

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human development is a phase of the life process that involves growth in the form of a biological and psychological stage comprising attitudes, personality, behaviour, and emotional and cognitive functions. Naturally, human growth is divided by stages of time through specific periods. In 1896, Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist, founded Psychoanalysis. Freud's view of human personality was based on his encounters with his patients, examination of his dreams, and depth studies in science and the humanities. The outcomes provided the foundation for developing his theories, and his notion of personality was constantly revised during the following 50 years of his life (Feist et al., 2013). The psychoanalysis theory influenced theorists such as Erik Homburger Erikson, and his post-Freudian making the concept of Sigmund Freud's adolescent developmental stages include adolescence, adult years, and old age. Erikson's theory suggests that Freud's works contribute to the history of adolescence development.

Erikson observes that a distinct psychosocial struggle leads to personality formation at each stage. In the adolescence stage, the conflict occurs as an identity crisis, a critical stage in development in a person's life that can either strengthen or weaken the personality. Similarly, Sylus (2011) states, "an identity is fundamental for a person to develop even while he/she reflects on changing cultures and people's opinions." This suggests that identity is developed throughout a human life cycle,

starting when we are young and continuing until the human becomes old. Identity is not given to us instantly when we are born; it may be formed and evolved as a result of the situations and experiences that one goes through.

Writing on identity, self-actualization, and personality has recently become increasingly popular. Those are all identity-related issues. Identity is a person's self-image that may differ from that of others. Erikson (1988) theorizes that the term identity conveys such a relation that it implies both a constant sameness within an individual (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some basic characteristic with others. This indicates one's identity would differ from another based on how one lives their life.

The theme of finding one's true identity is common in adolescent and young adult literature. Since the late 1960s, young adult literature has risen and become popular. According to the Children's book Division of American Publisher, the young adult genre is associated with contemporary prose, which refers to realistic fiction that addresses real-life problems and situations, and brings interest to young readers aged 12-18. As time passed, literature has expanded into many new forms of literary works, including novels, poetry, and other non-fiction that combines visual pictures, for instance, comics, picture books, and graphic novels. Young adult literature, also known as the coming-of-age genre, gives the author the creative freedom to explore themes that relate to the younger demographic of readers. Literature often associates the coming-of-age theme and the problems or challenges with transitions. In the view of Stephens (2007), young adult literature

is “a story that tackles the complex and often adult issues that arise during an adolescent journey toward identity.

Jerry Spinelli is known for specializing in adolescent - young adult literature and received a Newbery Award for one of his books *Maniac Magee* (1990). Spinelli's writing concerns controversial topics such as racism, sexism, and homelessness while accurately and humorously depicting adolescents. In most of his works, he speaks on experiences and sentiments from his youth. Spinelli lives in Pennsylvania with his wife, Eileen, a children's book author. His known published works are *Wringer* (1997), *Loser* (2002), *Milkweed* (2003), and many others. Jerry Spinelli's novels give a hint of realistic fiction. *Stargirl* (2000) is about conformity versus individuality that revolves around the social climate in Mica High School. *Stargirl* became *New York Times* Bestseller and received awards from Parents Choice Gold Award Winner and American Library Association Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults Award winner. Bringing the novel to the screen, *Stargirl* was adapted to be a Disney+ original movie in 2020, followed by a sequel *Hollywood, Stargirl* (2022), and has been discussed as a research topic in different articles, journals, and studies.

Susan Caraway 'Stargirl' a colorful and lively spirit, enters the life of the male adolescent narrator, Leo Borlock, an eleventh-grader from Mica Arizona High School who was conscious of his close-minded high school environment in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* (2000). *Stargirl* is portrayed as odd and strange because she is different from her classmates. *Stargirl* is different from the other kids because she dresses differently, listens to different music, and acts differently. She doesn't care

what others think of her and stands by her values. *Stargirl* is a mystery at the start of the book, and many are intrigued by her. People become tired of her as she reveals her true self, and they begin to despise her for her uniqueness. The author, Spinelli, remarks on how individuals are seen and the influence of conformity in society. Spinelli also focuses on how individuality is rarely seen positively.

Stargirl limits her sense of herself for someone else when she changes her name to Susan for Leo. She is unhappy since she's not being her authentic self. She felt unease and not being true to herself when acting like everyone else. She is low, almost frustrated. This section of the story demonstrates how far individuals will go for love.

Throughout the novel, Spinelli depicts Leo's selfishness since Leo is genuinely interested in being with Susan rather than *Stargirl*. He is too focused on his own emotions to notice how sad and how badly she dislikes being Susan. When she decides to be *Stargirl* again, he demonstrates his selfishness by refusing to be with her, even though she is the girl he has fallen in love.

Stargirl and her actual surname are both symbols. *Stargirl*, like her names imply, is outgoing and unique. She, just like stars, stands out from the crowd. *Stargirl*, just like stars, stands out and shines brightly. She symbolizes herself completely and proudly. For example, social media commonly drives individuals to conform to society's dress standards, self-expression, and what they want and think to be considered normal.

The process of exploration and discovery of self-awareness is depicted by Jerry Spinelli in his works commonly in adolescent & young adult literature,

portrayed explicitly in *Stargirl*. By choosing to analyze *Stargirl*, the writer could recognize the ideology that sets within the text and the options authors showcase for adolescent identity.

Erik Erikson (1963, as cited in Pond, 2017) defines this adolescent stage in a person's life as "a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood," which is relevant to exploration and discovery. Cherry (2021) observes that Erikson's Ego identity concept constantly changes due to new experiences and information humans receive in their daily interactions. As there are new experiences, humans also take on challenges that can help or delay identity development. As studies about adolescent development evolved, James Marcia, the Canadian developmental psychologist, refined Erikson's theory. In the 1960s, Marcia published his work about identity statuses. Marcia concludes that adolescents are not confused but will go through two key processes as they develop their identities: crisis and commitment. Commitment is the achievement of one's identity. Erik Erikson, a theorist, also published works about identity crises, and Marcia studied further about identity in adolescence from his work. "Ego Identity: A Handbook for Psychosocial Research," a book by Marcia, includes his work on identity theory.

Numerous research has been conducted on concerns of identity. Identity may be seen in a variety of ways. The first research study is related to the corpus *Stargirl*. This research is conducted by Merrillyn Lundahl (2020) from Southern Oregon University, and her study is an Ecocritical Approach to *Stargirl*. Ecocriticism was examined between literature and the physical environment. There are at least some ecocritical approaches to consider in a textual analysis of *Stargirl*.

An ecocritical reading examines the relationship of the natural world to characterization and argues that *Stargirl* becomes a more rounded character. One way of reading *Stargirl*'s ecocritical includes examining how aspects of the natural world are used for characterization.

Another study that is relevant to the research is conducted by Emma Gormely (2006), which examines, *Name and Identity in Spinelli's Stargirl and Loser*; based on this study, the notion of identity as an inherently linguistic and social construct is reflected in the writings of author Jerry Spinelli, particularly in his novel *Stargirl*, which is specifically studied in the article. Names and titles play a crucial role in the development of identity. For example, Maniac Magee, Wringer, *Stargirl*, and *Loser* take their names from the central character's nickname in Jerry Spinelli's novels. *Milkweed*, *Loser*, and *Stargirl*, Spinelli's three most recent books, portray young adults whose identities are profoundly shaped by what they are called. Spinelli emphasizes the importance of the name in the struggle for self-definition as the characters reach adolescence.

Meanwhile, Harper (2007), in her research entitled "Studying Masculinity in Books about Girls," examines the depiction of masculinity in popular young adult fiction of female protagonists. *Stargirl* was one of the novels considered narratives that involve the consequence of narratives. The novel's narrator Leo Borlock insists upon change so *Stargirl* can fit in with the ordinary people and not be flamboyant. Harper considers *Stargirl*'s character as diminished masculinity. *Stargirl*'s renewed commitment to herself rather than others is affected by Leo's actions, which is consistent with traditional masculinity. In general, masculinity and adolescence are

portrayed as negative and limiting, which in the novel restricts and dictates Stargirl's performances of self.

These studies give a different approach to corpus studies. Previous studies in the field of literature have discussed identity construction using a variety of corpuses and methodologies. The discussion about identity development in Jerry Spinelli's novel *Stargirl* is uncommon, and *Stargirl* contributes to primary education as a reading resource that impacts children's literature.

Therefore, the writer will analyze the growth of the Identity development of Susan Caraway '*Stargirl*' with Erik Erikson's Development Stage and James Marcia's Identity Status.

1.2 Research Question

How is Susan Caraway or as known as *Stargirl* identity development depicted in the novel *Stargirl*?

1.3 Objective

This research aims to understand *Susan Caraway's 'Stargirl'* character that has gone through a phase of change, developing their identity that is supported by a sequence of passages throughout the novel viewed from Erik Erikson's Development Stages and James Marcia Identity Status.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the identity development of the character *Stargirl* from *Stargirl* (2000) utilizing Erik Erikson's Development theory and James Marcia's Identity Status.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to English Literature studies, specifically in adolescent and young adult literature. The results of this study are expected to contribute to and inform the broader community, particularly about the identity development of adolescent character in the novel, by combining Erik Erikson's Psychosocial development and James Marcia's identity statuses theory. Additionally, this study is emphasized to give the readers more knowledge about human development and will help the reader understand Identity Development in literary works. Furthermore, this research also contributes to the study of literature, particularly for students in the English Literature Department at the State University of Jakarta. It can be used as the reference of another researcher who relates to their research.