term non-binary is also known as *genderqueer* (Lautama, 2021). The definition of *genderqueer* is an identity that is not always male or female, or it can be a combination of both characters (Monro, 2005). There are abbreviated initials used for this group, namely NBGQ (*non-binary and genderqueer*) (Lautama, 2021).

According to BBC news survey by charity Pride in London (2016), almost all of minorities choose to hide their gender identity from the public since there

will be rejection and discrimination from society. United Nation Human Rights (2019) said in their official website that non-binary and transgender people often experience high levels of violence and discrimination such as bullied, rejected by family, expelled, and denied access to work. They also stated that a migrant, belong to ethnic minority, sex worker or someone living with HIV are particularly at risk for violence, including murder, mutilation, beating, rape, harassment and maltreatment.

The gender binary system becomes the unwavering norm. The society is expected to obey with these rules and norms, so that they can be considered as proper members of the society (Herza and Rahmantyo). The belief in heteronormativity often places non-binary people on the margins of social acceptance (Worthen, 2021). Heteronormativity is The concept of a hegemonic system of practices, norms and discourses that promote heterosexuality as a natural and superior to all other sexual orientation and the standard for defining normal sexual behavior and raises the assumption that there are only two gender identities in society, male and female (Abizar 2022; Robinson 2016).

Demi Lovato, an American singer who declared herself as a non-binary person, argues in her interview on live broadcast of Jane Fonda's Fire Drill Fridays about how the patriarchy keep her from being who she is. The patriarchal system puts women in a box that always says '*they are women*'. According to The Women Research Institute (2011), "The context of patriarchal culture marginalizes other sexual identities (besides men and women) because patriarchal culture preserves the Heteronormativity system and only recognizes a single

sexual identity and then negates other genders". Gender out of the gender binary is described as a marginalized population due to cisgenderism which delegitimizes their gender identity (Tan et al., 2021). It can be said that patriarchal culture has not only pushed women's freedom, but also gotten rid of the rights of non-binary people.

In countries that have legalized gender 'X' such as New Zealand, non-binary people still experience injustice and inequality. According to Jack Byrne, an activist of trans-masculine and human rights from New Zealand, minority groups such as transgender people and non-binary people are not explicitly protected in New Zealand's anti-discrimination laws. Although since 2006, the government has agreed that laws prohibiting sex discrimination also prohibit gender identity discrimination. According to Murphy (2019), transgender people and non-binary people suffer psychological distress up to nine times higher than the general population. Moreover, they even considered committing suicide and two out of every five people have intentionally self-harmed in the past 12 months. It shows a high number of cases against minority groups such as non-binary people.

According to Ripu Bathia in the report entitled "*Queer ethnic youth facing harassment and rejection from community*" (2019), Gender minorities in New Zealand are twice likely faced high level of rejection and harassment from their community. The rejection is highly dependent on factors such as cultural background, religion belief, family reputation, and social group. It is the reasons why, almost all gender minorities choose to hide and silent about their gender identity from public since there will be rejection and discrimination from society.

The lack of education regarding the broad understanding of sex, gender, and sexual orientation in society is also a factor that needs to be considered.

On the other hand, minorities like non-binary people need to come out in order to become visible and recognized by other (Rosati et al., 2020). Minorities such as non-binary people whose existence is invisible to others, especially in heteronormative society (Meyer, 2003). Coming out is a process of disclosing one's gender identity or sexual orientation such as non-binary person to others (Cass, 1979). They may experience difficulties during the Coming Out process due to the internal problems such as stress, depression, and other mental illnesses. In addition, they may also face pressure from their environment, especially from cis-heteronormative and cis-heterosexual society (Rosati et al., 2020). However, their existence may never be realized by others if they do not come out.

Minority groups are usually ignored and marginalized. However, when they are represented, it will be in negative way (Ross, 2019). In this digital era, media has an important role to change those negative stereotypes. It has a very important role in education. Media is a form of device which serves as an intermediary in a communication process between the communicator and the communicant (Asyar, 2011). Previously, non-binary character is often narrated by other people. However, the role of the media provides a place for minority groups to speak and express themselves (Saputra, 2017). Nowadays, there are several stories that put non-binary people as the main focus of the story in order to voice and express themselves. One of the stories which take non-binary people as the main characters is the short movie entitled "*They/Them*" (2020) from New Zealand.

"They/Them" is New Zealand short movie that was released in 2020. This short movie is created by Bo Beaufill who declares themselves as a non-binary gender. This short movie talks about a teenager named Juliana who struggled for their self-identity and face a gender dysphoria until they realize that they are someone with a non-binary gender. They have to struggle with toxic family, society, and friends. Bo Beaufill, the writer of the story, said that the aim of this movie is to create a story that makes everyone think in depth about the world. In addition, they also want to point out the positive representation of minorities, especially non-binary or transgender communities.

There is other short movie with the same theme and from the same region called *"Still Me"* (2021). This short movie also puts non-binary gender character as the main focus of the story. *"Still Me"* (2021) tells about a non-binary gender who wants to stand out their gender identity. However, because of all kinds of pressure from their environment, they experience anxiety and choose to hide their true identity again. The story in *"Still Me"* (2020) is similar as other non-binary gender short movies that focus on *'let me be myself'*. Moreover, this movie is created by Lachlan Mckeown, a cinematographer, writer, director and editor. Lachlan is a male cisgender. If we go back to the *"They/Them"* short movie, the writer is a non-binary and the story was created by individual who experienced violence, discrimination, and transphobic. Thus, it makes the story feel more genuine. In addition, the focus of the story is about *'who really I am'* before they finally realize *'this is me'*. The relationship shown between the main character and

the people around is more complex which includes family, friendship, and social environments.

There are a lot of studies which talk about gender representation in media and/or movies and it is not something new in academics. There are a lot of studies that have raised issues about gender. For instance, the study from Karolina Hansen and Katarzyna Żółtak (2022) entitled "*Social Perception of Non-Binary Individuals*" which aimed to reveals how non-binary individual is perceived through the language they commonly used. Additionally, there is a study from Glenn Mason (2016) entitled "'Coming Out' Stories: A narrative study into 'coming out' as lesbian and gay to the family". The aim of this study is to better understand the Coming Out process experienced by adolescents in revealing their sexual identity to their families. Others study comes from Afiah, Sawitri and Halleh (2020) titled "*Transcending the gender binary: Gender non-binary young adults in Amsterdam*". That study focused on how the character experiences of non-binary young adults in Amsterdam. Then another study from Medhy Aginta Hidayat and Mohtazul Farid entitled "*Strangers at Home: Identity Negotiation Practices among Ethnic Chinese in Madura, Indonesia*" (2013) which aimed to analyze the practices of identity negotiation of ethnic Chinese identity in inter-ethnic relations in Madura.

Based on the previous study, there are a lot of studies that focused on how gender minorities are represented. This current study aims to identify the Coming Out process before identify herself as non-binary gender using the theory of the Coming Out process stated by Eli Coleman (1982). This study also analyzes the

negotiation that is done by the main character, Juliana, during the Coming Out process in the short movie "*They/Them*" (2020). Furthermore, the writer applies a narrative and non-narrative approach to explore the character through the storyline, spoken word, and visualization presented

1.2. Statement of the Problem

According to the background of the study, these are the following questions were formulated for this study:

1. How does Juliana come out into Ash in "*They/Them*" (2020) short movie?
2. How does Juliana/Ash negotiate during coming out process in Country legalizing gender 'X' portrayed on "*They/Them*" (2020) short movie?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem, these are the objectives of the study, as follows:

1. To identify the coming out process of the non-binary gender character named Juliana when change her self-identity into Ash in the short movie "*They/Them*" (2020).
2. To analyze the how a non-binary gender, especially youth, negotiate their gender identity in the country legalized gender 'X' represented in the short movie "*They/Them*" (2020).

1.4. Significant of the Study

This study aims to find out the Coming Out process of non-binary gender character named Juliana who tries to transitioning her identity into Ash. This study also analyzes the negotiations conducted by Juliana as non-binary youth who lives in the country legalized gender 'X'. Therefore, this study is expected to be useful for future research. Hopefully, this study can be used as a reference source for students who will be doing research and bring up the same topic or issue in the future. Moreover, it is also expected to increase knowledge about non-binary individual, especially how an individual goes through several processes before identifying themselves a non-binary individual.

Furthermore, hopefully, people will realize that gender is about what we feel, not what we have. People need to understand that gender and sex are two different things. Those who are considered to have deviated from the society should not be judged and must be respected, because they are also part of human beings who deserve equality. Even though our society is not suitable with something which is related to gender 'X'. They are also having the same rights as male and female in their society.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

Coming Out : Coming out is a process of disclosing one's gender identity or sexual orientation such as non-binary person to others (Cass, 1979).

- Gender Binary : An assumption that gender and sex traditionally seen as binary, opposite forms of masculine and feminine (Morgenroth et al. 2020)
- Hetero-normativity : The concept of a hegemonic system of practice, norms and discourse that promote heterosexuality is a natural and superior to all other sexual orientation and the standard for defining normal sexual behavior (Robinson 2016).
- Negotiation : A way of dealing with differences between individuals, groups, or organizations in such a way as to minimize conflict (Saphiro, 2011)
- Non-Binary : Someone who can identify themselves as a male and female at the same time (*bigender*), can be male or female (*genderfluid*), or not gendered (*agender*) (Adinda, 2020).