

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of problem, research objective, research significance and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of Research

Study of men and women in world's culture is interested to be analyzed. There is dichotomy that emerged in the study of men and women through genders. The one is between how men and women act, and how they are perceived. Woman is always considered as subordinate. Beauvoir (1974: 16) defines man is "the one" and woman is "the other". Woman subordinate refers to the inferior position of women such as lack of access to society, decision making and etc. The feeling of powerlessness and discrimination has perceived by women. When power relationship exists, women are always dominated men.

Contemporary feminist theory begins with Simon de Beauvoir's argument that because men view woman as fundamentally different from themselves. Beauvoir (1974: 26) affirms that man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without men. Those situations above indicate that men are seen to be the one who have authority to control women. The inferiority of women shows inequality, which places women under men's domination.

The problem is often fitted with gender issues. Kessler and Wendy (1978: 6) say "gender is an anchor and once people decide what you are and they interpret everything you do in the light of that". There is many interpretation and

definition about men and women and what they should do in society relevant to their gender role. The term 'society' positively will correlate with cultural inheritance. One of the effects is the emergence of different perspective about men and women. Thus, gender is social construction as a product of social practice.

Penelope (2003:1) states actually as we were child we surrounded by gender role continually. Gender presents in real life of smallest society. The example is family. Speaking of family life, there are many roles in it such as, role of mother, father and child. All of them present action, conversation, and how they treat one of each naturally. Everyone can decide their role but in fact they have to following the norm of society. Gender has become a fundamental issue because gender is important aspects of people's life. Gender also has historically played a significant role in how the life of men and women are shaped. The word 'gender' originated from French word 'Genil' meaning how society and culture define female and male. The meaning of gender in English word has changed over time. The first meaning gender had the same definition as 'sex'.

Robert Stoller in Millet (1968: 29) states gender was thus refer to behavior, feelings, thoughts, and fantasies that were related to be sexes but that did not have primary biological connotations. This usage of the word gender refers to a perception caused socially constructed based on biological difference. Gender is a primary category in which individuals both identify themselves and are identified by other. West and Zimmerman in Penelope (2003: 1) defines gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but

something we do. Similarly Butler in Penelope (2003: 1) says, gender is something we perform.

Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potentials.

Gender is the social elaboration of biological sex, gender builds on biological sex.

Thus the definition of the biological categories male and female, and how people perceive themselves and other as male and female, is ultimately social. According to Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000: 3):

Labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender-not science-can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place.

However, every cultures have also contains a set of norm describing the sex and gender. Siwal (2008: 6) says the term 'gender' become popular in 1979 when Rhoda Unger urged scientists to use the term 'sex' when referring to biological aspects of being male and female and to use the term 'gender' when referring to social, cultural and psychological aspects in the lives of man and women. So it's more importantly, the very distinction between sex and gender, and relationship between the two terms. They have correlated with socio-culture.

Theoretical of gender can take many different form, like theory of gender development, gender identity: masculinity/femininity, gender and socialization and gender roles, gender prejudice and stereotypes etc. There are several studies about gender. That studies showed that problem about gender always develop

until present. Gender in 19th century was something of paradox. Traditionally, women were defined physically and intellectually as the ‘weaker’ sex in all ways subordinate to male authority. In private life women were subject to father, husbands, brother even adult sons. Publicly, men dominated all decision-making in political, legal and economic affairs.

One of literary work which is represents gender issue is *The Important of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde (1895). *The Importance of Being Earnest* presents story of the greater influence of women toward men, while in Victoria world, men have greater influence than women. *The Importance of Being Earnest* raises questions about gender roles by representing the unusual position between men and women.

This plays included literary canon, refer to a classification of literature and it gains status as an official inclusion into a group of literary works that are widely studied and respected. According to George Sampson in *The Concise of Being History of English Literature* (1961), *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of the two best comedies written since the time of Sheridan. Thus the researcher chooses to analyze this play and the researcher writes this analysis based on previous study.

The previous study mentioned earlier which has relevancy to my research such as, the first is *An Analysis of the Play Called The Importance of Being Earnest with Feminist Perspective*. The second is *Queer representations of Gender, Sexuality, Marriage and family in Oscar Wilde’s Comedies*. The third is *Gender Roles and Spousal Authority in A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled*

Hosseini and The Motif of Inversion in The Importance of Being Earnest. This first previous study is written by Çağlar Demir, International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research (2015). Second is written by Anni Alto, School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies University of Tampere (2010). Third is written by Karlina Amalia Alimat, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (2012) and fourth is written by Farnaz Sadaf, University of Punjab (2015).

The previous study of *An Analysis of the Play Called The Importance of Being Earnest with Feminist Perspective* focuses on social critique about Victorian society especially satirized patriarchal aspect. In other hand Anni also analyzes the idea of separate sphere for men and women in Wilde's three plays. The third is *Gender Roles and Spousal Authority in A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini analyzes about role of husband and wife in family and the last *The Motif of Inversion in The Importance of Being Earnest* explores the play to demonstrate such an inversion of the paradoxical situation. Based on the background above, the writer tries to explore the gender issues, especially representation of gender role in *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. The writer will examine the masculine and femininity role and the relationship.

2.1 Statement of Problem

This research will concern all characters both of men and women within represent their gender. The problem is formulated into questions:

- 1) How are the masculinity and femininity represented in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* plays?
- 2) How is the relationship between men and women based on their gender?

3.1 Research Objective

Objective of the study contents the object that is going to analyze based on the problem formulation:

- a. To search how the masculinity and femininity are represented in Oscar Wilde play's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- b. To find out how the relationship between men and women based on gender. In addition, to see what is actually effecting by gender for men and women in the relationship.

4.1 Research Significance

This research will apply literary theory as before and corroborate, the significance of this research are:

- a. Academically, this research is directed to the students of literary subject or reader generally for further analysis. Furthermore this research can be used as a reference for those who are interested in enriching the literary knowledge.
- b. Practically, this research is directed to those who are interested in this research and the readers have a new insight about the study of gender itself.

5.1 Definition of Key Term

- a. Gender: Term denoting the cultural constitution of notions concerning femininity or masculinity and the ways in which these serve ideologically to maintain gendered identities.
- b. Gender Stereotype: The impression and beliefs about what behavior for

females and males.

- c. Femininity: The matchmaking, universal sexuality, woman's highest value, which she seeks to realize always and everywhere.
- d. Masculinity: Masculinity is not a fixed characteristic of men, but is socially created and changes through history.
- e. Relationship: Connection between two variables, such as correlation, or relation between people such as a marriage or socializing with the opposite sex.
- f. Representation: Representation for every representation there are some object which is represented or object which are represented, to stand for something.

