

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The literary works are personal expressions in the form of experiences, thoughts, passions, beliefs, ideas, and feelings that represent life with language as a medias in written form. According to Wellek and Warren, literature presents life as generally made up of social realism and is considered a social phenomenon (1949:109). Hudson stated that literature is an essential track record of people's lives including what they have seen, what they have experienced, and what they have thought and felt about those aspects (2015:12). Literature has become one of the best media for people to express their thoughts.

Literature in factual meaning has been equated with creative work or writing of the imagination: especially poetry, prose fiction, and drama. Meanwhile, literature in close meaning refers to various written texts (Frye et al., 1985:263). A novel as a literary work is the collaboration of real-life experience and imagination expressed through written language media. The novel is an advanced version of the fictional prose that emerged in the eighteenth century to become the world's primary literary expression (Frye et al., 1985:314). In literary works, not everything that is written is fictional, but the author also takes real events that occur in life as inspiration or basic information before writing the literary work.

One of the popular topics in the novel that portrayed a hot issue in society is homosexuality as part of the LGBT community. The American Psychological

Association claimed that homosexuality is a sexual attraction or activity between members of the same sex (2015:502). Homosexuality has become a fascinating and hot issue of discussion in society since many people believe they have a chance to speak up or come out about their identity. However, Stevens claimed that “prior to the twentieth century, gay and lesbian writing had been largely represented as the impossibility of the desired result thwarted by circumstances” (2011:2). This means that there is already a certain label that refers to literary works with LGBT topics. Stevens also mentioned that the writers of LGBTQ literature are individuals who are connected with certain contacts who can generate, assist, and continue the output of queer civilization (2011:10). Literary works with specific topics such as LGBTQ can help create a safe space for LGBTQ community and reach them without having to meet and unite them.

Society has two different reactions to homosexuality as a social issue, one is on the contra side, and the other is on the pro side. Although people nowadays tend to be more accepting of the LGBTQ community and support them, some groups still do not accept them as it is against their opinion or in matters of religion that homosexual behavior is deviant and immoral (Robertson & Monsen, 2008:14). Certain people consider homosexuality as a sin that violates religious teachings and social norms.

In society, a group who cannot accept homosexuals are called homophobic or homophobia. According to Herek, “homophobia is a term that is used to describe hostile reactions to lesbian and gay men, implies a unidimensional construct of attitudes as expressions of irrational fears” (2008:1). Thus, the term is

generally used by individuals or groups in society who express excessive hatred and fear based on beliefs, negative attitudes, or prejudice against LGBTQ people. However, Ahmad and Bhugra mentioned that activists have misused the term homophobic and made it into popular parlance. In different societies the term homophobia has broader implications (2010:448). The term homophobia is identical to heterosexuals who cannot accept homosexuals.

In the modern era, homophobia is still a scourge, especially in heterosexual societies. Although many countries have accepted the existence of sexual diversity and same-sex marriage, homophobia is widely supported by religious, political, and cultural values and beliefs on an individual and societal level. Homophobic attitudes are mostly based on the principle of heteronormativity that heterosexuality is the standard for legitimizing social and sexual relations, and considers homosexuality as an abnormal form (Ventriglio et al., 2021:1-3). Eguchi mentioned that the majority of gay and bisexual men who self-identify with internalized homophobia tend to feel unbearable with being recognized as homosexual by others (2006:352). The existence of social norms and religious teachings that have been attached to individuals and groups of people in general have become the standard for assessing homosexuality. Therefore, many people hide their homosexuality because they do not want to get different treatment.

Thompson and Zoloth stated that there are four types of homophobia includes personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural. First, personal homophobia refers to an individual's prejudgment that LGBTQ people belong in a form that is irreligious, immodest, and diseased. Additionally, people with this

behaviour feel superior to LGBTQ people and heterosexual consider them as incomplete women and men. Second, interpersonal homophobia refers to personal homophobia which becomes a behavior in individual's life in hatred by creating a harmful gag, discrimination, or verbal and physical abuse towards LGBTQ people. Third, insitutional homophobia or often called heterosexism refers to the behavior of certain institutions and organizations such as the governments or the church that discriminate against people based on their sexual preferences. Fourth, cultural homophobia refers to social norms and standard that creates prejudice based on sexual orientation, then dividing them into good heterosexuals and bad LGBTQ. In this homophobia, society makes people to be heterosexual. Cultural homophobia is also called heterosexism like institutional homophobia (1990:1). These types of homophobia show that homosexuals have difficulties to live because they have to face discrimination that exists in various aspects of life and it will be difficult to change it because it refers to existing standards.

Homophobic behavior has several different effects on each homosexual, especially in mental and physical health. Based on Newcomb and Mustanski's research in a journal article entitled *Internalized homophobia and internalizing mental health problems: A meta-analytic Review*, concluded a small to moderate correlation between Internalized Homophobia (IH) and internalization of mental health (symptoms of depression and anxiety). Signs of mental health disorders include lowered self-regard, racing heart, shortness of breath, rumination, and fear of negative evaluation (2010:1026-1027). When these signs get worse, they can lead to serious mental health problems.

This research contains a study of Angelo Surmelis' debut novel entitled, "*The Dangerous Art of Blending In*", which was published in early 2018. This novel is about Evan Panos' development of his sexuality. Evan's father is quite a workaholic and is a staunch believer in avoiding any conflict. Meanwhile, Evan's mother is a homophobic. Evan hides his homosexuality as he lives in Christian-Greek and heterosexual environment. However, Evan is in love with his best friend, Henry. The highlight of this novel is about the development of the main character's sexuality. Evan experiences various struggles, includes violence from his mother as his homosexuality develops in the story and this violence increases when Evan boldly admits his sexuality. Therefore, the writer wants to analyze the causes, process, characteristics of the main character's homosexuality, and the effects of homosexuality in the main character's life.

1.2 Research Problems

1. What are the causes of Evan's homosexuality in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*?
2. What are the stages of Evan's homosexuality development in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*?
3. What are the characteristics of Evan's homosexuality behaviors in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*?
4. What are the effects of Evan's homosexuality in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. This research will analyze the causes of Evan's homosexuality in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*.
2. This research will analyze the development of Evan's homosexuality in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*.
3. This research will analyze the characteristics of Evan's homosexuality behaviors in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*.
4. This research will analyze the effects of Evan's homosexuality in Angelo Surmelis' *The Dangerous Art of Blending In*.

1.4 Previous Study

There are several reviews of the novel entitled *The Dangerous Art of Blending In* written by Angelo Surmelis on the internet specifically in some personal blogs. The first review was written by Jessica entitled *Review: The Dangerous Art of Blending In By Angelo Surmelis*. In this review, Jessica mentioned that Evan should choose one of his indecision either being himself or being a good son according to his mother's wishes. On the good side, Jessica likes this novel as it portrays important topics, such as identity and abuse. She also admires the character development of Evan as the main character includes how he manages to dealing with problems that occurs in the story. However, Jessica feels the ending of the story is too rushed as it lack of several parts explanation about Evan's mother's reaction when her son decides to leave home, the responses of anyone who know Evan's abuses, and the confrontation between Evan's parents. She also feels this novel is a bit hard to read especially the abuses part and she feels frustrated about the missing piece of several parts (2018).

The second review was written by Charvi entitled *The Dangerous Art Of Blending In: Book Review*. In this review, Charvi describes Evan as a character that fits the description of humans in general where many people try to act normal and try to adjust to society rather than live to be themselves. Charvi also mentions how Evan lived in a toxic family where his mother has abusive behavior and his father failed to protect his family and fulfil his role as head of the family. Moreover, Charvi loves the plot of this novel, the story is not overly descriptive, and the portrayal of Evan's mother is not totally evil. However, Charvi feels there is minimal explanation on how Evan's mother becomes psychopath in the story (2018).

The third review entitled *Book Review: The Dangerous Art of Blending In by Angelo Surmelis* by Rach or Anxious Nachos. In this review, Rach mentioned that this novel well describes the form of domestic violence by showing that the change in behavior of Evan's mother from good to bad happened quickly. As well as how Evan as a child still hoped that his parents would love him even though he had been hurt. Rach mentioned how she does not like Henry's personality in the story. Henry becomes ignorance of Evan's safety, it shows when he sneak out to Evan's room without thinking the consequences that waiting for Evan from his mother. However, Rach stated that the story does not fit well together as it contain a realistic and emotional portrayal of domestic abuse with an odd romantic arc (2020).

The three reviews above mainly describes the characters, the relationship between the characters, domestic abuse in Evan's life, and the plot of the story.

However, there is no description of Evan's sexual identity development in the reviews. The writer uses these reviews as the guideline and becomes the research gaps which discuss the main character who experiences the development of his homosexual identity along with the causes, processes, the characteristics, and the effects of the main character's homosexuality.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is to discuss the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects reflected in "*The Dangerous Art of Blending In*" the novel by Angelo Surlmelis. The intrinsic aspects include the analysis of the main character and its characterization, and the internal and external conflict of the main character. Meanwhile, the extrinsic aspects includes, the causes, the process, the characteristics of Evan's homosexual behavior, and the effects of homosexual identity development in Evan's life. Every homosexual has a different process to recognize and develops their sexual identity. When their sexuality develops and enters a new chapter, they need to deal with certain situations such as how heterosexual society will treat them. Will homosexuals be treated differently and considered as problem or will homosexuals be accepted by heterosexuals. Evan as the main character who represents homosexuals in the novel goes through a process, transition, or development of his sexuality from heterosexual to homosexual which can be divided into six stages according to Vivienne Cass. Evan also deals with several situations as his homosexuality develops throughout the story.

1.6 Writing Organization

The organization of this study comprises four chapters.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The first chapter consists of six sub-chapters. They are the Background of the Study, Research Problems, Objectives of the Study, Previous Studies, Scope of the Study, and Writing Organization.

CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD

The second chapter consists of the theories and methods. The writer will look closely at the intrinsic aspects and the extrinsic aspects.

CHAPTER III: DATA ANALYSIS/RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains of the analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects using theories that are mentioned in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the summary of the analysis results in the previous chapter.

REFERENCES