

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of The Research

Literary works have been crucial pieces of evidence that represent the issues of human history. One of the issues that literary works present is the struggle of the transgender to claim their rights as humans being. The issue of equality of transgender rights is still controversial to this day. It is due to the diversity of opinions and considerations for the community. One of them is considerations according to specific religions and cultures that deny the existence of the third gender in society. However, it also became a debate among human rights activists. According to them, every human being has the right to get an equal and decent life like other humans being. This gender inequality is also caused by a patriarchal culture that is still strict. The power in determining a choice is still dominates by men. This patriarchal system is still used consciously or unconsciously in various countries. With this patriarchal system, all decisions are only seen from man's point of view, making the existence of a third gender still controversial.

One of the literary works that reveal the history of Transgender is *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff. Ebershoff is the first writer who tells the beginning of sex-change surgery and transgender issues in his debut novel, *The Danish Girl*, published in 2000. This novel is base on a true story from the first legal transgender recorded in the medical world. The novel is set in Copenhagen,

Denmark, where Einar Wegener, a famous painter in the 1920s, decided to change his identity to become a woman. David Ebershoff's novel was adapted into 20 languages and won several awards. The Rosenthal Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Lambda Literary Award for transgender fiction. It has also been adapted into a major motion picture the Academy Award winner by actor Eddie Redmayne.

David Ebershoff successfully raised the issue of transgender through *The Danish Girl*. This novel is encouraged by the story of a trans-woman life journey that cannot be forgotten and heartbreaking. Through his narration in this novel, the author invites the reader to know more about the history of transgender development. The Chicago Tribune agrees that this novel has strong abilities related to gender dysphoria and transsexualism issues. The style of receiving in this novel can also bring us back to Denmark in the early 1920s. Ebershoff uses a combination of words that are so beautiful and poetic that it makes the readers feel the vintage atmosphere. Ebershoff's novel is considered a pioneer of the LGBTQ+ movement, specifically for transgender people today.

In the beginning, literary works were only dominated by two sexes or genders, male and female or feminine and masculine. Many writers do not want to raise the third gender issue in their novels because it is still taboo and not popular among the readers. In general, gender is an individual's identity or behavior that reflects masculinity or femininity (Butler, 2016). Sex and gender are different, gender represents someone's behavior or appearance by following the tendency of their

own identity, and sex leads to a person's genital organs they are born (Giesecking, 2016). In this first novel, David Ebershoff boldly raised the issues of gender minorities, namely transgender, to the public openly. Ebershoff believes that people need to know about the existence of LGBTQ +, especially transgender. In a literary work, some people feel they have been born into the wrong body and try to find their true identity, the picture of a transgender person. The term transgender appears explained as a transfer of one's gender to another gender, interpreted as people who have an incompatible behavioral or sexual identity with their genital organs at birth (Bradford, 2017). This form of transgender uses as a person's social identity.

Lauren Guy, an LGBT editor, argues in her article entitled "*What's the point of LGBT literature,*" (2016) Heterosexual audiences always avoid what consider as "gay literature." They think that it is not relevant to their lives. However, if straight people do not read books that they consider to be "gay literature," then of course, "straight literature" also does not appeal to gay readers. (Guy Lauren, 2016). This shows that the whole purpose of fiction is to show the reader what it feels like to be someone else. We do not like to read about someone who is just like us. We like to read about others, precisely because they are different. Lauren said A gay man, LGBT experiences the world and is treated by the world in particular ways. They are not the same for every LGBT citizen, but it seems safe to say they are generally quite different from others' experiences in the world. An LGBT writer is just about inevitably writing from a different body of experience from a straight writer.

David Ebershoff illustrates gender issues in his novel from various perspectives. One of them, David, highlighted the dominance of one gender in another gender. Where “masculine” gender dominates “feminine” gender, Ebershoff confirmed this in the article entitled *The Danish Girl: an exploration of gender, sexuality, and cultural expectations*. “She was a working artist in a male-dominated world; she was very fiery and, in a way, a feminist” (2016:3). In the early 1900s in Denmark, men demanded masculine traits. Men with feminine traits would be ostracized by society. In pursuing his true identity, the main character, Einar Wegener, discovered many struggles and conflicts.

In the early 1900s, transgender categorization as a psychiatric disease such as Schizophrenia, which makes this a most significant problem. Referring to the statement of Eugen Steinach, a pioneer of Austrian endocrinologist, he says, “homosexuality originated in male testes” (1926:27). This theory led to testicular transplantation experiments in the early 1920s. A “homosexual” man was castrated, then given a “heterosexual” man’s testes. Same-sex relationships between men considered deviant, sinful, and even criminal for centuries. According to Erin Blakemore’s article entitled “*Gay Conversion Therapy’s Disturbing 19th-Century Origins*” (2019), psychiatrists and doctors also began at the end of the 19th century to discuss the issue of homosexuality. They start labeling same-sex desires in medical terms and start looking for ways to reverse them (homosexual to heterosexual) (2019:2).

As a result of the knowledge development in the medical world, experts have removed LGBTQ from the list of psychiatric disorders. Referring to the statement of Dr. Lale Say, a reproductive health expert at the *World Health Organization* (WHO) in the article entitled “*Mental and Behavioral Disorders*,” previous version - ICD-10 - (a medical term to Transgender) this was considered a gender identity disorder, but now -ICD-10- has been excluded from the category of gender identity disorders (2019:15). The strong dominance of the majority gender makes a terrible stigma for transgender people. They are considered to have a mental illness.

Despite that, in the novel *The Danish Girl*, the author explains that Einar did not despair with his wife, Greta. However, they received much pressure and rejection from the community. They finally found a bright spot. One doctor was willing to perform a sex-change surgery on Einar. The change in his identity to become a woman also impacts his behavior and habits. Then, Einar appeared as a different person from his new identity.

This novel, *The Danish Girl*, shows many social, life, and political aspects that can be analyzed based on the oppression and pressure faced by transgender people. Starting from the transgender position is considered a psychiatric disease until there is a change in the behaviors and habits of a transgender person after changes in identity. The patriarchal system was strong in the community and the government. It also became one of the aspects that oppressed the existence of transgender people. Masculine women and feminine men are very taboo at the

time. The writer feels challenged and interested in analyzing *The Danish Girl* to see how a man who turns into a woman (transgender woman) sees the habits and behavior changes.

As a result of changing someone's identity to transgender, it profoundly impacts changes in the person's habits and behavior. This thing is different from their old identity or before they do the process of being transgender. Thus, the writer entitles this research **Before and After Being A Transgender Reflected in *The Danish Girl* Novel by David Ebershoff: Examining Habits and Behaviors Changes.**

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The Danish Girl represents the experience of a man who transformed into a woman. Set in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the 1920s, which is very strong with its patriarchal system. The author presents many problems that arise in the novel. One of the novel's problems is that men must look masculine. Limited knowledge is also the key to the problems in this novel. People can not accept the existence of the third gender in society.

Another problem exposes by the author is the pressure and oppression of homosexuals and transgender people. Through Einar (Lily) 's character, the author, David Ebershoff, tries to show the readers how a transgender woman who succeeded changes people's perspectives. To be more receptive to other gender existences that were very strong at that time. Through her voice and actions

against all regulations, according to her, she was not in accordance with human freedom itself. It is later known as a form of the radical feminist movement.

Considering there are some many problems in this novel, the writer focuses on changing the main characters' habits and behavior. Changes in habits and behaviors from the main character (Einar Wegener) are exciting to analyze and discuss because identity change dramatically influences one's life. Especially for changes in the habits and behavior of the person. Those changes are examined from the perspective of the third and first person in the novel. After performing transgender surgery, the author shows readers that Einar has changed how he communicates. Ebershoff also explains that the main character was more confident after transitioning into a woman (Lily). The author also shows the struggles of how the main character can achieve his dream.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

This research focuses on how new identities can change the habits and behaviors of trans people themselves, as Ebershoff describes through the main character Einar Wegener.

This research aims to answer the following questions :

1. How does the author portray Einar's habits and behavior before becoming a woman in response to society's patriarchal system?

2. How does the author portray Einar's perspective of the patriarchal society towards Einar's new identity?

1.4 Objective of the Research

The research aims to analyze how the author presents the patriarchal values from a male's perspective who transformed into a female. The changes in perspective change the main characters' habits and behaviors during the transition from male to female. Changes in behaviors significantly affect the lives of trans people, as represented through the main character in *The Danish Girl* novel. Thus, the struggle to be transgender at the time was not easy. Ebershoff describes in his novel the oppression and struggles experienced by trans people. He shows how the character lives suffer not only emotionally but also socially. In this research, the writer will analyze further changes in the habits and behaviors of a transgender person before and after the transition from male to female. How these changes affect the reactions of those closest to the Einar Wegener himself. Besides, Ebershoff's work is evidence of the struggle and gender discrimination experienced by LGBTQ + especially for Transgender

1.5 Review of Related Studies

Before conducting this research, the writer finds some articles and essays related to this study. Some of them are about transgender movements, rights, and queer theory. As a medium of comparison to achieve a more in-depth

understanding, the writer compares the analyses made by other researchers to find different views and opinions for expanding this analysis.

First, *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff has analyzed by Kamelia Talebian Sedehi and Tay Lai Kit, students of the English Department Faculty of Modern Languages & Communication, Putra Malaysia University Payam Noor University, Isfahan branch, Isfahan, Iran. Their article is entitled “*Dissociating Realities and Trans-Forming Self in David Ebershoff’s The Danish Girl.*” Sadehi and kit argue that *The Danish Girl*, Einar, has a dissociative mental disorder or better known as a dissociative identity disorder, which is the result of Einar’s childhood stress and trauma. Sadehi and Kit see that Einar’s childhood trauma formed Lily’s character, who later took over Einar’s awareness and behavior. Sadehi and Kit argue that Einar’s alter ego was formed due to Einar’s failure to overcome childhood trauma. Ebershoff describes this as Einar's (Lily) choice to transform himself as a woman in the form of transferring the trauma part of himself. With the choice to follow his alter or remain with his traumatized part. In the end, Einar decides to be fully controlled by Lily (Einar’s alter ego).

This research has the same object as the writer, regarding the main character of Einar Wegener. However, this research's weakness is that the writers only focus on Einar’s personality disorder. The researchers do not focus on how the environment of the environment helps form Lily’s personality. The reference to the “*Mental Illness*” to the Einar character is also considered less precise, given that the WHO (*World Health Organization*) had excluded LGBTQ + from the

“*mental illness*” list. The theory applied by Sadehi and Kit is also different; in their research Sadehi and Kit apply the theory of Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. In their research, Sadehi and Kit saw the change in Einar’s character from a man to a woman through the mental side. They concluded that Lily is an Einar alter ego formed due to childhood trauma. Psychoanalysis theory is appropriate because they see from the psychological side. In contrast, the writer uses the queer theory to see the side of freedom of gender expression.

Second, a journal article by Rizka Wigati entitled “Gender Performativity in *Neil Jordan’s Breakfast on Pluto*” (2014). In her article, Wigati examines Patrick’s life in *Neil Jordan’s Breakfast on Pluto*. Patrick’s character describes as a man who has a high feminine side. Wigati argues that Patrick’s feminine side arises because Patrick often sees a woman dressing up every day. This repetition incident affected Patrick and later formed a feminine personality in Patrick himself. In her research, Wigati applies the Gender Trouble theory from Judith Butler. This study’s weakness is that the authors consider femininity to be transmitted by women to men. According to the writer, the writer does not have the same boat because feminine and masculine traits can be shared by a man simultaneously. This article also contributed to the author’s future research because it refers to the same theory but with different objects. This article can link the similarity of the main character conditions in *Neil Jordan’s Breakfast on Pluto* with the main character in the novel *The Danish Girl*, where the main character is a masculine a feminine man.

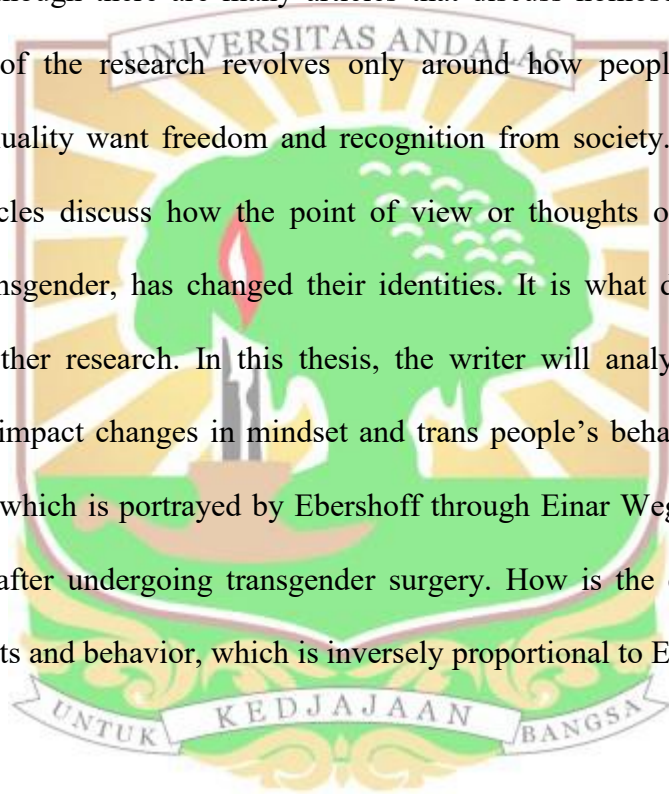
Third, in her article titled “Male Characters Bisexuality in Andre’s Call Me By Your Name” (2019), Erisa Mirani highlights three factors that cause a person to become homosexual. The first factor, one of the most significant possibilities for homosexual behavior, is a genetic inheritance from parents. The second factor is in adolescence. Everyone is trying to find their true self, so they often experience a dilemma in determining who they are. The third factor is the high curiosity of teens to try new things. This article’s weakness is that she talks about genetic factors that influence a person’s sexual orientation. However, through this article, the author exposes the identity crisis became superficial issues. In the case of an identity crisis, this is indeed the most common case that happened. Therefore, in this particular case, it needs to be accompanied by a psychologist or people who compete in this field.

Fourth is Nancy J. Knauer, a student from Temple University. She titled her thesis “Homosexuality as Contagion: From *The Well of Loneliness* to the *Boy Scouts* by *Radclyffe Hall*” (2016). In her thesis, Nancy uses the psychological approach of Sigmund Freud to represent the view of homosexuality. In her research, she argued that homosexuals do not want compassion or just a word of tolerance. Her research concludes that they want recognition, equality, and respect. Because they are also the same human as others, it is just different “tastes” in choosing a partner or dressing.

Research from Knauer in her thesis tells about how homosexual people in London in the 1920s demand recognition from society, which has the same case

with this thesis. This research's strength is Knauer shows that the homosexual character of the novel "*Well of Loneliness to the Boy Scouts*" (1928) by Radclyffe Hall not only wants tolerance and freedom but he also wants recognition and equal rights from the London society. Unfortunately, in her thesis, Knauer used a different theoretical approach from the writer. The use of sentences is rather challenging to understand.

Even though there are many articles that discuss homosexual and LGBT issues, most of the research revolves only around how people with minority gender or sexuality want freedom and recognition from society. Nevertheless, very few articles discuss how the point of view or thoughts of LGBT people, especially transgender, has changed their identities. It is what distinguishes this thesis from other research. In this thesis, the writer will analyze how identity changes also impact changes in mindset and trans people's behavior towards the environment, which is portrayed by Ebershoff through Einar Wegener's character to Lily Elbe after undergoing transgender surgery. How is the change in Lily's character habits and behavior, which is inversely proportional to Einar's thought?



1.6 Theoretical Framework

As the foundation of this research, the writer will apply the feminist theory by Judith butler. Feminism is an expansive arrangement of belief systems and developments centered around characterizing and accomplishing social, monetary,

and political equity for the woman. The feminist term begins in 1837 by a French savant named Charles Fourier, which has experienced many changes over time. There is much debate about the movements and historical events of feminism, but generally agree that the history of Western feminism is divided into three waves.

The first wave of feminism occurred during the 19th. The beginning 20th century in the U.K. and the U.S. Activists focus on women's suffrage, equal suffrage, and equality in marriage, sexuality, property ownership, and economic matters. In this first wave, activists fight for women's rights and equality in various aspects of life. Then, the activists also began to mention sexuality and race in social life, which was then emphasized in the second and third feminist waves. The second wave of feminism began in the U.S. in the 1960s and quickly spread throughout the world. Whereas the first wave only focused on property rights and voting rights. The second wave paid more attention to cultural and social arenas, including reproductive rights, family problems, domestic violence, and workplace equality. This movement has been criticized for paying more attention to upper-class white women than other groups.

After successfully fighting for equality of woman and man rights in the first wave, then proceed with class, cultural and racial problems in the second waves. In this third wave, the activists began to gather more votes to fight for non-white ethnic groups' rights or races other than whites (Evans, 2015). The third wave of feminism is the latest movement in the 1990s in the U.S. It addresses the second wave's movement's limitations by giving more attention to non-white ethnic

groups. This movement challenges the definition of gender and promotes sexuality as women's empowerment. In this third wave, the activists explored freedom of sexuality, where gender and freedom of expression are not limited to men and women. Various parties widely opposed this thought at the time.

One of the influential woman figures in the feminism movement in the modern era is Judith Butler, an American gender theorist and professor in comparative literature at the University of California. Since 1988, Butler has composed numerous books and articles on woman's liberation, sexual orientation hypothesis, theory, and culture. Her thoughts regarding women's liberation and sexual orientation were introduced in her most notable book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Butler states that "historically, feminism has viewed gender in a binary fashion. Particularly, humans are usually divided into two different categories: men and women" (1990:25). Butler argues against these binary categories. She states that gender should be seen as a human attribute that shifts and changes rather than remaining fixed. She disputes that women have been put together in a group with the same characteristics and interests, limiting their ability to choose their own unique identities (Butler, 1990).

This study will apply the radical feminist theory. Radical feminism was a branch formed during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. At this time, women had won the right to vote and work outside the home. The United States had gone through the sexual revolution, which had lowered the pressure for people to be strictly monogamous and had given them more room for sexual

expression. Radical feminist beliefs are based on the idea that the leading cause of women's oppression originates from social roles and government structures being constructed from male supremacy and patriarchy (Butler, 2015). The main difference between radical feminism and other branches is that they did not concentrate on equalizing power distribution. Instead, they focused their efforts on eliminating patriarchy by transforming society's entire structure. More specifically, they wanted to get rid of traditional gender roles.

Therefore, the writer also applies queer theory to analyze more specifically transgender. Queer reflects something that is unusual or could not be identified. Thus, the term queer theory interpret as an umbrella that includes Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and other sexual orientations. Which term queer can also be used to labeling a gender or sexuality that could not identify before it. As Jen Jack Giesecking writes in *Queer Theory* (2018), "heterosexuals whose gender or sexuality does not conform to popular expectations have used the term" queer "to define themselves" (2018:1). The writer uses queer theory because this research will focus on the main character, a heterosexual, then transformed into a trans-woman (transgender-woman).

The queer theory emerged in the 1990s, where this theory focused on gender. This theory is the development of feminist theory and gay studies, which were first studied. The term "queer theory" itself originates from Teresa de Lauretis's work in the differences in feminist cultural studies entitled "*Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexuality*. (1991) She explained that the term queer indicates at

least three interrelated goals in this theory. Rejecting heterosexuality as a benchmark for sexual formation is a challenge to the belief that lesbian and gay studies are one single entity, and a strong focus on various ways race forms sexual bias (1991:26). De Lauretis proposes that a strange theory can represent all sexual criticism and expect to make us think more about the diversity of sexuality.

One of the key concepts in this queer theory is the notion of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is a worldview that promotes heterosexuality as a normal, preferred, and strengthened sexual orientation in society through the institutions of marriage, taxes, work, and adoption rights, among many others. Heteronormativity is a form of power and control that puts pressure on righteous and gay individuals through accepted institutional arrangements and social norms (Knauer, 1998).

Regarding the relationship Queer with literature, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick wrote: "*Queer and Literature*" (2000). The relationship of queer with literature is about "trying to understand different types of sexual desires and how culture defines them" (2000:12). It is about how "you can not understand the relationship between men and women unless you understand the relationship between people of the same sex" (2000:13), including the possibility of sexual relations among them.

Considering that literature is a medium that greatly influences society, many writers try to introduce LGBT to the world through literary works. These novels are one form the media that can influence the readers' perceptions. Through *The*

Danish Girl novel, Ebershoff tries to portray the struggle of a transgender person in fighting for a human being's rights. According to Ayça Durmuş in his article entitled "*From Fiction to Reality: How LGBT Representations in Dragon Age Series Impacts Players' Happiness*" (2019), representations in the media can and do affect people's perceptions about various issues and subjects. Depending on how it is handle in the media, a subject or group of people can be seen positively or negatively. "...The media not only shapes our thoughts towards others. This can also affect our self-perception..." (2019:4). The lack of negative stereotypical representations or representations can endanger minority and marginal groups in general.

The writer uses several books, articles, and journals related to queer, homosexual, and transgender to support this research. The writer uses feminist and queer theories to analyze this research because Feminist and Queer Theories have covered all aspects of life LGBT itself. As explained by Jen Jack Giesecking, "Queer theory can also use beyond the realm of the gender of sexuality, particularly when studying the politics of racial, ethnicity, or class identities" (Giesecking,2013). Then, Thomas K. Nakayama explained, "Queer Theory covers many aspects such as academics, the study of literature, history, sociology, music, theatre, and law" (Nakayama,2016). Articles, books, and theories above will be used to understand the structure of literary works more deeply and guide how to elaborate on the issues in the novel with the theories. To make the writer easy to analyze the research object later on.

1.7 Method of the Research

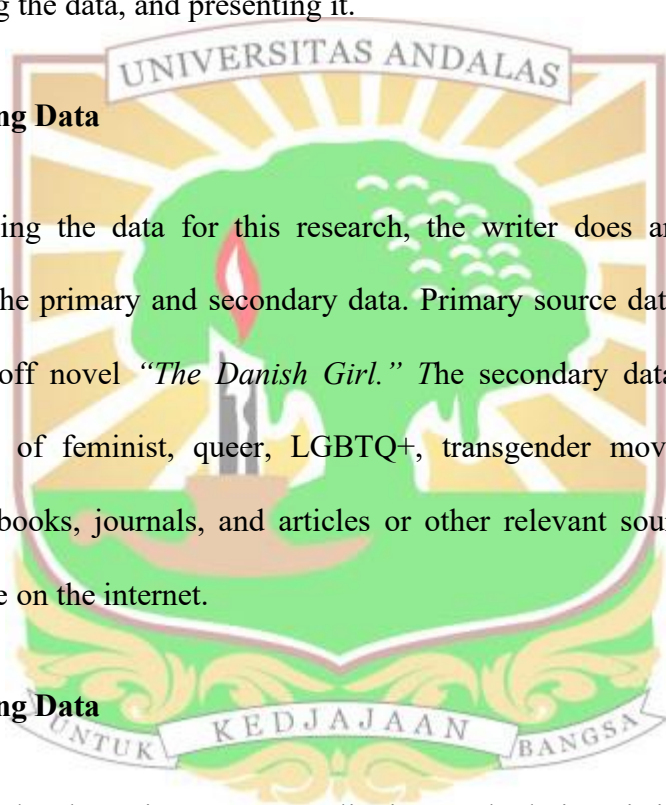
In conducting this research, the writer applies qualitative research to collect the data by doing library research. According to Elmer E. R. in his book entitled *Research, Instruction, and Library Research Process Outreach Services* (2016), library research involves the step by step process used to gather information to write a paper, create a presentation complete a project. The steps are collecting data, analyzing the data, and presenting it.

1.7.1 Collecting Data

In collecting the data for this research, the writer does an in-depth close reading with the primary and secondary data. Primary source data are taken from David Ebershoff novel *"The Danish Girl."* The secondary data is about the related issues of feminist, queer, LGBTQ+, transgender movement from the collection of books, journals, and articles or other relevant sources that able to find by browse on the internet.

1.7.2 Analyzing Data

In this study, the writer uses a qualitative method since it is non-numerical. As Stainback in *Understanding and Conducting Qualitative Research* (1968), states "qualitative research focuses on subjective data, data existing in within the minds of people and typically expressed or reported in natural language" (1968:7). Based on this explanation, the writer argues that the qualitative method will be sufficient to analyze it. To analyze the data, the writer will use Feminist Theory



by Judith Butler as the foundation of the analysis, Then, Queer Theory by Jen Gieseeking for analyzing more specific about transgender and Gender Trouble Theory by Judith Butler to examine habits and behaviors of the main character.

There are three steps in analyzing the data; first, the writer explains the main character's struggles to become transgender; the struggles included society, government, and emotions. Second, the writer analyzes how Einar's behaviors and habits before transitioning into a woman. Third, the writer analyzes how sex-change surgery and new identity impact Einar habits and behaviors. How do the responses/reactions from the people closest to Einar see the change in Einar's habits and behavior after undergoing the transition to being a woman?

1.7.3 Presenting the Result of Analysis

Since this research uses a qualitative method, the result of the analysis will be present descriptively. According to Bodgan and Biklen in their book entitled *Qualitative research for Education: an Introduction to Theory and Method*, qualitative research is descriptive; the data collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The study's written results contain quotations since the collected data are in the form of words.