

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, LGBT people are more intense in gaining their rights. Compared to the previous era where people who realized that they are gay decided to remain silent therefore they act and pretend like they are also a part of the heterosexual people. Like what Bernstein and Schaffner ever stated:

In 1960, every state in the United States had a sodomy law that banned certain consensual sex acts between adults in private. In addition to statutes regarding anal sex, the sodomy statutes, either by express statutory language or judicial interpretation, prohibited any oral-genital contact (3).

Here, the regulation of a country became a reason for some gay people not to express or perform their sexual activity. At that time, if they insist to act like what they wanted to do, they would be punished. Not to mention, the homophobia reaction towards homosexual people or any person who indicated as homosexual. The reaction from the homophobic can be varied; avoidance, sublimation, reaction formation, undoing, intellectualization, displacement, undoing, and suppression (Kantor 83). The reactions from homophobic people can also do the harm to the homosexual people, such as violence. This reaction usually called as a hate crime, because homophobic

people do the violence based on their hatred or even their fear towards the homosexual people. These consequences make LGBT people who have not come out yet need to think twice before they revealed to their beloved relations that they are gay. They think that the consequences are too hard to be compared with their lives, so the best decision at that time was remain secret or stay in the closet.

As time goes by, the world started to accept the homosexual people. In some countries, they even legalized the same-sex marriage. Brym & Lie stated that:

In 2001 the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. Belgium followed suit in 2003 and Spain and Canada legalized same-sex marriage in 2005. Eight other countries allow homosexuals to register their partnerships under the law so called *civil unions*. Civil unions recognize the partnerships as having some or all of the legal rights of marriage (459).

Different from any other countries that have already accepted the LGBT people in any kind of form that their law allowed, in Indonesia itself, the education about sex and sexuality still counted as left behind. Even in Indonesia, the term of sexuality itself is still being considered as taboo and not appropriate to be talked about in the public. Oetomo argued in his book that there was a time where some television shows in Indonesia aired few episodes that related with the topic about homosexuality, adultery and the freedom of sex life. It was aired on 2 private television channels; SCTV (*Potret*) and RCTI (*Buah Bibir*) on 1997. Unfortunately, Drs. Lukman Harun, who was on the Central Committee of Muhammadiyah condemned the shows as he

said that those 2 shows were really contradicted with the norms and the customs of this nation and also it against the value of religions itself (Oetomo 143).

Boellstorff argued in his book that it is always clear to Indonesians of any ethnic or religious background that the terms gay and *lesbi* do not originate in locality or tradition (Boellstorff 7). Therefore, Indonesia does not admit any sexual orientation other than heterosexual orientation. The heteronormativity itself becomes the mainstream idea in the society which means it blends with the norms and customs in Indonesia. The heteronormative discursive put man as the opposite of and more superior than woman, and placed heterosexual as the opposite of homosexual which makes the heterosexual is more superior than homosexual. The system of religion beliefs in Indonesia also makes it hard to accept homosexuals though it does exist. It makes the LGBT people in Indonesia feel oppressed because they cannot express their identity freely. People judgment and also the treatment from the society are some things they have to deal with. So, instead of dealing with it alone, some LGBT people create a medium where any people who feel they related to any LGBT issue could gather as one and share about what they have been through.

As an example, GAYa Nusantara, an LGBT community that spread along in Indonesia and Surabaya is becoming one of the cities which have the place for the LGBT community. This community is trying to gather LGBT people so that they would not feel alone, even they feel they are “different” from the society. The movement not only just a social institution like GAYa Nusantara but also in the

virtual world or as we can tell is in the internet. Now, that the development of technology has been increased, the movement of LGBT people is also expanding. Boellstorff's opinion towards virtual world and homosexual says that the modern Indonesian identities "gay" and "lesbi" had their own unique characteristics (Boellstorff 238). If a long time ago, it was difficult for LGBT people to meet and gather, now they do not have to meet each other face by face but by internet. The supports from the internet are also playing a big role in the LGBT people because everyone can be anyone without revealing their true identity and they are feeling confident about that.

The development of technology gives benefits towards LGBT people. In this case, we are talking about the internet. If we talk about the internet, we may not forget about the identity in the cyberspace. In cyberspace, the identities of many people remain anonymous. Hall writes that he views identification as 'points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us' (as cited in Bell 116). Some may use the fake name and though the rest of them using their real name, it is not guaranteed that the life in cyberspace is as the same as in the real life. More than that, the identity in the cyberspace is something that what we wanted us to be rather than what we really are.

As we know that LGBT is considered as a minority in this nation. Compared to the heterosexual people that we can express our identity freely at anywhere and anytime, in fact, the LGBT people cannot; in this case is lesbian. Therefore, they create a virtual community where they can speak their mind and express their identity

freely without the fear of judgment from the society. Through this study, it does matter because even lesbian is considered as a minority, their voices needed to be heard. It shows that lesbian also has the same right as heterosexual to express their identity.

With the anonymity in the cyberspace, it helps LGBT people to come out of the closet. It may not real, but by using the anonymous or a fake identity, they feel more accepted by the community they are in. As Bell stated that the anonymity offered makes cyberqueer spaces important cites for coming out, while retaining the protective shell of the RL (Real Life) closet (Bell 129). While in their real life, it might hard to accept them as the part of LGBT people. Though, by using the internet and find out that they are not alone and figure out that they have many other people who face the same problem as theirs, the moment of coming out itself becoming more bearable.

Even the identity in the cyberspace is not real does not mean their performativity can not be constructed. According to Butler, there is no authentic gender (27). It means that there are process of repetition and citational that lead to imitate the previous gender. As an example is in the drag contest where the drags trying to act and copy the femininity of a woman (Butler 136). Nevertheless, they would not be like a real woman because they are just keep repeating the action of a woman without being one.

There are a lot of online webs in Indonesia that stands for LGBT rights, such as *pelangiperempuan.com*, *sepocikopi.com*, *gaysindonesia.com*, *lgbtindonesia.org*

ourvoice.or.id and many more. These online websites, actually, are trying to be the place where some LGBT people could feel safe and not alone. . The feel of being alone for LGBT people and the lack of acceptance from the society towards them, – especially for the youth – could make them feel worthless. Nelson and Galas stated, as cited by Day, that the teenage years are difficult for all young people, but for gay youth the problems are compounded by isolation, rejection, fear and often self-hatred. (Day 104). Even in some serious cases, it led to commit suicide from the victims themselves, therefore for the youth where the emotions happened to be unstable, they need the support from their family and friends. Though, there are still few of people can accept the idea of a person being gay. Thus, the LGBT communities emerge as a shelter place for those who need acceptance. Not only just an offline community, but there is also an online community.

One of the most active online websites is *sepocikopi.com*. *Sepocikopi.com* is more concerned about lesbian issue. The creator, Alex and Lakshmi –who also declared themselves as a lesbian couple– claimed this site as a non-profit online magazine which means that it does not relate to any organization. As an online magazine, it posted new posts in every single day and it is not only being written by the creators but also the members. They can write any issue that they concerned with. There are 5 column categories in *sepocikopi.com*, which are; *sepocikopiana*, *gaya hidup*, *humaniora*, *seni budaya* and *reportase*. The author is more concerned about “Gaya Hidup” column because the author can figure out about the lesbian’s lifestyle through their performativity and also the ideologies that hidden behind the articles.

The author is using 2 writers from sepicikopi.com who go with the username Yasmin and Carmen. Yasmin and Carmen are considered as the most active writers in the “Gaya Hidup” column. Even the creator of sepicikopi.com, Alex and Lakshmi, have rarely posted their writings in this column. In January to September, there are 26 articles had written by different authors, and Yasmin and Carmen had posted almost half of the articles in the “Gaya Hidup” column in 2013. Moreover, Yasmin and Carmen also considered as a lesbian couple because they are also having written an article together and it is also the only article in the “Gaya Hidup” column which being written by 2 writers.

Giddens stated that “Gaya Hidup” or lifestyle interpreted as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity (Giddens 81). From “Gaya Hidup” column, the author can analyze the life of lesbian that portrayed in the articles that show whether their lifestyle is different from the heterosexual or not because their lifestyle also helps in constructing their identity trough their performativity. It would break the assumption and stigma in society that the sexuality is the one that constructing the lesbian identity.

There were some studies that had analyzed about lesbian issues before. As in Setyorini’s studies, she argued that the impact of weblog of lesbian in Indonesia is to help them to create a new identity (Setyorini 41). Another study from Nufus stated that weblog here helped to create a new discourse in the society about lesbian which

shows that lesbian is trying to present their positive impression through Sex & Health Rubric (Nufus 2011). In another study from Agustina argued that femininity itself is fluid and a form of a performativity (Agustina 2012). From these 3 studies, the aim of this study itself wanted to justify that lesbian sexuality is not the core of lesbian identity, instead it shows that their performativity from their lifestyle choice also plays a major role in constructing their identity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1. How are lesbians performativity represented in Yasmin's and Carmen's articles on "Gaya Hidup" column?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

sepocikopi.com is a lesbian online magazine that provides new articles every day from the members and also the creators. The articles usually contains of news and also information towards lesbian issues, such as their lifestyle. Therefore, the objectives of the study is to analyze and identify the construction of lesbian's performativity through 5 articles that Yasmin and Carmen had written in "Gaya Hidup" column.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to analyze the construction of lesbian performativity from the perspective of the actual lesbian themselves. It is necessary to be analyzed and observed because lately, we often read a lot of books, articles and opinion that come from the point of view of the heterosexual people about the life of homosexual people. Therefore, this research is going to analyze about the performativity of the lesbians in Indonesia that portrayed in the web sepocikopi.com.

The benefit from this research for the author is that the author able to know about the ambiguity of the performativity of lesbian's lifestyle from sepocikopi.com and the benefit for the society is that the society could see how the lesbians can also have the right to interpret themselves and prove to the society that they are not just another minority or the marginalized community. With having this online magazine, the lesbian community actually trying to show themselves to the public by using the power of cyberspace; it shows that their voices are no longer silence while their existence in the real society might not be as rapid as in the internet. Though, the creator of sepocikopi.com warned the lesbian writers to hide their identity properly; even the creators of this web itself are not using their real name in order to keep their identity remain secret in order to avoid the homophobic reactions. Then for this online magazine itself, the author found that the writings could not be copied and the image also could not be taken. It is also one of the ways to avoid the reactions from the society and negativism towards lesbians at sepocikopi.com.

The advantage in the field of scientific study itself is this research could be the reference for further study that related to the lesbian issue because this research is using the actual lesbian perspective in defining their performativity in order to figure out the ambiguity of lesbian's lifestyle in their actual practice.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

- Gender performativity : a stylized repetition of acts, an imitation or miming the dominant conventions of gender (Butler as cited in McCann and Kim 462)
- Identity : an issue of agency and self-determination: that the individual is a 'self interpreting subject'. (C. Taylor as cited in Benwell 18)
- Lesbian : A relationship between two women that happen to be romantically, psychologically and sexually involved.
- Queer : An umbrella term that usually refers to the LGBT communities.
- sepocikopi.com : an online lesbian magazine in Indonesia that was created by a lesbian couple, Alex and Laksmi in 2009.