# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The concept of femininity is the physical, psychological, and sociocultural traits associated with the female gender in a given culture (Gonzales & Spencer, 2015). Women are expected to possess feminine traits and attributes which include passivity, submissiveness, compassion, and maternal instincts (Mehta & Henry, 2017). Bacon (2023) through Dazed states that 2023 was the "year of the girl" with many emerging TikTok trends stemming from women's daily lives such as "lazy girl job", "girl dinner", and "girl math". Amidst the diverse trends and subcultures within social media namely TikTok, is the rise of the "bimbofication" phenomenon. The term "bimbo" was first used in the United States as a slang word to describe an unintelligent, hyperfeminine woman (Granados, 2021). As a result, bimbofication contradicts the feminist movement which emphasizes women's intelligence, independence, and success. However, the bimbofication trend on TikTok redefines "bimbo" with the aim of challenging the negative stereotypes against bimbos. This trend encourages women to dress and act in a way that embraces their femininity as a form of empowerment.

However, many Millenials and Gen Z have criticized this movement as it is seen as a setback for women's rights, while those who participate in it see the movement as a way of supporting other women's different lifestyles (Wynne, 2024). There is a prevalent issue where the "girly girl" is devalued and is seen as "shallow" as opposed to the "tomboy" and/or "bookwork" archetypes (BSN Voices, 2021). This problem stems from internalized sexism, which is when a woman applies generally sexist messages to herself and other women (Bearman et al., 2009). Interestingly, this contradicts with the fact that women who fail to conform to feminine ideologies often experience negative consequences (Levant et al., 2017). Despite this, women in Indonesia are constantly becoming targets of both offline and online harassment for displaying their femininity (Armiwulan, 2021).

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The National Commission of Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) have even declared cyber-violence against women as a growing trend in Indonesia (Armiwulan, 2021). This pervasive issue is caused by societal attitudes and the patriarchy which undervalues femininity, leading women to be mocked and shamed just because they possess feminine traits in unrelated topics. For example, a report done by SAFEnet states that they have found a total of 65 contents containing hate speech and abusive language against women during the 2024 Indonesian General Election period starting from September 2023 to February 2024 (Imal, 2024).

The lack of media on the concept of femininity in Indonesia can cause a condition where women distance themselves from their femininity due to being subject to constant belittling and mockery for expressing themselves. It is urgent to address this problem by creating a positive narrative around femininity to empower young women. Therefore, it is necessary to design an informational media about the concept of femininity with the aim of using and reclaiming femininity and feminine traits to deliver empowering messages. One of the many forms of informational media is a physical book, which will be the main output of this research. Despite a clear preference towards online media, research done by Le Cunff et al. (2024) states that online learning tools have reportedly caused stress, difficulties in navigating content, and trouble understanding concepts, all linked to the cognitive load produced by online reading materials. Another research done by Altamura et al. (2023) suggests that comprehension with physical books is six times better than e-readers. A study conducted by Helm et al. (2018) shows that readers hold sentimental values and feel emotionally attached to physical books fueled by the sound of flipping pages and the scent of paper. By combining visual arts and empowering messages through an illustration book, it is able to challenge feminine stereotypes and gender roles and inspire young women to embrace their femininity confidently.

**1.2 Problem Statement**

Referring to the background explained in the previous part, here are the problems identified:

1. Women who possess feminine traits are subjected to mockery and harassment
2. There is a lack of informational media which uses the concept of femininity to empower women

Hence, the problem statement obtained by the author is how to design an illustration book that is able to define the concept of femininity and use it to empower women.

**1.3 Scope of Problem**

This design is aimed at women aged between 16 – 24 years old, SES A – B (high – middle income), domiciled within the *Jabodetabek* (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) area, who have an interest in femininity, women empowerment, internet culture, and other similar topics. The scope of the design is limited to an informational media which uses visual storytelling, with the goal of defining the concept of femininity and use it as a tool to empower women.

**1.4 Objectives**

Based on the background and the scope of problem explained in the previous parts, the objective of this final project is to design an illustration book which helps to explain the concept of femininity to empower women.
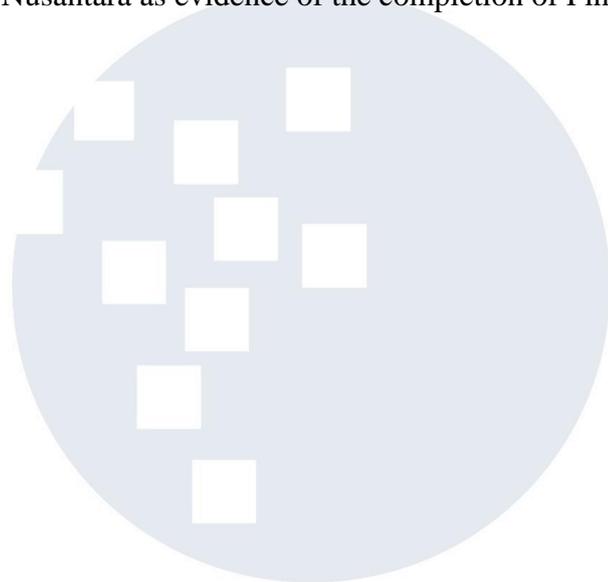
**1.5 Benefits**

1. Theoretical Benefit:

The benefit of this research is to spread awareness regarding the definition and concept of femininity and use it to empower women through designing an illustration book. This research is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge in Visual Communications Design, particularly in discussing the development of informational media, book design, femininity, and women empowerment.

2. Practical Benefit:

This research is expected to serve as a reference for students and other parties interested in the design process of informational media and books, as well as the topics femininity and women empowerment in Indonesia. Additionally, this research also serves as an archival document for Universitas Multimedia Nusantara as evidence of the completion of Final Project.