

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Identity is the first thing that appears in people to differentiate them from others. It is said that identity is socially constructed. Paul James said that identity can be defined as qualities, beliefs, personality, looks or expression that make a person as himself (James 2015). It can also be based on each person's sex, or it may say biologically, either it is a girl or a boy. According to sex, people will have their own gender role. If someone is a girl, they will be more feminine. As a feminine, according to gender role, they will be more emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive (Tyson 2015). This role also happens if someone's sex is a boy. According to traditional gender role, a boy will be rational, strong, protective, and decisive (Tyson 2015). But gender is totally different from sex. Sex is biologically constructed, but gender is socially constructed. In other words, gender could be different from sex.

Gender studies examine how gender is less determined by nature than it is by culture (Guerin, et al. 2005). If someone is born as a girl, she can be more masculine than feminine depends on her surroundings. A boy can also be more feminine than masculine. There is no one can assure it. Many acronyms have been used to describe the community of sexual minorities (LGB, LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQI [Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex], and others); an overall term sometimes used is "queer," encompassing all individuals who identify as non-heteronormative (Crewsa and Crawfordb 2015).

Gender has become a serious problem in America (Nazish 2018), especially for people who are considered as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Those people are still experiencing harassment and discrimination even though there are laws made to protect their rights. According to transgender survey done in New York, 30 percent of transgender people of respondents who has a job reported being fired and experiencing some mistreatment in the workplace. The processes by which gender identities and roles are communicated and reinforced for young people have been considered within a number of theories (K. Bussey 1999). In 2018, over 20 transgender people were killed in the United States (Nazish 2018). In some countries, people who are LGBTQ tend to be invisible because they have been afraid of society. People who are LGBTQ are seen and treated as ill, insane, and dirty (Zhang 2014). They always being discriminated. While in Asia, people see LGBTQ is against the law, and they are many LGBTQ are going into prison because their rights are still being debated (Safir Soeparna 2014).

The discrimination among transgender is still happening even though there are LGBT rights in the United States. Research shows that Americans are mainly conservative about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and therefore, their rights are not legally supported equally in all states (Adamczyk 2009). These

LGBTQ issues are adapted in many movies. One of them is in a movie entitled *Saturday Church*. *Saturday Church* is a 2017 American musical fantasy drama film. The film is written and directed by Damon Cardasis, an openly gay editor. Cardasis said in the interview that he wants to create a movie where the actors can feel like it is their own story and they can see themselves on the screen (Crowley 2018). So that Cardasis casted members of the LGBTQ community, especially transgender actor, as the queer roles in the film. The film stars Luka Kain, Margot Bingham, Regina Taylor, Marquis Rodriguez, and Indyana Moore. *Saturday Church* film was released on January 12 2018, by Samuel Goldwyn Films (IMDb, Inc. n.d.). *Saturday Church* (2017) movie represents how gender is based on someone's performance but their sex. This movie is special because it talks about young teenage boy struggling in order to find his gender identity while other movies generally talk about an adult man.

According to Butler, gender is something we perform (Butler 1990). In other words, gender is not something we born with, neither something we have. Gender is basically something we do. Performativity is not something controlled, it is talking about something different. The performativity of gender and sexuality is not the same as gendered and sexualized performance. To say that gender is performativity is the same as how we position ourselves as gendered or sexual beings in relation to others is achieved through the repetition and revelation of these activities (Meyerhoff 2015).

Butler argues that gender is an impersonation which means that performativity is a repetition of acts, an imitation of the dominant conventions of gender.

The movie *Saturday Church* talks about a young boy named Ulysses who is raised in a religious family without his father. Ulysses is struggling to find his gender identity. He finds himself love wearing woman's clothes. He loves doing what women usually do. He realizes that he is different from others. Because of that reason, he is being discriminated by his surroundings. He gets bullied by other boys in his school and he has no courage to fight against them. One day he finds his sports clothes in a water closet, he is mad but he has nothing to do. Not only in school, he is also being discriminated by his family. There have been many times he got caught by his family member when he tried to put on his mother's clothes. He said that he will try to stop, but it is always failing. He cannot stop doing what he loves. Until one day he finds a community which consists of many people like him. In that community, he makes friends and shares his experience in being different with other members and he meets a boy and he realizes that he falls in love with that boy. Based on the story, Ulysses' attitude defines his sexual identity.

The story begins when his father, who was a soldier, passed away. He lives only with his mom and his brother. There is one woman who helps to take care of him, named Aunt Rose, and his brother while his mom going to work. Since his father passed away, his mom works harder to fulfill their daily needs. It makes him and his brother stay at home with aunt Rose until midnight. The movie mostly shows

Ulysses' struggle in order to find his gender identity. Living in a religious family must not be easy for someone like him. Aunt Rose is a woman who is very mad, she even threatened Ulysses. If he keeps acting like a woman, Aunt Rose will kick him out of the house. Even she almost punch him because he tries to defend himself.

How transgender people represented in the movie also happen in another film entitled *The Danish Girl* (2015). The film is about a guy named Einar who lived in Denmark. He later became known as Lili Elbe. Einar used to pose as a female model for his wife's painting until he decided to change his identity as a female. Einar secretly wearing women's clothes and had a relationship with a man. One day he decided to do genital surgery as his doctor suggested him.

Saturday Church (2017) movie takes place in New York state. New York City has the largest of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender population in the United States (Stringer 2017). In the United States, there are about 1.4 million adults identify as transgender (Hoffman 2016). In New York, an estimated 798,800 adults identify as LGBT (Zucker 2017). According to that survey, in between 2014-2016, there are 90,300 people identify as transgender (Zucker 2017). The number increases in 2017 because in that time there are nearly 150,000 teenagers from 13 to 17 years old identify as transgender (Chokshi 2017). It means, based on the number of teenage population, teenage transgender in New York considered as minority and they have bad quality of life. It has been stated that there are many LGBT rights in New York. However, survey stated that people who are LGBT still experiencing discrimination

in many ways. According to a survey done during May until June 2017 (Zucker 2017), 70% of transgender people admitted they had been verbally and physically harassed in public spaces such as restaurant, hotel, and hospital. Many of them were fired or forced to resign from their jobs due to their gender identity and 18% of them experienced homelessness (Stringer 2017). This condition also happens to New York's students. Most of New York state LGBTQ students suffer discrimination at school (Algar 2019). They are denied the bathroom of their choice, addressed with improper pronoun, and discouraged from engaging in public displays of affections. According to a survey done by New York Civil Liberties Union (Lieberman 2015), the majority of teenage transgender being harassed verbally and physically. The discrimination of teenage transgender has impact on their mental health and suicidal behaviour. Teenage transgender who experience high levels of harassment decided to skip class and stay at home. Those who were harassed at school were 5.6 times more likely to report having attempted suicide (Lieberman 2015).

This condition also happens in Indonesia. People who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, or it usually called as LGBT, also experiencing discrimination in Indonesia. LGBT is not illegal in Indonesia, but it still is socially unacceptable. Based on an article, in November 2018 some transgender women in Lampung, Sumatra got caught by Police and experienced harassment (Harsono 2018). The video went viral and after they got caught, those transgenders were given Islamic guidance. A month before, ten lesbians were caught by police after the police found

some photos of them kissing on Facebook (Harsono 2018). Here are the signs that even being LGBT is not illegal, they do not want to come out and hide their identities to avoid getting caught by local police.

Some transgender also experiencing being discriminated by society. Shinta, a transgender woman in Yogyakarta, living in a village where people still see transgender as a disease. People do not want to get close to her. Shinta admitted that one day she sat inside a mosque, some girls sat next her stood up and left her, they moved to another place further from Shinta (Ishii 2018). This condition also happen in a life of transgender man in Indonesia. One of Indonesian transgender man named Abhi admitted that he had to pretend his gender identity for more than ten years in front of his family and tried to be a woman as society wanted him to be (Kresna 2018). When he was twenty years old, he decided to tell his parents about what he felt because it started to give effect on his mental health. He got rejection from his big family but his mother accepted his condition and gave him support to come out as a man.

This phenomenon not only happens in the daily life of society but also happen in Indonesian movies. A movie entitled *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*, which was directed by Garin Nugroho is not allowed to be shown in some Indonesian cinemas because it is about LGBT drama and considered as a tool to persuade society to be LGBT (Lova 2019). *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* basically is a movie about a guy named Juno who loves dancing and he decided to join a dance community in his

village. As he was living in a society who believed dancing is a symbol of femininity, he got discriminated. He was forced to move from one village to another to avoid discrimination. The way a transgender person represented in the movie and the way society rejected the movie can prove that Indonesian people cannot accept transgender.

There are several movies that portrayed transgender issue that have been analysed previously. First, a study from Hifa Leliyana entitled 'The Representation of Gender Performativity in Einar Wegener/Lili Elbe, A Character in The Danish Girl (2015) Movie' (Leliyana 2018). In her study, Leliyana aims to reveal how gender performativity of Einar Wegener or Lili Elbe portrayed in The Danish Girl movie. Using the theory of gender performativity by Judith Butler (Butler 1990), her study found that gender identity cannot be defined from sexual genital by birth, but from something act continuously. Second, there is a study by Michael Lovelock (2019) entitled 'My Coming Out Story': Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Identities on Youtube. Using the theory of gender performativity by Judith Butler (Butler 1990), this study aims to analyze how queer people express their identities on Youtube. The study found out that queer people find self-validation rather than reveal identity through Youtube (Lovelock 2017). The gap between this study and Lovelock study is that Lovelock's used Youtube as an object while this study used movie. Last is a study by Rizka Wigati (2014), entitled 'The Representation of Gender Performativity in Patrick, A Character in Neil's Jordan Breakfast on Pluto (2005) Film'. Patrick is a

man who lived in Ireland who performs his opposite gender. Wigati analyzed Patrick's gender performativity and how society treated him. Her study found that Patrick experienced discrimination and harassment because he decided to become a transgender (Wigati 2014). The gap between Wigati's study and this study is that *Breakfast on Pluto* talks about Irish society and *Saturday Church* movie talks about American teenager. *Saturday Church* movie was released in 2017 while *Breakfast on Pluto* was released in 2005, between those years many things happen with transgender people and how society's thought about it.

In this research, the writer will analyze gender performativity that portrayed in *Saturday Church (2017)* movie. Using the theory of gender performativity by Judith Butler (Butler 1990), and *mise-en-scene* by Louis Giannetti (Giannetti 2008), the writer focuses on Ulysses' performances through his act of cross-dressing, repetition of acts, until he revealed as transgender. The writer also analyses how society's reaction toward him as he decided to be a transgender.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1. How does gender is being performed in Ulysses character in *Saturday Church* movie?
2. How does society treat Ulysses?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem that has been stated, this study aims to reach several objectives which are:

1. To analyze gender performativity that represented in Ulysses character in Saturday Church Movie.
2. To see how society's reaction toward Ulysses when he performed gender performativity

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is necessary to do because society nowadays sees people who are transgender as the other. Society treats them unfair. Society still cannot differentiate sex and gender which means society still expect a person to act based their biological sex, based on traditional gender role. Society does not realize it yet how transgender people deal with themselves and their struggle to find their gender identity and how gender is not defined by sex but by each person's performance. This movie shows an experience of 14 years old boy who is still confused with his gender identity. This study is useful to make people see a journey of a young boy finds his gender identity and how he deals with society.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Transgender : The term describes people whose gender identity or the expression does not match the sex they were

assigned at birth (Bradford 2018).

Gender : Social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities (Beasley 2005)

Gender Performativity : Gender as performance (Butler 1990).

Heteronormativity : Expresses the view that within social life heterosexuality is constructed as a compulsory norm and non-heterosexuality are constructed as deviant. (Beasley 2005, 251).