

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Adriana states that “gender is interpreted as social sex, while sex is biological sex” (2009: 138). This means that gender encompasses differences in the roles, functions, and responsibilities of men and women that are socially constructed. These differences are not determined by biological characteristics but are shaped through cultural values, social norms, traditions, and societal expectations. Consequently, gender roles may vary across different societies and periods of time, reflecting the influence of social and cultural contexts rather than innate biological factors. While these socially constructed roles are often accepted as normal within society, they can also create unequal expectations and opportunities between men and women. Such inequalities may lead to discriminatory attitudes and practices that place one gender in a disadvantaged position.

Gender discrimination is one of the consequences of unequal gender expectations and social treatment. It occurs when individuals are treated unfairly based on their gender, resulting in limitations on their rights, opportunities, and participation in various aspects of life. Gender discrimination generates effects that reach well beyond individual encounters, influencing broader societal structures and impacting economic stability, social development, and mental health outcomes across communities (Grey, 2023: 127). Gender discrimination also affects people’s identity, self-esteem, and social acceptance. It limits self-expression, restricts

access to social spaces, and continues stereotypes from one generation to another. Therefore, the social construction of gender not only shapes identity but also maintains inequalities that can negatively affect relationships and social well-being.

One example can be found in Jenny Han's novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty* (2016), which tells the story of Isabel "Belly" Conklin and her coming-of-age journey during summers spent at Cousins Beach with the Fisher family. Throughout the story, Belly experiences friendship, first love, heartbreak, and personal growth while navigating her relationships with Conrad and Jeremiah Fisher. As she matures, Belly faces various expectations regarding her appearance, emotions, and relationships. Through the experiences of its female protagonist, the novel illustrates how gender norms and social expectations influence the choices, behaviors, and development of young women. The story also portrays the challenges faced by female characters as they negotiate their identities within a social environment shaped by traditional gender expectations.

This research focuses on gender discrimination in *The Summer I Turned Pretty* for several reasons. Firstly, gender discrimination remains an important social issue that continues to affect individuals in various aspects of life. Secondly, the novel presents a realistic portrayal of a young woman's experiences in dealing with social expectations and gender-related pressures, making it relevant for literary analysis. Finally, analyzing gender discrimination in the novel can provide a deeper understanding of how literature represents social realities and how gender norms influence the experiences and development of female characters.

1.2 Research Questions

This research examines gender discrimination faced by Belly Conklin, the main character of *The Summer I Turned Pretty* by Jenny Han. The research problems in this study are as follows:

- 1.1 How is gender discrimination represented through patriarchal cultural structures in Jenny Han's *The Summer I Turned Pretty*?
- 1.2 How is gender discrimination represented through patriarchal relations in sexuality in Jenny Han's *The Summer I Turned Pretty*?
- 1.3 How is gender discrimination represented through patriarchal violence in Jenny Han's *The Summer I Turned Pretty*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purposes of the study are as follows:

- 1.1 To analyze the representation of gender discrimination through patriarchal cultural structures in *The Summer I Turned Pretty*.
- 1.2 To analyze the representation of gender discrimination through patriarchal relations in sexuality in *The Summer I Turned Pretty*.
- 1.3 To analyze the representation of gender discrimination through patriarchal violence in *The Summer I Turned Pretty*.

1.4 Previous Studies

Previous studies have examined the novel from a variety of critical perspectives. Some previous studies discuss different aspects of *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. Some researchers focus on femininity and patriarchal influence, while others discuss psychological development and language aspects such as illocutionary speech acts. These studies show that the novel can be analyzed from many different perspectives in literary research.

The first previous study was conducted by McClelland (2023) in a postgraduate thesis entitled *The Commercialization and Imposed Voices of Femininity in The Summer I Turned Pretty*. This study examines the commercialization of femininity and the influence of patriarchal and consumerist values on women's voices in both the novel and its television adaptation. The findings reveal that the female characters, particularly Belly, are frequently represented according to idealized standards of femininity that emphasize appearance, romance, and emotional labor, limiting their ability to express themselves authentically.

The second previous study was conducted by Fatmasari (2024) in an undergraduate thesis entitled *Analysis on the Conflicts of Main Character in the Novel The Summer I Turned Pretty by Jenny Han*. This study analyzes the internal and external conflicts experienced by the protagonist, Belly. The findings indicate that her internal conflicts mainly stem from identity confusion and emotional insecurity, while her external conflicts arise from interpersonal relationships, particularly those involving family and romantic relationships.

The third previous study was conducted by Safitri (2025) in an undergraduate thesis entitled *Exploring Belly's Love Relation with Three Boys in Jenny Han's Novel The Summer I Turned Pretty*. The findings show that Belly's relationships with the three boys in her life play an important role in shaping her emotional development and self-perception. The study also highlights the influence of gender expectations in romantic relationships from a female perspective and concludes that these relationships are a significant part of Belly's coming-of-age process.

The fourth previous study was conducted by Nabillah (2024) in an undergraduate thesis entitled *Analisis Psikologi Tokoh Utama dalam Series The Summer I Turned Pretty Karya Jenny Han*. The findings show that Belly experiences emotional instability, self-doubt, and psychological development influenced by her family background and social environment.

The fifth previous study was conducted by Natasia (2025) in an undergraduate thesis entitled *An Analysis of Expressive Illocutionary Speech Acts in The Summer I Turned Pretty TV Series*. This study focuses on expressive illocutionary speech acts found in the television adaptation of the novel. The findings reveal that expressive speech acts are used to convey feelings, attitudes, and emotional responses, contributing to character development and the portrayal of interpersonal relationships.

Though the previous studies discuss the same character, Isabel "Belly" Conklin, they have different focuses in their analysis. This research pointed on the gender discrimination experienced by Belly, the influence of patriarchal norms on

her coming-of-age process, and the effects of those gender limitations on her emotional development, identity formation, and psychological growth. In addition, this research discusses how Belly deals with the expectations and limitations placed on her as a young woman. Through her coming-of-age journey, she experiences mixed forms of pressure that in the end influence the way she thinks, behaves, and interacts with others. These season of her life gradually create her understanding of herself and help her develop her own identity despite the patriarchal values surrounding her.

1.5 Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research method with library research as the primary method of data collection. Qualitative research is used because the study focuses on interpreting meanings, themes, and representations found in literary works rather than numerical data. The library research method is applied to collect and examine relevant sources related to the research topic. According to George, “Library research involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal expert opinion on a research question, assessing the quality of those sources, and incorporating relevant information into one’s own work” (2008: 6). Accordingly, this study uses books, journal articles, theses, and other scholarly sources related to gender discrimination and literary analysis to support the interpretation of the novel.

This study employs a feminist literary criticism approach to analyze the representation of gender discrimination in *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. According to Tyson, “feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature reinforces or

undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (2015: 83). Therefore, this approach is used to examine the representation of gender discrimination experienced by the main character, Belly Conklin, particularly in relation to gender roles, social expectations, and patriarchal norms that influence her identity formation, emotional development, and relationships throughout her coming-of-age journey.

The data used in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is *The Summer I Turned Pretty* by Jenny Han, which serves as the main object of analysis. Meanwhile, the secondary sources include books, journal articles, theses, and other relevant references concerning gender discrimination, feminist literary criticism, and Sylvia Walby’s theory of patriarchy. The data are collected through close reading of the novel, during which the researcher identifies words, phrases, dialogues, narrative events, and character interactions that represent gender roles, gender discrimination, and patriarchal relations. The collected data are then analyzed to support the interpretation of the novel and answer the research objectives.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research is limited to the analysis of gender discrimination in Jenny Han’s *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. The study focuses on the intrinsic elements of the novel, namely character and characterization, setting, and conflict, as these elements contribute to the representation of the main character’s experiences. To analyze gender discrimination, this research employs Sylvia Walby’s theory of patriarchy, particularly the concepts of patriarchal cultural structures, patriarchal

relations in sexuality, and patriarchal violence. Through these concepts, the study examines how patriarchal values, gender expectations, and unequal power relations influence Belly Conklin's experiences and development throughout the novel. Therefore, this research argues that gender discrimination in *The Summer I Turned Pretty* is represented through patriarchal cultural structures, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal violence, which collectively shape Belly's identity, relationships, and personal growth.

