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Gender Stereotype Portrayed in “I’m a Girl” by Yasmeeen Ismail and “Julian is a Mermaid” by Jessica Love Picture Books

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyses gender stereotype portrayed and how main character deal with it that is depict in picture books by Yasmeeen Ismail and by Jessica Love. The selected picture book entitled I’m A girl and Julian is a mermaid. The books were published in 2015 and 2018. By describing and analyzing the main characters in the picture books, this research uses a qualitative approach. The author used the theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1999) to analyze the data. The study's results demonstrated an analysis of gender stereotype addressing how male and female bodies are distinguished from one another by specific standards of appearance, personal traits, and gender roles that are acceptable in traditional societies for both genders. The finding of analysis I’m A girl picture book shows that how the main character can deal with the gender stereotype by knowing herself and also embracing herself and acts to break gender stereotype. The result of analysis Julian is a mermaid picture book also shows how the male main character breaks the gender stereotype with support by other character. This study concluded that female and male bodies identified as feminine and masculine as they performed certain acts, personal traits, and gender roles' considerations for male and female.

Keywords: *feminine, gender stereotype, masculine, picture book.*

INTRODUCTION

Humans were created by God with two genders, namely male and female. The two differences are unique because every human being has an identity that can reflect the appearance of their respective characters and roles. In society, gender differences are usually defined as determining positions or determining factors that have certain standards. Standardization of gender norms for both men and women frequently ignores unique variances and potential exceptions. Standardization can lead to gender stereotypes in both men and women. Sexuality refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys. Gender, according to the World Health Organization, are socially constructed characteristics of men, women, girls, and boys. This includes interpersonal relationships as well as the standards, behaviors, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy. It means being man and woman have special criteria in the society perception, men have to be like this, women have to be like that, this is called as gender stereotypes. In addition to biological factors, gender stereotype is affected by cultural suppositions gender is determined by society's assumptions, reviling norms, parenting styles and media.

Research about gender stereotype range from an examination of how gender stereotypes appear in various forms of media and how gender stereotypes influence and change how people perceive gender roles in society. Gender stereotypes have progressed into an interesting and mind-blowing issue that has been extensively researched and debated. Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained, reproduced, and validated in society, which is one of the reasons. Parents are often shocked by how can early children internalize gender stereotypes due to how deeply ingrained they are in our culture. Stereotype refers to the tendency to create and hold permanent societies perceptions and to apply this perception to a group among those group's members who have unique characteristics.

The societal conditioning of gender roles is frequently supported by gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are, to put it simply, culturally distinctive patterns of behavior that are determined by a culture's explicit or implicit norms. All individuals who are a part of that culture are expected to adhere to this at all times. Butler (1999) defines male bodies are connected with being masculine, while female bodies are associated with being feminine, Human identity is reflected through behavior, personality traits, roles, and appearance. This leads to the conclusion that gender is associated with distinct behavioral sets for woman and man, each of which varies based on sex. However, gender standards for man and woman in society are frequently overgeneralized without allowing for individual differences and possible exceptions. The standards may lead to stereotyped views of men and women.

Several decades of studies have revealed that gender stereotypes persist in children's books. Weitzman et al. conducted a study on Caldecott Medal and Newberry award-winning books and children's books from the popular Little Golden Books series from 1930 to 1970, which began research on children's literature and gender stereotypes in 1972 (As cite in Ellefsen 2015). Analyzing books that depict the issue of gender stereotypes is one way to raise awareness of gender stereotypes. The purpose of this study is to discuss gender stereotypes in selected picture books for children by Yasmeen Ismail and Jessica Love. Selected picture book titled *I'm*

a girl and *Julian is a mermaid*. The picture book was published in 2015 and 2018. This picture book is epic, interesting, had great art and takes seriously gender stereotypes in a fun way. The books were also chosen based on numerous reviews on the book club website amazon.com many adults have read it for their children, and it is one of the recommended books to read. The books grabbed writer's interest because they discussed gender stereotypes using relatable and can reached by children.

Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained in our life but today there are people who have an open mind about the issue of gender stereotypes. One example of people who against gender stereotype issues is Harry Styles. Harry Styles is an actor, singer, and songwriter from England. He is mainly remembered as a participant of the boy band One Direction. As publish by vogue.com article on December 2020, Harry Styles wear dress by Alessandro Michele crafted a frothy, lace-trimmed creation with a jacket on the cover for Vogue magazine. Style's action shows he dealing with gender stereotypes with the way he dresses up. According to vogue.co.uk article Styles state that "I presume there is so much masculinity if a man being vulnerable and accepting that you can be feminine too is not a challenge and I felt very comfort with that." On another occasion Harry Styles also argued "Born and raised, you are not even aware of what such terms signify. You have this sense of what it means to be masculine, and as you get older and learn more about the world you begin to be more comfortable with the person you are." (Style, 2020)

Butler (1999) defines gender as iterative and continuing process that acts repeated. Different roles in the society may have an impact. Additionally, gender stereotypes can be found in literary works such as picture books. Gender stereotypes issue depicted in selected literature picture books titled *I'm A girl* the author of the picture book is Yasmeen Ismail and also picture book by Jessica Love with the titled *Julian is a mermaid*. The selected picture book was published in 2015 and 2018. *I'm A Girl* picture book tells of a girl who is always mistaken for a boy by society because of her actions and appearance. *Julian is a mermaid* is picture book that tells the story of Julian. Julian is a young boy who love mermaids. Their appearance and actions are considered to be incompatible with their gender according to society norm so that the main characters in picture books become object of stereotypes.

The awareness about issue gender stereotype can be taught to children from an early age by picture book media. Yasmeen Ismail's *I'm A Girl* and Jessica Love's *Julian is a Mermaid* are both picture books. The picture book was published in 2015 and 2018. Selected picture book above contains issue gender stereotypes. Picture books focus to entertain or educate the children to not affect the negative impact of gender stereotype issues that could block their growth intellection on the golden ages.

In analysis selected picture books, the writer uses Judith Butler's gender performative theory. Gender performative theory relate with the issue will be discuss in selected picture books because in picture books depict issue gender stereotypes. Society manage how boys and girls should be in appearance, personal traits, and also categorize games for certain gender and gender roles.

The above-said topic caught the attention of the study. The reason for the study to happen because to educated the parents and children about gender stereotypes. The picture books entitled *I'm A girl* and *Julian is a mermaid* the picture book was published in 2015 and 2018 contains valuable lessons with simple illustrations, for example, doll is not always for girls and boys may like mermaid so children will easily understand gender stereotypes through this selected picture books. Therefore, readers, especially children, can increase their awareness about understanding gender stereotypes that can affect children's mindset from an early age through this picture book because reading such ideas at an early age will shape children's readers. That is why the writer chose this topic to discuss and analyze how gender stereotypes are portrayed in selected picture books. Hoping that this study will result in a study that the readers will accept and understand.

The study was able to compile three examples of study papers on the topic of gender stereotypes. They are as follows:

The first related study was conducted by Brendan Luyt, Seng Sheh Lee and Ng Yung Yong (2011) from National University Singapore, entitled "Gender Representations and Stereotype in Singaporean Picture Book: 1970 to 2008". The research was employed using Qualitative method. This study examines gender stereotypes in Singaporean picture books utilizing a content analysis approach of 80 Singaporean picture books were selected randomly. The random Singaporean selected picture book publishes from the 1970s until the present was coded. The following elements were examined: female and male name in picture book titles and of main characters, illustrations of female and male, male and female representations in outdoor and indoor scenes. Brendan and friends used theory by Weitzman et al. (1972) and Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) and counted up of the following: indoor and outdoor activities of girl and boy children; and the actions of all male and female characters, both instrumental-independent and passive-dependent. The result of the study shows that, roughly, gender parity had been achieved by the 2000s, with one important conclusion being that the 1980s marked a significant turning point in the representation of gender.

The second related study was written and completed by Zahra Nurul Aliyyah (2019) from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia conducted her undergraduate thesis entitled "Analyzing Gender Stereotype in Eva Ibbotson's *Which Witch?* (1992)." Zahra's study focuses on determining the existence of gender stereotypes and how they are perceived in *Which Witch* novel. This research analysis gender stereotype found in *Which Witch's* novel. This study using the Qualitative method. The present research specifically examines gender stereotype traits and attributes in the characterization of characters portrayed in the novel. To analyze the data Zahra using lists of traits and attributes theory developed by Evan-Davies (2000) and Copenhaver (2002). The study indicates that the book appears to perpetuate and promote gender stereotypes by integration gender stereotype term traits and attributes in the novel's protagonists' characterization. The result of study show that the novel does, in fact, reinforce gender stereotypes through the way its characters are portrayed. In *Which Witch* novel, the protagonist Arriman is characterized as a stereotypically aggressive, risk-taking, adventurous, assertive, and self-reliant man who values occupation and recognition over achievement as his source of power. The antagonist in this novel is portrayed as non-conforming towards the stereotype associate of their sexes. In the *Which Witch* novel, Madame Olympia is portrayed as aggressive, argumentative, and competitive. She is called an "evil beauty" as well. It can be concluded from the patterns and characterizations that the novel suggests that in order for a character to be deemed acceptable, she or he must conform to gender stereotypes. As a result, it can be claimed that the novel indeed promotes and perpetuates gender stereotypes.

Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati, Dian Adiarti, and Mia Fitria Agustina (2020) from the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman performed the third related study entitled "Gender stereotype in Nancy Meyers' *The Intern* (2015): A study of film audience response." This study focuses on analyzing gender stereotypes in the film *The Intern* using an audience response survey. Ririn Kurnia and friends applied gender stereotype theory by (Baxter, 2018; Ellemers, 2018) and theory by Jill Nelmes (2012) Introduction to film studies Fifth edition. This analysis employs theory in the study of film audiences, which also serves as a methodological approach and the discussion of gender stereotype and that is changing perspectives. The study's findings are the audience's perceptions of gender stereotypes are influenced by both the storylines and scenes in *The Intern* and the audience's underlying and profound background knowledge about gender stereotypes. The audience's extensive understanding of gender stereotypes and exposure to them has shaped their life experiences to response issue gender stereotypes and even to own better awareness and sensibility about gender stereotype.

The three related studies above discuss about gender stereotypes. The first study are written by Brendan Luyt, Seng Sheh Lee and Ng Yung Yong (2011) from National University Singapore, entitled "Gender Representations and Stereotype in Singaporean Picture Book: 1970 to 2008". The difference is in the method of study. Brendan and his friends applied the theory of Weitzman et al. (1972) and Kortenhuis and Demarest (1993), and counted gender representations and stereotypes in a random sample of 80 Singaporean picture books published between the 1970s and 2008. The similarity investigates gender stereotypes and analyses picture books as the subject, but concentrates more on male and female children's indoor and outdoor activities. Second related study fulfilled by Zahra Nurul Aliyyah (2019) from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia entitled "Analyzing Gender Stereotype in Eva Ibbotson's *Which Witch?* (1992)". The differences are in the theory used to conduct the study and the subject of the study, but the similarities are in describing gender stereotypes. The third study entitled "Gender stereotype in Nancy Meyers' *The Intern* (2015): A Study of film audience response" conducted by Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati, Dian Adiarti, and Mia Fitria Agustina (2020) from Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. The similarity examines issue gender stereotypes. This study uses a methodological approach and focuses on audiences' responses and perspectives on gender stereotypes in the film *The Intern*. The difference between this study and writer study is that this study is researching films, whereas writer is researching picture books, and the issue is about gender stereotypes. Writer use Judith Butler's of gender performativity theory and Ririn Kurnia and friends using theory gender stereotype by (Baxter, 2018; Ellemers, 2018) and theory by Jill Nelmes (2012) Introduction to film studies Fifth edition to analysis employs theory in the study of film using audience response survey.

METHODS

This study uses the qualitative method. The qualitative method is chosen because the data were taken from a picture book and they are analyzed in descriptive form and the result was described in descriptive explanation. Due to the lack of statistical processes used in this study, it differs from quantitative study. The writer collected all data related to the study, made some observations, and identified gender stereotypes portrayed in selected picture books with theory derived from related literature sources.

In order to fully understand processes, events, and relationships in the context of the social and cultural environment, qualitative research is the approach of choice (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The goal of qualitative research is to develop factual descriptions based on first-hand

knowledge of individuals or social groups in their natural environments, as opposed to producing numerical data that confirms or contradicts obvious hypotheses.

Meanwhile, Creswell (2002) describes that qualitative research is an inquiry procedure that focuses on using words to create a comprehensive, all-encompassing picture of a social or human situation, providing in-depth information reviews, and taking place in a natural environment.

The information was taken as references from some thesis, journals, books, and internet sources. The analysis interpreted by data related to the object into the description, then specifying the main problem found in the object to identify of issue gender stereotypes explained in selected picture books as the purpose of the writer analysis to be evaluated completely in the study.

This study's analysis units are Yasmeen Ismail's *I'm A Girl* picture book and Jessica Love's *Julian is a Mermaid*. Bloomsbury published the picture book *I'm A Girl* in 2015. Yasmeen is nominated for the 2015 Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Awards in the category of "Specsavers Children's Book of the Year - Junior" for her picture book *I'm A Girl*. The picture book also winning V & A Best Illustrated Book Awards in 2015. *Julian is a Mermaid* is picture book by Jessica Love. Candlewick Press published *Julian is a Mermaid* picture book in 2018. *Julian is a Mermaid* picture book awards includes winner of the Stonewall Book Award 2019, winner of the Klause Flugge Prize 2019, winner of the Opera Prima from the Bologna Children's Book Fair, Chicago Public Library Best of the Best and many more.

The following approaches are used by the writer to get the data such as: reading *I'm A Girl* and *Julian is a mermaid* picture books, identifying the pictures about gender stereotype in selected picture books, selecting the related pictures in selected picture books to analysis, categorizing gender stereotype related pictures and analyzing the data using Judith Butler's of gender performativity.

The technique of collecting and analyzing data that the study took such as: The data obtained through reading the picture books and analysis several times and paying attention to them as carefully as possible. The writer examined and found several gender stereotypes in selected picture books. The writer then analyzed how gender stereotype portrayed and how main character dealing with gender stereotype in selected picture books using Judith Butler's of gender performativity..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains how is gender stereotype portrayed and how the main character deals with gender stereotype in *I'm A girl* and *Julian is a mermaid* picture books. Writer's use picture and the text in both picture books for this study, then linked the analysis to Butler's (1999) gender performativity theory.

Appearance is a person's self-image that can be seen by others. Appearance describes a person's personality and nature from the outside. Gender stereotypes can be addressed to everyone including children. Stereotypes aimed at the main character are directly conveyed by people around in the picture book even just from her outside appearance. The main character be judged is a boy by community even though in their first impression. Gender stereotype can be seen through the main character appearance. The main character appears untidy and messed up and drinking from a scattered glass and table. She also seen with messy mouth after drinking consequently that someone thinks of her as a boys.

Picture shows that the main character appearance untidy when she playing around, her appearance characteristic it is not appropriate for her gender. It shows that the main character

appearance like a boy from outside with how she dresses up with t-shirt and short. She is forever getting mistaken for a boy because of her appearance and characteristic. Her characteristic is not appropriate as her gender when she drink and mess up to her shirt usually a girl considered being neater. It is suitable with Butler's (1999, p.179) statement "Gender should not be construed as a stable identity, but rather as a structured identity, a performative accomplishment in which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, comes to believe and perform in the style of belief." It is possible to conclude that gender should not be interpreted as a stable identity. Furthermore, from the picture above the way main character dress up and characteristic of her appearance interpreted that she constructed herself identity.

The picture describes that gender stereotype also can be seen through the way main character when she playing while running and someone ask her. She became object of gender stereotype masculine because her action and appearance.

Butler (1999, p.175) describes the performance as "playing on the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed." Anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance are three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality." The quotation suitable with picture it means main character performance depict different with her gender identity. Main character is a girl, but her appearance like a boy. The quotation "you okay sonny?" shows the masculine stereotype towards the representation of male. It portrays main character appearance and characteristic through how she looks like. It depicts main character as extremely energizing and energetic, preferring a boy. In addition, the main character dress up with red short shirt and pants shows how a girl expected having a nice-looking appearance with nude shirt color or small dress not shirt. In addition, the question "are you ok sonny?" portrays her as a boy, who is expected to engage more actively than a girl and who prefers to play passively.

Gender stereotype portrayed in term personal trait in picture book. Personal trait female and male have differences characteristics according traditional gender stereotype these differences fall into the masculine or feminine category. Masculinity is depicted as a characteristic of male in general that can be done and there can be on female characters. There are masculinity personal traits main character in *I'm a girl* picture book.

Picture shows that gender stereotype address to main character even though their first impression. The quotation "Ugh! Boys are so messy" shows judgment based on what is observed from external only. Stereotype is deliberate because in the eyes of society, boys are typically dirty or messy by nature. The following picture is also related. The main character raises her voice to deny that the person she is judging is a boy, displaying the rebellious part of her personality. The main character shouts "I'm a girl" repeatedly while standing up, causing the glass to break and disperse. Main character personal traits show that she arguing and bravely confirm that she is a girl. Additionally, the main character's responses to other people's judgments reveal that she has brave trait. It displays the masculine side of the main character's personality. It is suitable with Butler (1999, p.142) statement "if sexuality and gender are radically clearly different, then it does not follow that to be a given sex and gender are radically distinct, then it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender; in other word "man" need not interpret male bodies, and "woman" need not be the cultural construction of the female body. Gender can be concluded to be socially constructed and not as stable as sex. Main character is a girl but also can have masculinity trait side which boy characteristics, such as being fearless, have brave trait, messy appearance and other can also be found in girl.

Picture show that main character answer I'm a girl when she enjoyed played with scooter and running around, her masculine characteristics is shown when she keeps going on and confident. The indicate of masculine characteristic always fast, untidy, strong etc. According to traditional gender stereotype a boy faster than a girl, braver than a girl, stronger than a girl etc. Moreover, the masculine characteristics is shown as main character do not like the other little girl. The stereotype that only boy who can be brave or only boy who can run fast.

CONCLUSION

The writer was able to draw conclusions after examining *Julian is a mermaid*, a picture book by Jessica Love, and *I'm A girl* written by Yasmeen Ismail, applying gender performativity theory by Judith Butler. This selected picture books analysis of gender stereotypes demonstrates how some standards of society, such as appearance and personality traits, and gender role are considered appropriate for both genders are used to differentiate between male and female bodies. Furthermore, the binary nature of biological sex divides individuals into masculinity and femininity, which can result in expected roles based on specific characteristics. The male and female characters in this picture books are not what they appear to be. As a result, main character in the books must deal with gender stereotypes because character actions fall into categories that do not consider to their gender. The selected picture books breaking gender stereotypes by the content depicted in books each in their own way.

Gender cannot be depicted by biological but gender is portrayed when the character is formed. The main character in selected picture books is described as having both masculine and femininity. The main character in selected picture books is noted as being inconsistent with their biological gender. In other words, the two selected picture books break children's gender stereotypes and do not promote gender stereotypes. In selected picture books, main character can be deal with gender stereotypes that were addressed to her by gained confidence as a child by being himself and choosing what he and she liked.

In *I'm A girl* picture books it can be concluded that all of the pictures discussed above can be seen that how gender stereotype portrayed and how main character can deal with gender stereotypes. The main character can handle it by continuing to be confident in who she is and loudly declaring that she is a girl with all the traits and actions when playing. Main character being herself unaffected by stereotypes or society judgments. The main character is thought to have a strong character, she can still be herself and play how she pleases, whether or not others are around to encourage her.

In *Julian is a mermaid* picture book it can be concluded that the pictures discuss above can be seen that how gender stereotype portrayed and how main character can deal with gender stereotypes. Julian can be deal with gender stereotype can be seen based on the fact that he still like mermaids regardless of gender. The picture book is not mentioned that society examines behaviors and appearances and makes them objects of gender stereotypes, it is obvious that people think mermaids are for girls. He also participated in the Parade shows that he defies gender stereotypes. Julian is seen as being able to balance himself with gender role through dealing with them, being himself, and carrying on with what he wants. Julian's grandmother who still accepted Julian as he was, supported his acts as well. His grandmother's actions were seen as capable of dealing with gender stereotypes by supporting Julian.

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