CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Every human being goes through some stages in their life before turning into the person she/he is right now. The way people shape their personal identity is a part of psychological development. Psychological development focuses on how people grow, develop and adapt at different stages of life. According to Erikson (1963) there are eight stages of psychological development, from infancy to adulthood. During each stage, the person experiences a psychosocial crisis which could have a positive or negative outcome for their identity development.

Identity is not something given by birth, and it is not independent from biological processes of the human body either. It is not the (physical) body itself, and it is not the Super-Ego or Ideal-Ego alone (Erikson, 1959). Erikson defines identity as a constant reproduction of images of self, experienced and put together by an individuum. It is acquired via our interaction with others in particular situations (Ting-Toomey, 1999). According to this definition, identity is the reflective view of a person’s self, and this reflection is relevant to his or her culture. Identity meaning is relevant to questions such as “Who am I and who are you?”

People learn about their identity and the identity of others through interactions. Tajfel (1979) proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team etc.) by which people belonged to are an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world.

A person with a strong sense of identity is one who knows where he is in life, has accepted this positions and has workable goals for change and growth. He has a sense of uniqueness while also having a sense of belonging and wholeness (Heffner, 2017). According to Erikson’s Psychosocial study, people who do not successfully navigate the crisis of identity are confused about who they are and
either become isolated socially, or develop an overblown sense of superiority. Teens that become stuck at this age are usually emotionally immature as adults.

We humans are social beings thus we need to have social interaction with others for we cannot live all by ourselves our whole life. There are times in life when we need the hand of others so much which is why we need to have interaction with other human beings. Therefore, when a human is isolated socially it becomes a big problem. Patrick Süskind describes it best in his novel **Perfume: The Story of a Murderer**. The novel shows us how it matters to have an identity of our own and the trouble we need to face when we do not have one.

In the novel “Perfume: The Story of a Murderer” by Patrick Süskind, the main character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, is depicted as somebody who is gifted with the world’s most extraordinary sense of smell and has the ability to discern odors. Ironically he was born with no body odors. The fact that he has no body odor makes him think that he is not a human being for every human being must have their own odor. In the novel it shows that it is a problem when someone has no body odor and what scares Grenouille the most is the fact that he claims himself as having the best nose in Paris for being able to discern odors but ironically has no smell himself. Grenouille determines identity through smell and the fact that he cannot smell himself makes him thinks that he does not have an identity. In his mind he has to smell himself so that he can claim himself a human being, just like every person he meets. The lack of body odor has triggered him to create the best scent in the world and wear it so that people will recognize his existence and that he will be accepted as a part of them.

There has been some research of this novel done by some researchers before. They put their attention on Grenouille’s psychological condition. One of the researches I found is titled *Jean-Baptiste Grenouille’s Alienation Symptoms in Patrick Süskind’s “Perfume: The Story of A Murderer”* by Aurelia Laksmi Kriswanti (2017) an English Literature student of Sanata Dharma University. In her research, she analyzes Grenouille’s characteristics and how his
characteristics reveals alienation symptoms. She applies psychological approach to analyze the alienation symptoms experienced by the main character of the novel—Jean-Baptiste Grenouille. She reveals in her research the alienation symptoms experienced by Grenouille are his state of being helpless, disobedient and feeling different from others and it makes him difficult to interact with others in his society and also he shows the feeling of depression—he is depressed because he cannot overcome his disappointment knowing that he is failed in distilling non-scented objects and he cannot accept his failure. She draws a conclusion saying that alienation can happen when a person withdraws from his/her environment and by the alienation symptoms Grenouille experiences he then isolates himself from the society. Therefore he feels distant and estranged from his own emotions too.

The previous research mentioned above has different focus from my research yet the research is useful as the supporting sources for me to study Grenouille’s identity crisis because the research discusses the alienation symptoms where Grenouille feels that he is unwanted and does not belong to the society he is living which later—in my research—can lead to a crisis of identity (where it all starts from Grenouille’s condition of being isolated from his own society). Besides, both alienation and isolation express similar condition or feeling of being alone or loneliness so the research is very useful for me because even though the focus of the research is different, both mine and Aurelia’s research is interconnected.

Based on all the explanations above, I would like to discuss the identity crisis experienced by the main character of the novel and how it (identity) matters in every human being’s life. Therefore, I want to analyze the novel using Psychosocial theory by Erik Erikson. I entitled this research as Identity Crisis: A Psychosocial Study of The Main Character’s Identity in Patrick Süskind’s Novel “Perfume: The Story of A Murderer”.

B. Scope of Study

The analysis focuses on the role of society on the process of the main character’s growing and its impact on finding his personal identity in order to be considered exist as the other human beings around him.

C. Problem Statements

This research is focused on answering the following question:

1. How does the role of society influence Grenouille’s process of growing?
2. What is the impact of society’s role upon Grenouille’s personality?

D. Objective of Study

Based on the problem statement above, the objectives of this research is:

1. To find out the influence of Grenouille’s society on the process of Grenouille’s growing.
2. To find out the impact of the society’s role on Grenouille’s personality.

E. Benefits

After reading and doing the analysis of Patrick Süskind’s novel Perfume: The Story of A Murderer, I learn that every human being has their own personality, their own character. We cannot force someone to be somebody they are not. We cannot force others to think the way we do, to have same opinion on something as we do. Everyone has different thought process, individual mindset, and individual opinion. We need to respect the difference. Everyone has their own identity, but we cannot deny this that society also has the role on shaping someone’s personal identity. Some people may think that to be accepted by the society is a must thing to do. They try really
hard to fit in, some even do bad things they shouldn’t do; like commit crimes.

Doing analysis on Perfume: The story of a murderer novel I realize that there are several problems presented by the author here not only identity problem but also about mother-children bonding, human’s needs; love, affection, attention, communication, etc. The next researcher can use the topics mentioned above if they want to use the novel as their source data of analysis. The discussion of how society’s role shapes someone’s identity can also be used as a reference because in my opinion the topics are all related to each other.

F. Methodology

1. Type of Research

This research is a descriptive qualitative research for it is conducted in order to collect and describe information about—in this case—psychological development which focuses on identity. Therefore, understanding and exploring what contains within the data will help to find the answer for the problem. Qualitative research is all about exploring issues, understanding phenomena, and answering questions (Bryman, 1988).

A qualitative research is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994).

The goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic. What can be discovered by qualitative research are not sweeping generalizations but contextual findings. This
The process of discovery is basic to the philosophic underpinning of the qualitative approach.

2. Data and Data Sources

The source of data in this research is a novel entitled *Perfume: The Story of A Murderer* by Patrick Süskind written in 1985. The data are divided into two:

a. Primary data: the main data are gathered from the novel *Perfume: The Story of A Murderer* (the conversation between each character to another character, the explanation from the narrator about the main character’s actions, skill, problem, etc.).

b. Secondary data: the supporting data are collected from other sources as books, internet articles, journals which are related to the topic of research. These secondary data are used when it is needed to have a deeper understanding and to interpret the primary data before stepping on further analysis.

Both data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis.

3. Technique of Collecting and Processing Data

Firstly, the data are collected by close reading the novel as the source of data. The main data then collected, classified and selected based on the problem statements of the research—the identity crisis experience by the main character of the novel, Grenouille. After that, the selected data are analyzed and discussed by applying correlated approaches and theories to build the idea to answer the research questions. The supporting data are used when
it is needed to have a deeper understanding and to interpret the main data before stepping on further analysis. Afterwards, conclusion will be drawn based on the answer of the research questions.

G. Theoretical Approach

Approach is used as means in understanding and analyzing a literary work. This research will apply Psychosocial theory since the analysis will focus on the main character’s process of finding his personal identity. Firstly, I will discover how does the role of society influence the main character’s process of finding personal identity. Secondly, I will discover the effect of having no identity on the main character’s existence in his society.

One of Erikson’s main emphases in his book *Identity, Youth and Crisis* is that the identity crisis of the adolescent is severe. The adolescent has developed enough of an identity to be self-reflective and yet he/she must navigate between a desire of uniqueness and a desire to join significant social groups, culture, and society.

According to Erikson (1963), the ego develops as it successfully resolves crises that are distinctly social in nature. These involve establishing a sense of trust in others, developing a sense of identity in society, and helping the next generation prepare for the future. He emphasized the role of culture and society and the conflicts that can take place within the ego itself. Erikson assumes that a crisis occurs at each stage of development. For Erikson, these crises are of a psychosocial nature because they involve psychological needs of the individual (i.e. psycho) conflicting with the needs of society (i.e. social). According to the theory, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. Basic virtues are characteristic
strengths which the ego can use to resolve subsequent crises. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore a more unhealthy personality and sense of self. These stages, however, can be resolved successfully at a later time (McLeod, 2008).

H. Thesis Organization

The structure of the thesis is organized as follows:

The first chapter is Introduction which consists of Background of Choosing The Subject, Scope of Study, Problem Statement, Objectives, Benefits, Methodology, Approach, and Thesis Organization.

The second chapter is Literature Review which consists of the relation between literature and psychology and about Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory; further explanation about the theory used in this research.

The third chapter is the Analysis which the answer of the problem discussed will be revealed. It consists of the society which play role in Grenouille’s process of growing; his mother, wet nurses, Father Terrier, Madame Gaillard, friends from the orphanage, Maitre Baldini the Perfumer, Grimal the Tanner, Grenouille and society; the impact of the role of society on Grenouille’s personality, and Result of the analysis; does he finally find his personal identity or not and also the consequence he has to face if he failed in finding one.

It will be analyzed through the conversation between each character and the narrator explanation. And the last, the fourth chapter is conclusion and recommendation.