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A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THETA ROLE IN PRABOWO SUBIANTO'S PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL SPEECH

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Abstract

This study examines the use of Theta roles in President Prabowo Subianto's inauguration speech delivered on October 20, 2024. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the research investigates how Theta roles function within the framework of political communication. The data were derived from the official transcript of the speech. The analysis reveals that the *Agent* and *Theme* roles are the most frequently occurring, appearing in 83% and 66.6% of the relevant structures, respectively. The predominance of these roles underscores Prabowo's rhetorical emphasis on action, leadership, and policy direction. These findings indicate that the speech serves not only as a medium for policy articulation but also as a strategic rhetorical tool aimed at building public trust and mobilizing support. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of linguistic patterns and argumentation strategies in Indonesian political discourse and offers a foundation for further exploration of Theta role application in political speech analysis.

Keywords: *argument structure; Theta role; Prabowo Subianto's Presidential Inaugural Speech*

1. Introduction

Theta role is a fundamental concept in generative grammar that examines the semantic relationships between predicates and their arguments (Katamba, 2006). As semantic codings, theta roles clarify how entities such as agents, patients, themes, and locations function within sentence structures (Keni & Adam, 2019). According to Crystal (2008), each argument in a sentence plays a specific role assigned by the predicate. This theoretical foundation traces back to Fillmore's (1968) concept of "deep semantic case," further developed by Givón, and later refined by Jackendoff through the term *thematic relation*, which evolved into the now widely accepted *theta role* (Saeed, 2005). O'Grady (1996) and Williams (1994) emphasize the interaction between theta role donors (verbs, adjectives, prepositions) and recipients (nouns or noun phrases), highlighting the necessity of semantic congruence in syntactic structures.

While the theoretical foundation of theta role is well established in linguistic studies, its application in political discourse remains underexplored. Despite the importance of political speeches in shaping public opinion and influencing democratic

processes, few studies have examined how theta roles contribute to the rhetorical and semantic structures of these speeches. This study addresses that gap by analyzing theta role distribution in the first presidential speech of Mr. Prabowo Subianto delivered on October 20, 2024.

Presidential speeches serve as crucial vehicles of political communication, defining leadership vision, articulating national goals, and mobilizing public sentiment. As Kravchenko (2007) argues, language in this context is not merely a code but a dynamic act of meaning-making grounded in cognitive and experiential dimensions. Semantic analysis, particularly through the lens of theta roles, provides a valuable tool for uncovering the communicative strategies and ideological underpinnings embedded in such discourse.

Prabowo Subianto's inaugural address—delivered before the MPR and witnessed by millions—marked his first public message as the 8th President of the Republic of Indonesia. In this speech, he emphasized constitutional duty, inclusive leadership, and unity. Notably, the speech contains a variety of transitive and intransitive verbs, making it an appropriate text for examining theta role functions. This presents an opportunity to reveal how semantic structures are used to construct persuasive political messages.

This research is the first to analyze theta roles in Prabowo Subianto's inauguration speech. The choice of this speech is justified by its richness in verb types and the absence of prior research in this area. By focusing on theta roles rather than critical discourse or ideological analysis—as done by Latupeirissa et al. (2019)—this study complements previous work by emphasizing the semantic structure and linguistic construction of meaning in political language.

Previous research on theta roles has primarily focused on literary or general linguistic contexts. For example, Muhammad (2014) examined theta roles in Hausa verb structures, while Gufron et al. (2020) analyzed the verbs *give*, *bring*, and *take* in the novel *At First Sight*. However, there remains a lack of research applying theta role analysis to Indonesian political texts.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to explore how theta roles such as Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Benefactive, Goal, Source, and Location are distributed in a key political speech. It argues that understanding theta role distribution can reveal how meaning and persuasive intent are structurally constructed in political communication. Thus, this research contributes both to the field of linguistics and to the broader study of political discourse.

Despite the rhetorical significance of political speeches, little attention has been paid to how theta roles contribute to their semantic structure and communicative impact. Thus, this study aims to analyze the distribution and function of theta roles in Prabowo Subianto's 2024 inauguration speech in order to reveal the semantic strategies used in political communication. This research would answer how theta roles are distributed and employed to convey meaning and rhetorical intent in Prabowo Subianto's presidential inauguration speech.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Argument Structure

Argument structure is a crucial concept in linguistics and argumentation theory, bridging syntax and semantics. It describes the relationship between predicates and arguments in a sentence (Ahmed & Huseen, 2022) and plays a central role in

understanding word formation and grammatical architecture (Wood & Myler, 2019). In scientific articles, argument structure mining can reveal domain-specific patterns of argumentation, aiding in knowledge discovery and representation (Song et al., 2019). The study of argument structure extends to the analysis of counterarguments, which can be classified based on their logical relationships to the original argument (Marraud, 2019). This classification of counterarguments contributes to a broader understanding of argument structures. Across these studies, argument structure emerges as a fundamental concept for exploring the interplay between morphology, syntax, and semantics in language, as well as for analyzing the construction and refutation of arguments in various domains.

Luuk (2009), argues that the predicate/argument structure of natural language is much more complex than first-order predicate logic. He said that language has fossils and, according to (Jackendoff, 1999) language has five fossils; what he means by linguistic fossils is the structural features of language. He found that the linguistic predicate/argument structure has a universal approach in natural language syntax. He said that linguistic arguments are universally marked by determiners, possessors, and word order constraints, while linguistic predicates are universally marked by tense, mood, aspect, voice, and also word order constraints. In addition, (Verhoeven, 2014) studied the thematic prominence and animacy asymmetry that cross linguistically in four heterogeneous languages, namely Greek, German, Chinese, and Turkish. According to him and others (see. Jackendoff, 1987; Grimshaw, 1990; Dik, 1978; Lavin and Rappaport, 2005), the role of theta agents is higher than others because of the animacy effect. Towards the end, he found that the experiencer-first effect was observed in Greek and German but not in Turkish and Chinese. He concluded that the animacy effect in arguments is not universally accepted; it varies from language to language. On the other hand, (Harley, 2013) studied external (subject) arguments and the Mirror Principle. He asked two research questions: 1) what are arguments? 2) how are they suppressed? According to the Mirror Principle (Baker, 1985), morphological derivation is syntactic derivation, which means that morphology leads to syntax. He said that applied arguments come structurally between external and internal arguments.

2.2 Theta Roles

Theta role theory is a fundamental aspect of generative grammar, which concerns the relationship between the syntax and semantics of a language. The theory aims to explain how predicate arguments are assigned theta roles, or thematic roles, based on their semantic properties (Laili, Herwiana, & Wibowo, 2023).

Theta roles according to Katamba (2006), are semantic coding of the morphological and syntactic inflectional forms of a language. The marking includes agent (actor), instrumental (tool), patient (who receives treatment), benefactive (who benefits from the treatment), theme (theme) and locative (location/place). Theta roles are defined as a semantic relationship between arguments in a sentence and its predicate or verb (Keni & Adam, 2019). Theta roles are the roles played by each argument (Crystal, 2008).

Carnie in (Srinivas & Kadim, 2015) states that in lexical grammar, thematic roles such as agent, patient, benefactive, instrument, locative, and so on are always expressed through argument structures, for example 'hit' <agent, patient>, and 'see' <experiencer, experiencer>, theme>. In lexical grammar, these thematic roles have a hierarchical character. This hierarchy applies across languages, is not arbitrary, but is

determined semantically. The most active thematic role in an event is determined as the role with the highest hierarchy or prominence (Soares, 2016).

Haegeman (1994) explains that the role of the theta agent is the actor who carries out the action expressed by the predicate, while the theme is the person or object that moves as a result of the action expressed by the predicate, the patient is the person or object that is subjected to the action expressed by the predicate, and the beneficiary is the entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate.

The transfer of elements in a sentence produces a transformation sentence. Each type of transformation sentence consists of more specific types of transformation sentences with special rules. In government and binding theory (GBT), transformation sentences are not categorized based on these types. Linguists have explained that various rules that function to transfer elements are now united and simplified into one theory, namely: transfer alpha. Alpha is a category, for example FN, FV, and so on. The theory of transfer alpha acts as general principles in analyzing the transfer of elements in sentences that include the elements that are transferred, the purpose of the transfer, and the traces of the transfer (Prihatini & Sunaryo, 2016).

Meanwhile Haegeman (1994), divides the role of theta for arguments in sentence constructions containing intransitive, monotransitive, and ditransitive verbs as follows:

Theta Roles	Definitions
Agent/Actor	A person who starts the action expressed by the predicate/verb intentionally.
Patient	People or objects that experience actions expressed by predicates/verbs.
Theme	The person or object moved by the action expressed by the predicate/verb.
Experiencer	An entity that experiences some (psychological) state expressed by a predicate/verb.
Benefactive/Beneficiary	The entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate.
Goal	The entity that refers to the purpose of the activity expressed by the predicate.
Source	Entities that refer to sources or origins as a result of a transfer activity are expressed by predicates.
Location	The place where the action or state expressed by the predicate is located.

Table 1: Theta role and definition (Haegeman: 1994)

There are still many linguists who provide detailed descriptions and explanations of the Theta role. They are (Radford, 2009), (Carnie, 2007), and (Van Valin and Lapola, 1997) all of whom have discussed this type of theta role. Regarding thematic relationships, (Radford, 2009) states that it is very important to know the predicate and argument. In his opinion, the predicate is an expression that indicates an action or event, while the argument is an expression that states the participants in the relevant activity or event. Furthermore, the participants of the verb are usually the subject and its complement, which can be direct objects or direct and indirect objects. He also explains the types of theta roles that are universally considered by most linguists. These roles are:

1. Agent

Agent is an entity that investigates some performance or action expressed by a verb. It also shows thematic relationships in which arguments cause actions by consideration. Agents are participants who cause something to happen. Agents provide information about the cause of an event. For example, below:

Richard visited the Mall.

"Richard" as the subject of this sentence called agent.

2. Experiencer

Experiencer is something that experiences some psychological state expressed by the verb. For example,

John likes Milla.

"John" as the subject in the sentence, called Experiencer

3. Theme

Theme is something that experiences the effects of some action. The theme is something that directly receives the action of the verb. For example,

The butterfly flew over the lake.

"The butterfly" in the sentence is theta role of theme.

4. Goal

Goal is an entity represented by something that moves. A goal is an activity expressed by a verb, which can be animate or inanimate. For example,
Michael sent Marie a gift.

"Marie" is the theta role of goal in the previous sentence.

5. Source

Source is an entity represented by something that moves and the activity expressed by a verb. Sometimes, Source and goal are combined in a sentence. For example, "Mike ran from the station".

In the sentence above, the argument "station" is the source, and in the previous example, "Michael sent a gift to Marie". Argument of "Marie" is the source.

6. Locative

A locative is a place where something happens or where something is or takes place. For example, "George is currently sitting at Tanjung Bias".

The argument "Tanjung Bias" is the theta role of locative.

The theta role argument can also be related to the lexical approach. The lexical approach challenges the foundations of language, namely grammar (structure) and vocabulary (words). It argues that language is made up of chunks that, when put together, produce a continuous and coherent text. These chunks are of different types, and other different basic types are identified. One is the single word, while the other is multi-word items such as collocations, expressions, and so on. For example,
A flood is coming.

The boxes have been put on the table.

From these examples, "flood" has the theta role of patient, and "boxes" has the theta role of theme.

3. Research Method

The descriptive qualitative method was chosen as the most appropriate approach for analyzing the speech text of President Prabowo Subianto, as it allows for an in-depth interpretation of the meanings, structures, and linguistic nuances embedded in political discourse. This method is particularly effective for studies that aim to understand language as a social and political act, as it begins with a structured description of factual data—here, the official speech text of the 8th President of the Republic of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto—delivered at the plenary session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) on October 20, 2024, at the DPR/MPR RI Building in Jakarta. The speech text is publicly accessible via the official website of the Ministry of State Secretariat: <https://www.setneg.go.id>.

This particular speech was selected due to its historical and political significance as a landmark in Indonesia's democratic process. An inaugural address is not only ceremonial but also functions as a platform for communicating a newly elected leader's vision, priorities, and rhetorical positioning. Thus, it offers a fertile ground for examining theta roles (syntactic and semantic roles) within its complex sentence constructions and strategic language use. In the context of political communication, qualitative analysis enables researchers to explore meaning, rhetorical strategy, and communicative intent holistically—qualities essential to interpreting how theta roles function in formal political rhetoric.

Additionally, this method highlights the importance of human interpretation in understanding the socio-political and cultural contexts behind language use, making it suitable for addressing research questions concerning theta role functions in presidential speech. Through the descriptive qualitative approach, the researcher is able to provide a detailed account of Prabowo Subianto's language patterns, argument structures, and communicative goals, while also connecting them to relevant political dynamics. The method is ideal for capturing ambiguities and layers of meaning, which are key to in-depth studies in political linguistics.

The data collection technique employed in this study was the listening and note-taking method. The researcher read and annotated the official transcript of the speech carefully, focusing on relevant sentence structures that illustrate theta role functions. The speech text served as the primary data for analysis.

For data analysis, the study adopted the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three interconnected steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and focused on segments of the speech that were relevant to theta role analysis, simplifying the data to retain only meaningful units. Data presentation was carried out through narrative explanations and structured tables designed to highlight specific theta role patterns across various sentence types. In the final stage, drawing conclusions and verification, the researchers sought to interpret and assign meaning to the data based on linguistic theories and role classification (Mukminin, Wulandari, Pratekawati, Noveintine & Sari, 2024).

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the data analysis was reviewed and cross-validated by two independent linguists with expertise in syntax and semantics. Differences in interpretation were discussed collaboratively until a consensus was reached, ensuring that the role assignments were both linguistically sound and contextually accurate.

4. Discussion

4.1 Findings

From the results of roles analysis in Prabowo Subianto's presidential speech text, there are 42 sentences that are considered to have a good and correct structure. Agent/Actor is the most frequently appearing theta role in the speech text, namely (35 data/83%) followed by Theme with (28 data/66.6%), then Experiencer and Goal are both (7 data/16.7%), while patient and Benefactive/Beneficiary are only (2 data/4.8%), Source and Location are not found in the text. From the findings of the data, Agen/Actor and Theme are the most dominant. It can be concluded that the president places great emphasis on action and commitment to move Indonesia forward.

Theta Role	Amount	Percentage
Agent/Actor	35	83%
Patient	2	4,8 %
Theme	28	66,6 %
Experiencer	7	16,7 %
Benefactive/Beneficiary	2	4,8 %
Goal	7	16,7 %
Source	0	0 %
Location	0	0 %

Table 2: Percentage of Theta Roles in Prabowo Subianto's Presidential Speech

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Agent/Actor

Almost all of Prabowo Subianto's presidential speech texts have the role of theta Agent. From 42 sentences found, there are 35 data/83% as Agent. Look at the data (1) to (6) below.

- (1) *Kita [AGENT] memiliki luas wilayah daratan dan, lautan yang sangat besar. [THEME]*
- (2) *Kita [AGENT] harus menghadapi kenyataan [THEME] bahwa masih terlalu banyak kebocoran, penyelewengan, korupsi di negara kita.*
- (3) *Kita [AGENT] masih melihat sebagian saudara-saudara kita yang belum menikmati hasil kemerdekaan. [THEME]*
- (4) *Kita [AGENT] juga punya energi bawah tanah geothermal, energi dari air dan batu bara yang cukup banyak [THEME].*
- (5) *Kita [AGENT] juga harus mengelola air kita [THEME] dengan baik,*
- (6) *Sumpah tersebut [THEME] akan kami [AGENT] jalankan dengan sebaik-baiknya, dengan penuh rasa tanggung jawab dan dengan semua kekuatan yang ada pada jiwa dan raga kami.*

From the data above, the verbs (1) have: <Agent, Theme> (2) face: <Agent, Theme>, (3) see: <Agent, Theme>, (4) have/have: <Agent, Theme>, (5) manage: <Agent, Theme>, and (6) run/run: <Agent, Theme>. The six verbs are transitive verbs that have two arguments. Argument 1 is the agent and argument 2 is the theme. However, it is different from data (7) and (8) below. The verbs “understand” and “learn” only require 1 argument, namely <agent>.

- (7) *Kita [AGENT] mengerti bahwa karunia yang diberikan oleh yang Mahakuasa kepada kita sungguh sangat besar dan sungguh sangat beragam.*

- (8) *Saya [AGENT] sudah mempelajari bersama pakar-pakar yang membantu saya, saya yakin paling lambat empat sampai lima tahun kita akan swasembada pangan*

4.2.2 Patient

Theta role of patient is a role that is very rarely found in the text of President Prabowo Subianto's speech. From 42 sentences analyzed, only 2 data were found. In data (9) the word "hilirisasi" and (10) "saya" are the roles of theta patient, which experience the actions of the verbs "do" and "beat".

- (9) *Kita [AGENT] harus melakukan **hilirisasi** [PATIENT] kepada semua komoditas yang kita miliki [RECIPIENT].*
(10) *Presiden Joko Widodo [AGENT] mengalahkan saya [PATIENT], dalam pilpres beberapa kali.*

4.2.3 Theme

Besides agent/actor as the theta role that is often found, Theme is also a theta role that is often found. As many as 28 data or 66.6% were found in Prabowo Subianto's presidential speech text.

- (11) *Indonesia [AGENT] memilih **jalan bebas aktif, non-blok, non-aligned** [THEME].*
(12) *Indonesia [AGENT] akan menjalankan **politik luar negeri sebagai negara yang ingin menjadi tetangga yang baik** [THEME].*
(13) *Kita [AGENT] ingin menganut **filosofi kuno, "seribu kawan terlalu sedikit, satu lawan terlalu banyak."**[THEME]*
(14) *Kita [AGENT] ingin menjadi **sahabat semua negara** [THEME].*
(15) *Kita [AGENT] harus membela **rakyat-rakyat yang tertindas di dunia ini** [THEME].*
(16) *Kita [AGENT] mendukung **kemerdekaan rakyat Palestina** [THEME].*

In the data above, (11) *jalan bebas aktif, non-blok*, (12) *politik luar negeri sebagai negara yang ingin menjadi tetangga yang baik*, (13) *filosofi kuno, "seribu kawan terlalu sedikit, satu lawan terlalu banyak.*, (14) *sahabat semua negara*, (15) *rakyat-rakyat yang tertindas di dunia ini*, and (16) *kemerdekaan rakyat Palestina* are the theta theme roles of the verbs to choose, carry out, adhere to, become, defend, and support. The verbs in these are transitive verbs, which require two arguments, namely argument 1 <agent> and argument 2 <theme>.

4.2.4 Experiencer

Experiencer is a theta role that is quite often found in the data. In this study, there were 16.7% of the data obtained. In data (17) the verb *merasa*, (18) *bersyukur*, (19) *berterima kasih*, and (20) *berdoa* are intransitive verbs that only have one argument "we" which is an entity that experiences several (psychological) conditions expressed by the attached verb.

- (17) ***Kita** [EXPERIENCER] merasa bangga bahwa kita diterima di kalangan G20 dan disebut ekonomi ke-16 terbesar di dunia.*
(18) ***Kita** [EXPERIENCER] bersyukur kepada presiden dan proklamator pertama Bung Karno, yang telah memberi kepada kita ideologi negara Pancasila.*
(19) ***Kita** [EXPERIENCER] berterima kasih kepada Presiden Soeharto, Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati, SBY dan Jokowi yang sudah memimpin Indonesia dengan baik.*

- (20) *Kita [EXPERIENCER] juga berdoa kepada Yang Mahakuasa, agar tamu-tamu agung kita, mereka-mereka yang datang dari jauh akan kembali ke rumah mereka masing-masing dalam keadaan aman dan dalam keadaan terus bersahabat dengan kita, Saudara-saudara sekalian.*

4.2.5 Beneficiary/Beneficiary

From the analyzed data, the theta roles of Benefactive/Beneficiary and Patient are the data that are found the least. In data (21) *terhadap apa yang sekarang kita nikmati*, and (22) *semua komoditas yang kita miliki* are the theta roles of Benefactive/Beneficiary who benefit from the actions stated by the verbs “have” and “do”.

- (21) *Mereka semua dengan cara masing-masing [AGENT] memiliki sumbangsih [THEME] terhadap apa yang sekarang kita nikmati [BENEFICIARY],*
(22) *kita [AGEN] harus melakukan hilirisasi [PASIEN] kepada semua komoditas yang kita miliki [BENEFICIARY].*

4.2.6 Goal

The role of theta Goal is an entity that refers to the purpose of the activity expressed by the predicate. Goal and experiencer have the same percentage, namely 16.7%. From the data found, President Prabowo emphasized the purpose of what his leadership would do. The following data was obtained.

- (23) *Saya Prabowo Subianto dan Saudara Gibran Rakabuming Raka [AGENT] telah mengucapkan sumpah [THEME] untuk mempertahankan undang-undang dasar kita, menjalankan semua undang-undang dan peraturan yang berlaku, serta berbakti pada negara dan bangsa [GOAL].*
(24) *Semua pejabat dari semua eselon dan semua tingkatan [AGEN] harus memberi contoh [THEME] untuk menjalankan kepemimpinan pemerintahan yang sebersih-bersihnya. Mulai dengan contoh dari atas dan sesudah itu penegakan hukum yang tegas dan keras [GOAL].*
(25) *Kita [AGEN] akan punya kekuatan [THEME] untuk bisa menghilangkan kemiskinan dari bumi Indonesia [GOAL].*
(26) *Kita [AGENT] menjalankan kekuasaan [THEME] harus untuk kepentingan rakyat [GOAL].*
(27) *Kita [AGENT] siapkan semua rumah sakit tentara dan rumah sakit-rumah sakit lain [THEME] untuk membantu saudara-saudara kita yang menjadi korban perang yang tidak adil [GOAL].*
(28) *Saya [AGENT] selalu mengajak saudara-saudaraku sebangsa dan setanah air [THEME] untuk menjadi bangsa yang berani, bangsa yang tidak takut tantangan, bangsa yang tidak takut rintangan, bangsa yang tidak takut ancaman. [GOAL]*
(29) *pemimpin yang berani pemimpin yang baik, [AGENT] akan terpanggil untuk menghadapi yang tidak mungkin dan mencari jalan yang agar yang tidak mungkin kita atasi. [GOAL]*

In the data (23) *untuk mempertahankan undang-undang dasar kita, menjalankan semua undang-undang dan peraturan yang berlaku, serta berbakti pada negara dan bangsa*, (24) *untuk menjalankan kepemimpinan pemerintahan yang sebersih-bersihnya. Mulai dengan contoh dari atas dan sesudah itu penegakan hukum yang tegas dan keras*,

(25) *untuk bisa menghilangkan kemiskinan dari bumi Indonesia*, and (26) *harus untuk kepentingan rakyat*, (27) *untuk membantu saudara-saudara kita yang menjadi korban perang yang tidak adil*, (28) *untuk menjadi bangsa yang berani, bangsa yang tidak takut tantangan, bangsa yang tidak takut rintangan, bangsa yang tidak takut ancaman.*, and (29) *untuk menghadapi yang tidak mungkin dan mencari jalan yang agar yang tidak mungkin kita atasi* are entities that refer to the purpose of the activity expressed by the verbs “say”, “give”, “have”, “carry out”, “prepare”, “invite” and “be called”.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of theta roles in President Prabowo Subianto's inauguration speech on October 20, 2024, identified six types of roles: Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Benefactive/Beneficiary, and Goal, while Source and Location were notably absent. Among these, Agent and Theme emerged as the most dominant roles. The frequent use of Agent—representing an active subject performing an action—reflects the speech's strong rhetorical emphasis on leadership, agency, and decisive governance. Simultaneously, the prominence of Theme—representing entities affected by or central to the action—signals a deliberate focus on specific policy priorities and national issues that require immediate attention.

This pattern suggests that the speech was carefully crafted not merely to outline policy directions, but to project a narrative of accountability, vision, and action-oriented leadership. The dual emphasis on Agent and Theme roles supports a communicative strategy aimed at building public trust and legitimizing political authority. It highlights how syntactic-semantic choices can shape the public image of a political leader, reinforcing the performative nature of political language.

However, this study is subject to several limitations. It analyzes only a single political speech, without incorporating data from other presidential addresses or perspectives from audience reception, which may affect the comprehensiveness of the interpretation. The exclusion of intertextual or cross-speech comparisons limits the scope of generalization about Prabowo's broader rhetorical strategies or how they align with or differ from other political figures.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies across multiple speeches by Prabowo Subianto or other Indonesian political leaders, to identify recurring theta role patterns or shifts in rhetorical emphasis over time or in different political contexts. Moreover, integrating audience reception analysis and critical discourse perspectives could offer richer insights into how theta roles contribute to the persuasive and ideological functions of political language.

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POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN DIGITAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: GANJAR PRANOWO'S INSTAGRAM INTERACTION

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Abstract

This study investigates the politeness strategies employed in interactions on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account, with particular attention to how linguistic choices shape digital political communication. It explores the strategies used by both followers and the politician to navigate social dynamics, express solidarity, and manage face-threatening acts within a public online setting. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach, the study examines 250 comments and responses, categorized according to Brown and Levinson's four politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. The findings reveal that positive politeness is the most commonly employed strategy among followers, reflecting a supportive and affiliative communicative style. Bald-on-record strategies are also frequently observed, indicating direct and unmitigated expressions. In contrast, Ganjar Pranowo primarily adopts bald-on-record strategies, suggesting a preference for clarity and communicative efficiency. Negative politeness and off-record strategies appear less frequently, underscoring the overall informal and inclusive nature of the digital interactions.

Keywords: *digital political communication; Instagram; politeness strategies.*

1. Introduction

As result of advancements in technology, individuals are now required to navigate two distinct modes of interactions: offline and online. The semantic and pragmatic mechanisms appear to be the same in both interactions. In actuality, though, they contain gaps. The differences between offline and online interactions might not be immediately apparent. They are even counter-intuitive in certain situations. Humans have been interacting in person for at least 40,000 years, but in the past 20 years, online communication has become more and more prevalent. The intrusion began with a tiny and restricted application, such as email and short messages, but it has since spread to secure a few hours of our everyday human communications. People of all ages are immersed in the world of online communication. It's possible that the politeness and characteristics of offline interactions were carried over to their online counterparts, and vice versa. Certain aspects and concepts of politeness are effective in both contexts. In

any case, those are human-made concepts that are used in the human world. Nevertheless, it frequently happens that some concepts that are effective in one media do not translate well into another (Pratama, 2019).

In the digital age, social media platforms have transformed the way political figures interact with the public. Platforms like Instagram allow politicians to directly communicate with constituents, fostering engagement and transparency. However, the nature of online communication presents challenges, particularly regarding maintaining politeness and respect in public discourse. Politeness strategies, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987), play a critical role in managing face-threatening acts and ensuring harmonious interactions. Politeness can be expressed through various approaches, such as positive politeness (highlighting solidarity or friendliness) and negative politeness (acknowledging personal boundaries or minimizing imposition).

In digital communication, particularly on platforms like Instagram, the application of politeness strategies become more complex. The absence of non-verbal cues and the semi-public nature of interactions demand greater attention to linguistic subtleties (Herring, 2004). Moreover, indirectness and respect for hierarchy influences how individuals, including politicians, navigate online discourse (Kuntjara, 2023). Instagram interactions occur in a semi-public environment where multiple audiences observe every response. This dual-layered audience presents unique challenges for politicians, who must carefully craft responses that align with both cultural expectations and the dynamic nature of social media communication.

Social media platforms such as Instagram are characterized by high interactivity, enabling two way communication where political figures engage with their audiences through posts, captions, and direct responses to comments. In this context, how a politician employs politeness strategies can influence public perception, either reinforcing credibility or potentially alienating certain groups. Ganjar Pranowo, as a prominent Indonesian politician, is an interesting case study due to his active and strategic use of Instagram. His ability to balance openness, respects, and assertiveness in his responses to a diverse audience provides an invaluable opportunity to examine the interplay between digital communication and politeness strategies. By focusing on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions, this research sheds light on how politeness strategies are adapted to meet these demands, contributing the broader understanding of political communication in the digital era.

By analyzing Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram posts and responses to public comments, this research explores the linguistic strategies he uses to maintain a positive public image, address criticism, and foster engagement with followers. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the understanding of digital political communication within an Indonesian cultural framework. While existing studies have explored politeness strategies in offline contexts (Nguyen, 2021; Kumar & Chen, 2020), few have examined their application in online environments, particularly in the political domain. This study addresses this gap by providing insights into how a high-profile Indonesian politician manages public discourse on Instagram, offering implications for both linguistic theory and practical communication strategies in the digital era.

Based on the background outlined, this study aims to address the research question regarding the politeness strategies employed in Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions within the context of digital political communication.

2. Literature Review

Politeness strategies are fundamental in understanding how individuals manage social interactions while preserving both their own “face” and that of others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness strategies are categorized into four main types namely bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. (1) Bald-on-record strategies provides no effort by the speakers to minimize the impact of the FTA’s (*Face-Threatening Acts*). However, this type of strategy is commonly found with people who know each other very well, and very comfortable in their environment such as family, and close friend; (2) Positive politeness is the strategy oriented by the speaker toward the positive face or the positive self-image of the hearer that the speaker claims for himself; (3) Negative politeness is the strategy to increase the social distances between interlocutors, and; (4) Off-record means taking some pressures of the hearer by using indirect language that constructs more general utterance or actually different from what one mean (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These strategies have been widely applied in linguistic research across various contexts, including intercultural communication and digital discourse (Culpeper et al., 2021).

In online communication, politeness strategies take on new dimensions due to the unique characteristics of online platforms, such as asynchronous interaction, textual communication, and visibility to a broad audience (Herring, 2004). Several studies highlighted that in online era, the semi-public nature of platforms necessitates a careful balance between positive and negative politeness strategies to address diverse audiences (Nguyen et al., 2021). To provide a broader context for understanding politeness strategies in digital communication, it is important to consider previous studies on similar platforms. It is found that the most frequently utilized polarity of politeness is positive politeness when analyzing comments on various YouTube videos (Zainurrahman & Kofau, 2020).

Positive politeness strategies are often employed in public forums like YouTube comments because they foster solidarity, express friendliness, and seek to build a connection between the speaker and the audience. Such strategies may include compliments, expressions of agreement, or supportive remarks. These behaviors align with the cooperative and community-driven nature of many online platforms, where users aim to engage positively with content creators and fellow commenters. Conversely, negative politeness strategies-such as being indirect, apologizing, or showing deference-are less common in this setting. The straightforward and casual nature of YouTube comments often prioritizes direct engagement, leaving less room for the elaborate or reserved tone associated with negative politeness.

However, people's comments are not always positive; in contrast, people frequently make harsh remarks to others as well. Receiving unhelpful criticism, being judged, and being ridiculed are all unpleasant outcomes of living in cyberspace. This is made possible by the fact that people can use anonymity on social media, hiding behind a screen or a protected or fake account, which is similar to wearing a mask, to predict that they will have no problems when saying whatever they want to without taking into account additional moral responsibilities. People can say and act in ways that seem contrary to real-life because they would not dare to say and to the same speech acts on a face-to-face basis (Pratama, 2019).

On the Instagram accounts of famous Indonesian politicians such as Anies Baswedan, it was found that the majority of politeness strategies that emerged were positive politeness strategies (Silitonga & Pasaribu, 2021). This finding indicates that

positive politeness strategies, which aim to build camaraderie, express approval, and foster solidarity, are particularly effective in digital platforms like Instagram. Politicians often use these strategies to engage with a broad audience, creating a sense of approachability and shared identity.

Building on this understanding of the prevalence of positive politeness strategies in Indonesian political communication, it becomes essential to explore how these strategies are employed by other influential figures in the digital sphere. Politician's interactions on social media are not only reflective of their personal communication style but also serve as a strategic tool to engage with diverse audiences, maintain their public image, and foster political support. To gain deeper insights into the role of politeness strategies in shaping public discourse, this study focuses on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions. As a prominent Indonesian politician with a substantial social media presence, Ganjar's engagement with his followers provides a valuable case for examining the nuanced application of politeness strategies in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Investigating Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions holds significant relevance due to his prominent political influence in Indonesia and the role his digital communication plays in shaping public perception and engagement. While prior research has examined politeness strategies in YouTube comments (Zainurrahman & Kofau, 2020), there remains a notable gap in studies focusing specifically on Instagram. Given Instagram's distinct features, including interactive functionalities, visual content, and direct audience engagement, analyzing Ganjar Pranowo's interactions on this platform offers valuable insights into the application of politeness strategies by political figures to promote positive discourse and uphold their public image in digital spaces.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to investigate the politeness strategies utilized in Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions. Content analysis is well-suited for examining textual and contextual features within communication, allowing the researcher to identify patterns and underlying meanings in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). By focusing on Instagram comments and posts, the study seeks to explore how positive and negative politeness strategies, as conceptualized by Brown and Levinson (1987), manifest in Ganjar's digital interactions with his followers.

The data for this research were collected from a purposive sample of Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account. A total of 250 interactions were selected, comprising 10 Instagram posts and their accompanying follower comments. Posts were chosen based on their relevance to political discourse and their engagement level (e.g., number of comments and likes). The selection of 10 Instagram posts was based on specific criteria to ensure relevance and data richness. The chosen posts were those that: (1) featured Ganjar Pranowo's direct engagement with followers, such as replies or acknowledgments; (2) contained politically themed content, reflecting his role as a public figure; and (3) generated a significant number of comments, indicating active public interaction. This purposive sampling technique was employed to capture diverse instances of politeness strategies within meaningful and contextually rich interactions. This sampling method ensures a diverse representation of interactions that reflect both routine and significant political events. The comments were categorized into four types of politeness strategies to facilitate systematic analysis. Purposive sampling is

appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to focus on rich, relevant data sources that align with the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic content analysis approach. This method involves coding data into themes that align with Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, ensuring a systematic examination of politeness strategies within the interactions. The coding process was iterative, starting with identifying explicit uses of politeness strategies in the data, followed by categorizing them into four types of politeness strategies. To ensure intercoder reliability, multiple coders were involved in the data analysis process. Prior to coding, the coders underwent training to familiarize themselves with the politeness strategy framework to promote consistent interpretation. A coding manual with clear definitions, examples, and guidelines was provided to maintain uniformity in the coding process. Additionally, a pilot coding session was conducted to identify discrepancies and refine coding criteria. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to assess the level of agreement between coders, ensuring the reliability of the analysis.

The results were then contextualized to assess their alignment with Indonesian cultural norms and the digital medium's affordances. Thematic analysis allows for flexibility in identifying both explicit and nuanced patterns in data, making it particularly effective for analyzing online discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To minimize researcher bias, several measures were implemented. First, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing data from multiple sources, including previous studies and theoretical frameworks, to validate findings. Second, researcher reflexivity was maintained by documenting assumptions, interpretations, and decision-making processes throughout the study. Finally, peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues to review coding results and interpretations, ensuring greater objectivity and enhancing the study's overall validity.

4. Discussion

This study analyzes the politeness strategies employed in the digital interactions on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account, focusing on the various linguistic features used by followers when engaging with political content. In this discussion, the results will be interpreted in the context of politeness strategies theory, particularly Brown and Levinson's framework, and explore the implications of these strategies for political communication in digital spaces.

There are 250 data in the form of comments from followers and also comments from Ganjar Pranowo himself taken from the 10 posts. The comments are then analyzed and categorized as follows:

4.1 Bald-on-record

Bald-on record is a politeness strategy used directly without any attempt to soften or mitigate the message. One of the data sample is the Ganjar Pranowo's reply on his follower's comment. The analysis can be seen as follow:

@riyantilauren: *Saya di singapura klau ke supermarket sll beli tempe,*

This comment is replied by Ganjar Pranowo by saying "*Joss*". The term "*Joss*" carries distinct sociolinguistic implications in the Indonesian context. Commonly used in informal discourse, particularly in Javanese and Indonesian slang, "*Joss*" is an expression of praise, approval, or admiration. In the context of Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interactions, followers' use of "*Joss*" reflects a

positive evaluation of his actions, statements, or public image. This term not only conveys agreement or support but also establishes a sense of solidarity and familiarity between Ganjar Pranowo and his followers. Its usage illustrates how informal language can function as a politeness strategy, fostering rapport and strengthening social bonds in digital political communication. In the context of the comment “*Joss*”, the message is delivered straightforwardly without additional explanation to reduce the threat to the “face” or social face of others. The word “*Joss*” is a short response that shows agreement or acceptance of a statement or action without further explanation. This comment does not attempt to add formal politeness elements such as expressions of gratitude, requests for permission or other forms of respect. In everyday conversation, the word “*Joss*” is often used to express something that is liked or agreed upon. This word is commonly used in conversations between close friends which explains that the two speakers are very familiar.

4.2. Positive politeness

Based on the research findings, it is found that positive politeness strategies are used in Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interaction. Positive politeness is a politeness strategy that aims to strengthen social relationships by showing attention, appreciation, or solidarity to the person we are speaking to. In Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram interaction, it is found that one of his followers commented as follow:

@ilhamadityapranata: *Masih berharap Pak Ganjar beneran jadi Presiden.*

This comment shows positive expectations for Ganjar Pranowo, namely that he will become President. This reflects support and trust in Ganjar's abilities and potential, which is part of the positive politeness strategy. The phrase “*Pak Ganjar*” is used as a form of respect, but in an informal tone like this, it shows familiarity or a sense of closeness. This expression makes the relationship between the commenter and Ganjar appear warmer and friendlier. The statement “*masih berharap*” implies empathy or recognition of the situation, which can increase the emotional connection with the recipient of the message. Comments like this create a positive and supportive communication atmosphere, enhancing Ganjar's image as a figure who is respected and expected by the community. This is in accordance with the goal of positive politeness which strengthens social relations with the interlocutor or audience.

4.3 Negative politeness

One of comments that can be categorized as negative politeness strategy is a comment by:

@d1on_w4hyu who stated “*Maaf pak. Bagaimana menurut anda tentang hal itu Pak Ganjar?*”

The phrase “*maaf pak*” is a form of hedging, which is characteristic of negative politeness. It softens the impact of the request, making it less imposing or demanding. The use of “*bagaimana menurut anda*” explains that the commenter is trying to remain polite by using the word “*anda*” which also explains that there is distance between them. The term “*Pak Ganjar*” reflects respect for the individual being addressed, showing that the speaker is aware of the social hierarchy and is trying to minimize any threat to Ganjar's face or status. The commenter is not directly demanding that Ganjar clarify his stance but is instead

phrasing it as a polite question. Negative politeness strategies aim to avoid making the request or statement too forceful, which is evident in the indirect nature of the comment.

4.4. Off-record

Off-record strategies are used by Ganjar’s followers in his Instagram interaction. The data can be seen as follow:

@anliman08: “*Mantap presiden kita lagi kunjungan kerja*”. This sentence can be analyzed as a form of irony, considering that Ganjar Pranowo is currently not the President of Indonesia, but rather a former presidential candidate or a politician who is visiting a place. This sentence mentions "presiden kita", which literally indicates Ganjar as the president of Indonesia. However, in reality, Ganjar had not yet served as president at the time this comment was made. This statement functions as irony because it contains a contrast between what is said (Ganjar is the president) and the reality (Ganjar is not the president). Comments like this may also be used to strengthen a political position or support a former candidate (Ganjar), while alluding to the inappropriateness of the actual status of the position. The use of "presiden kita" can indicate disagreement with the status quo, namely the fact that Ganjar is not president, while simultaneously supporting or hoping for political change. The use of the word "*mantap*" (meaning "great") could also be a veiled satire to suggest that Ganjar should have been president, even though he was not the legitimate president at the time. This adds a dimension of irony to the comment, where the speaker indirectly states that Ganjar is the figure who is wanted to lead, even though in reality he has not held the office.

After analyzing the data from Ganjar Pranowo’s Instagram interaction, it can be inferred that there are 250 comments found. The data was obtained from 10 Instagram posts by Ganjar Pranowo and from each post 25 comments were taken which were then categorized based on politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. Here are the results.

Comments	Politeness Strategies				Freq	%
	Bald-on-record	Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Off-record		
Followers	49	138	24	17	228	91%
Ganjar Pranowo	18	4	-	-	22	9%
Total	67	142	24	17	250	100%

Table 1: Result of the Study

The data provides a clear insight into the politeness strategies employed in the interactions between followers and Ganjar Pranowo on Instagram. From a total of 250 comments, the majority of politeness strategies utilized are concentrated within the positive politeness strategies, comprising 142 instances or 56,8% of all comments. This dominance of positive politeness aligns with findings from previous studies that highlight the tendency of social media users to express solidarity, approval, and support in their comments, particularly when interacting with public figures such as politicians.

The high frequency of positive politeness strategies (56,8%) reflects followers' inclination to reduce social distance and establish camaraderie with Ganjar Pranowo.

This could be attributed to the nature of digital political discourse in Indonesia, where supporters often use social media to display enthusiasm and collective identity (e.g., "*Mantap, Pak Ganjar!*"). Positive politeness fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect, which is especially prominent in political contexts where individuals feel connected to their preferred candidates. This finding is in line with the previous study which states that positive politeness strategies are more frequently used when commenting on Anies Baswedan's (one of former candidate of President) Instagram account (Silitonga & Pasaribu, 2021). The positive politeness strategies used indicate that the agreement and support from the followers to their favorite politician.

The second most frequent strategy is bald-on-record, with 67 occurrences (26,8%), often characterized by direct statements or commands, such as "*Tetap semangat, Pak Ganjar!*" This finding suggests that followers may not feel the need to mitigate their comments, possibly due to a perceived closeness or an informal context where directness is socially acceptable. Bald-on-record strategies often arise in interactions where the speaker prioritizes efficiency over politeness (Culpeper et al., 2021).

Negative politeness appears less frequently, with 24 instances (9,6%), reflecting a more formal or cautious interaction style. This might occur in comments where followers feel a need to maintain distance or show deference, such as in polite requests or carefully worded criticism (e.g., "*Maaf, Pak Ganjar, bisa jelaskan lebih lanjut kebijakan ini?*"). Similarly, off-record strategies (17 occurrences, 6,8%) highlight indirectness, such as implied praise or subtle suggestions, showcasing a desire to avoid imposition while still contributing to the discourse. This finding aligns with a previous study that indicates negative politeness strategies are less frequently employed by Indonesian politicians (Eliyana & Susanti, 2023). The positive politeness strategies are preferred due to the purpose of gaining trust from audiences.

Interestingly, comments from Ganjar Pranowo show a contrasting pattern. Out of his 22 comments, the majority are bald-on-record (18 comments, 81,8%), reflecting a direct and concise communication style, typical of public figures addressing a broad audience. His minimal use of positive politeness (4 comments, 18,2%) may indicate an effort to maintain professionalism while still engaging with his followers. The absence of negative politeness or off-record strategies suggests that his communication is more focused on clarity and efficiency than on mitigating potential face-threatening acts.

The prevalence of positive politeness among followers emphasizes the relational and affiliative nature of political discourse on social media. Polite language should be used when uploading comments or writing on social media (Sulistiyowati et al., 2024). It suggests that followers use language not only to communicate but also to express shared identity and support. On the other hand, Ganjar Pranowo's preference for bald-on-record strategies aligns with the need for clear and authoritative communication as a political figure.

Public figures, including politicians, often prioritize positive politeness strategies to foster engagement and maintain a favorable public image (Suerni, 2024). This connection is particularly relevant to the present study, as Ganjar Pranowo's use of similar strategies reflects broader patterns observed in Indonesian political discourse. By demonstrating consistency with previous research findings, this study reinforces the role of politeness strategies in shaping effective online interactions. Every social media user needed to maintain politeness when interacting, they need to make the right choice of words, avoid using harsh words, and respect the views of others (Suparno et al.,

2023). The interplay between followers' supportive comments and Ganjar's direct responses highlights the dynamic nature of digital communication, where linguistic strategies adapt to varying social roles and expectations.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the politeness strategies employed in interactions on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram account, focusing on the linguistic and social dynamics of digital political communication. The findings revealed that positive politeness strategies were the most dominant, reflecting followers' tendencies to express support, admiration, and solidarity with the political figure. This aligns with the relational nature of digital platforms, where users often employ inclusive and affiliative language to build a sense of community and shared identity.

In response to the research question, the findings indicate that Ganjar Pranowo's responses are predominantly characterized by bald-on-record strategies, emphasizing directness and efficiency. This suggests a pragmatic approach to engaging with followers, aligning with the expectations of a public figure communicating in a professional yet relatable manner. The limited presence of negative politeness and off-record strategies underscores the generally informal and affiliative tone of the interactions, which may reflect cultural norms and the nature of Indonesian digital political discourse.

This study contributes to the understanding of linguistic politeness in digital contexts, particularly in political communication. It highlights the role of social media as a platform where politeness strategies are employed not only to convey meaning but also to negotiate power, solidarity, and identity.

Further studies could explore politeness strategies used by politicians on different social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, to examine platform-specific communication styles. In addition, comparative studies between Indonesian and non-Indonesian political figures could uncover how cultural norms and societal values shape politeness strategies in digital political communication.

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CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: LIBERAL FEMINISM IN *MULAN* (2020)

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Abstract

This study examines gender equality through the lens of liberal feminism in the film *Mulan* (2020), addressing a significant research gap in existing feminist analyses of the film. While previous studies have examined Mulan's character from various perspectives, this research focuses specifically on how her character development and actions reflect liberal feminist principles, offering a fresh perspective on her challenge to patriarchal norms. Data was collected and analyzed using qualitative textual analysis, which involves a close examination of key dialogues, character interactions, and narrative choices within the film. This method allows for a deeper understanding of how Mulan's journey embodies the ideals of liberal feminism, particularly in its defiance of traditional gender roles and its advocacy of individual agency. This study argues that the character of Mulan represents a meaningful redefinition of female agency through liberal feminist ideals. By portraying a strong female protagonist who challenges societal expectations, the film reinforces feminist discourse and highlights the evolving representation of female empowerment in contemporary cinema.

Keywords: *Feminism; Gender Equality; Liberal Feminism; Patriarchal Norms.*

1. Introduction

A movie script serves as a medium for conveying ideas and concepts, blending factual elements through narrative structure, dialogue, shot descriptions, and set design (Suprpto, 2022). This distinctive literary form combines storytelling with visual and auditory elements, creating a blueprint for the cinematic experience. Among the many scripts available, Elizabeth Rudnick's adaptation of *Mulan* (2020) stands out as a significant subject for feminist analysis. It presents a modern retelling of an ancient story, resonating with current discussions on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Originally released as a Disney animated film in 1998, *Mulan* is based on the ancient Chinese folk tale "The Ballad of Mulan" (Qingli & Ying, 2020). The story follows *Hua Mulan*, a young woman who disguises herself as a man to take her father's place in the imperial army. Her mission to protect her dynasty and honor her family showcases bravery and filial duty while delving into complex themes of gender identity and societal expectations (Liu, 2021). Mulan's journey highlights feminist themes as her

actions challenge societal norms that restrict women to traditional roles, such as domestic duties and exclusion from public life (Wang, 2020).

While earlier studies (e.g., Smith & Johnson, 2021) have explored feminist themes in *Mulan*, few have specifically examined its connection to liberal feminist theory. This study addresses that gap by focusing on how *Mulan*'s defiance of patriarchal norms exemplifies liberal feminist principles. The central research question guiding this analysis is: How does *Mulan* (2020) depict gender equality through the lens of liberal feminism?

The 2020 live-action adaptation, written by Elizabeth Rudnick, reinterprets this story for a contemporary audience, adding depth to *Mulan*'s character while further exploring the feminist themes present in the original tale. This version emphasizes the protagonist's resistance to rigid gender norms imposed by a patriarchal society. The film portrays *Mulan* as a symbol of defiance against gender-based oppression, reflecting broader feminist discussions aimed at dismantling such constraints (Smith & Johnson, 2021). By showcasing *Mulan*'s journey of self-discovery and empowerment, the script serves as a critical reflection on the significance of gender equality in both historical and modern contexts (Doe, 2019).

Liberal feminism, which is rooted in Enlightenment ideals of individual rights and rationality, advocates for equality between men and women through legal and political reforms. It argues that women's subordination is not due to biological differences but rather stems from unequal access to rights and opportunities (Freedman, 2014). The script critiques gender discrimination by illustrating how *Mulan* must conceal her identity as a woman to fit into the male-dominated military. By the film's conclusion, *Mulan* is recognized for her abilities and accepted for who she truly is, symbolizing the victory of liberal feminist ideals over patriarchal structures.

Mulan's character not only demonstrates physical strength and courage but also grapples with internal conflicts and a determination to challenge societal gender roles. Through her journey, the script examines broader issues of gender inequality and highlights the importance of individual agency in the fight for social justice (Hansen, 2021). The film ultimately serves as a metaphor for the feminist struggle, with *Mulan*'s journey representing the quest for gender equality and the empowerment of women in all areas of life.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Protagonist

The protagonist is the character who the reader or audience follows most closely and who faces opposition from an adversary. This adversary, often referred to as the antagonist, presents challenges, conflicts, and obstacles that test the protagonist, revealing both their virtues and flaws. A protagonist can take on various roles, such as a supporting protagonist, tragic hero, antihero, hero/heroine, or even a villain, depending on the narrative structure. The key attribute of a protagonist is their significant dramatic objective, which drives the plot forward.

According to Morner and Rausch (1991: 31) in Hanggur et al. (2022), the protagonist in a film is typically the character portrayed as having a morally positive disposition. This character's behavior, moral compass, mental state, and physical actions are pivotal in identifying them as the protagonist. In discussing the protagonist, it's essential to also consider the other characters, as their interactions with the protagonist

are crucial to the narrative. The way these characters behave is consistent with their roles within the story, often serving to highlight the protagonist's journey.

2.2 Movie Script

A movie script, also known as a screenplay, shares structural similarities with drama, incorporating essential elements such as setting, plot, characterization, and theme. However, the approach to writing a movie script differs significantly from that of a drama, particularly in its reliance on dialogue to convey characters' traits, emotions, and motivations. This focus on dialogue is instrumental in translating the written narrative into visual scenes, ensuring that the story is effectively communicated through the medium of film (Field, 2005).

A movie script serves as a comprehensive blueprint that outlines the key directions and components necessary to bring a film to life. It provides the foundation for the entire filmmaking process, guiding the transformation of a story concept into visual sequences, dialogues, and other narrative elements (McKee, 1997). The script is not only a guide for directors, actors, and cinematographers but also a tool that shapes the pacing, tone, and overall aesthetic of the film.

2.3 Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to equality between men and women, boys and the law, in terms of decision-making and income. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees every right and freedom regardless of gender. Gender equality is the socially constructed difference between men and women, which is the difference in expected behavior for both sexes (Horký and O'Sullivan 2010).

Gender equality refers to the state in which individuals, regardless of their gender, have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It encompasses equal access to resources and opportunities in areas such as education, employment, political participation, and healthcare. Achieving gender equality is integral to fostering peace, enhancing human potential, and promoting sustainable development (United Nations, n.d.). Over the decades, significant progress has been made globally through various feminist movements and governmental policies aimed at addressing gender disparities. Despite these efforts, many regions continue to experience gender inequality, especially in the workplace, politics, and access to education (World Economic Forum, 2022).

2.3.1 Gender Equality in Literature and Cultural Narratives

The role of literature in shaping and reflecting societal gender roles has been widely acknowledged. Gender representations in literary works often mirror the social and cultural values of the time in which they were written. Historically, literature has featured predominantly male protagonists, reinforcing traditional gender norms and hierarchies. According to a recent study by the World Economic Forum (2022), male characters outnumber female characters by a ratio of 4:1 in traditional literary works, a reflection of the dominant patriarchal structure in society.

However, literature also serves as a platform for challenging these established norms. Feminist literature, in particular, critiques and subverts traditional gender roles, offering alternative narratives that empower women and celebrate their autonomy. Feminist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Toni Morrison, and Audre Lorde have used literature to address issues of gender inequality and challenge the patriarchy by portraying strong, independent female characters and narratives that empower women (Morrison, 1987; Woolf, 1929). This genre of literature plays an essential role in

advancing gender equality by offering new perspectives on women's roles and experiences.

Furthermore, literature and films, including Disney's *Mulan* (2020), continue to challenge conventional gender roles. In *Mulan*, the protagonist defies societal expectations by embracing traditionally male roles, such as that of a soldier. This narrative challenges the gendered norms within Chinese society and offers a more inclusive representation of women's strength and capabilities (Liu, 2020). Films like *Mulan* contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality, portraying women as capable of transcending the limitations imposed by patriarchal structures.

2.3.2 Gender Equality and Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism, a major school of feminist thought, emphasizes gender equality through legal and political reforms. It focuses on the protection of individual rights, advocating for equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life, including politics, education, and the workplace. Liberal feminists argue that gender inequality arises from systemic barriers that prevent women from accessing the same rights and opportunities afforded to men. Therefore, achieving gender equality involves dismantling these barriers through legal reforms and social change (Tong, 2009).

In literature and media, liberal feminism is often reflected in narratives that foreground women's autonomy, individual rights, and ability to challenge restrictive societal norms. By examining works such as *Mulan*, one can analyze how female protagonists exercise their autonomy and challenge patriarchal structures in pursuit of equality. These narratives promote the notion that women should not be confined to traditional roles but instead be allowed to explore their full potential, free from societal restrictions.

Liberal feminism has been particularly influential in contemporary feminist discourse, influencing both the academic field and popular culture. It advocates for change through existing legal frameworks, believing that gender equality can be achieved by ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal access to opportunities and protections.

2.3.3 Contemporary Perspectives on Gender Equality

In the present day, achieving gender equality continues to be a crucial global issue. According to the United Nations (n.d.), achieving gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary condition for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Gender equality remains a priority on the global agenda, with initiatives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030. This highlights the importance of continuing efforts to address gender-based violence, improve women's access to education and healthcare, and ensure women's equal participation in decision-making processes (United Nations, n.d.).

Additionally, the #MeToo movement and other contemporary feminist initiatives have garnered widespread attention, highlighting ongoing gender inequality in various sectors, including entertainment, business, and politics. These movements aim to raise awareness and challenge the status quo, demanding accountability for gender-based violence and discrimination (FutureLearn, n.d.).

2.4 Feminism in Literature

Feminism in literature has emerged as a vital field of study, analyzing the representation of women and the implications of gender dynamics in literary texts. This body of work challenges the historical marginalization of female voices and perspectives, asserting that literature reflects and shapes societal attitudes toward gender. Feminist literary criticism interrogates not only how female characters are portrayed but also how these portrayals influence readers' perceptions and societal norms regarding gender roles.

According to Showalter (1977), feminist literary criticism aims to reveal how literature perpetuates or challenges patriarchal ideologies, thus playing a significant role in advocating for gender equality. This critical approach seeks to expose the ways in which women have been historically portrayed in literature as passive, submissive, or secondary to male characters. Showalter's framework includes three phases of women's writing: the "feminine" phase, where female writers imitate male styles; the "feminist" phase, where women write in protest against the male-dominated literary canon; and the "female" phase, where women create literature that reflects their unique experiences and perspectives (Showalter, 1977). This evolution underscores the importance of acknowledging diverse female voices and experiences in literature.

Scholars like Gilbert and Gubar (1979) emphasize the need to examine the cultural and social contexts that inform literary depictions of women, illustrating how feminist critiques can unveil the power structures at play within narratives. Their seminal work, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, explores the representation of women in 19th-century literature, revealing how societal expectations and constraints have shaped female characters. They argue that literature often reflects the anxieties of patriarchal society regarding female independence and sexuality, suggesting that women's creativity has historically been stifled by these pressures. This analysis not only highlights the complexities of female identity but also calls for a reevaluation of how literary texts can serve as both mirrors and critiques of societal norms.

Feminist literature has also evolved to include contemporary issues, such as the representation of women in popular media and genre fiction. Scholars like Smelik (2018) argue that modern adaptations of classic texts offer new opportunities for feminist readings by challenging traditional narratives and stereotypes. For instance, adaptations of stories like *Mulan* or *Little Women* often reinterpret female protagonists, emphasizing their agency and resilience in the face of societal constraints. Such adaptations not only reflect changing attitudes towards gender but also contribute to ongoing discussions about women's rights and empowerment in contemporary society. Scholars such as Hansen (2021) and Smith & Johnson (2021) have analyzed the feminist themes in *Mulan*, highlighting how the protagonist challenges gender stereotypes. However, these studies have not fully explored how the film aligns with liberal feminism. This research builds on previous work by applying liberal feminist theory to analyze *Mulan*'s defiance of patriarchal norms.

In summary, feminism in literature is a dynamic and essential field that critically examines the representation of women and the implications of gender dynamics in literary texts. By revealing the historical marginalization of female voices and perspectives, feminist literary criticism serves as a powerful tool for advocating for gender equality and reshaping societal attitudes toward women. Through the works of scholars such as Showalter, Gilbert, Gubar, Crenshaw, and others, this field continues to

evolve, incorporating diverse voices and experiences that enrich our understanding of gender in literature.

2.4.1 Kinds of Feminism

Within feminist literary criticism, various kinds of feminism address distinct issues and perspectives, enriching the discourse surrounding gender representation in literature. According to Jaggar (1983), feminism can be categorized into several kinds, each with its own approach to addressing women's oppression and advocating for gender equality:

2.4.1.1 Liberal Feminism

Rooted in 17th and 18th-century liberal political philosophy, liberal feminism emphasizes equality between men and women, advocating for equal rights and opportunities. It draws heavily on Enlightenment ideals that champion individual freedom, rationality, and the belief that all individuals, regardless of gender, are entitled to the same rights (Tong, 2009). Herouach (2019) argues that liberal feminism maintains that societal structures should be reformed to be more inclusive of women's individual rights, focusing on dismantling legal and institutional barriers that hinder women's full participation in society. Unlike more radical forms of feminism, liberal feminism does not necessarily challenge the underlying systems that perpetuate gender inequality; instead, it seeks to work within those systems to create equitable opportunities.

The liberal feminist perspective holds that gender equality can be achieved through reforms within existing social and political frameworks. This approach emphasizes core principles such as equality, individual rights, legal reform, and autonomy (Tong, 2009; Herouach, 2019). Liberal feminists advocate for policies that promote equal access to education, employment, and political representation. They argue that by ensuring women have the same legal rights as men, including reproductive rights, property rights, and protection against discrimination, society can progress toward true equality (Duffy & Nentwig, 2019).

2.4.1.2 Marxist Feminism:

Marxist feminism, which first appeared in the 1970s, connects capitalism and class conflict to the subjugation of women. It contends that capitalism is the main cause of women's oppression and criticizes orthodox Marxism for ignoring gender concerns. It then calls for the establishment of a socialist regime that would remove gender inequality. Marxist feminists have noted that, for social, commercial, and economic reasons, women's oppression is evident in the home, workplace, and social spheres Dil et al. (2019).

2.4.1.3 Socialist Feminism

According to Bell et al. (2020), socialist feminism seeks to understand the relationship between gender and class by examining the results of a just distribution of incentives. It emphasizes the intersectionality of gender, class, race, and other social categories, advocating for systemic change to achieve gender equality. Social feminists have observed that women's experiences with gender are influenced by class disparities. For example, wealthy women may hire less fortunate women to help them with household chores.

2.4.1.4 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism emerged in the 1960s, focusing on patriarchy and male violence as the root causes of women's oppression Jensen (2021). It seeks to dismantle patriarchal systems and challenges the traditional roles of women in society, advocating for a complete transformation of social structures.

2.4.1.5 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism links the exploitation of women with the exploitation of the environment, emphasizing the need for harmony between humans and nature. It critiques patriarchal systems for their role in both environmental degradation and the oppression of women, advocating for a sustainable and equitable relationship with the Earth. According to Braidotti et al. (1994), ecofeminism is "the feminist position most explicitly concerned with environmental degradation." Its essence is far more spiritual than political or intellectual. There are two main components to it: feminine and ecology. It holds that under patriarchy, women are aware of and naturally appreciate nature, and they reject acts of violence against it and the subjugation of women Zhang (2021).

2.4.1.6 Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism seeks to revalue and promote traits traditionally associated with women, such as cooperation, relationships, and care. It challenges patriarchal societies that devalue these traits and advocates for creating spaces that celebrate and empower women. The establishment and maintenance of distinct spaces focused on women that "promote female biology as the basis of women's power" is how cultural feminists fight the oppression of women. They search for ways to lessen the harshest effects of patriarchy Hyde (2022).

2.4.1.7 Black Feminism

Black feminism emerged in the 1970s as a response to the unique experiences of black women facing both racial and gender oppression. It emphasizes the intersectionality of race and gender and advocates for social justice for women of color Collins (2008).

2.4.1.8 Postmodern Feminism

Even though we live in a postmodern society in the twenty-first century, prejudice and discriminatory attitudes against women have not changed all that much over time Jensen (2021). Postmodern feminism, also referred to as third-wave feminism, embraces diversity and the multiplicity of women's experiences while criticizing the essentialist tenets of previous feminist groups. It questions established ideas about gender and promotes a more flexible and inclusive definition of identity.

These various schools of feminism offer different perspectives on the causes of women's oppression and propose different strategies for achieving gender equality. Collectively, they contribute to a broader understanding of the role of feminism in literature and society. In this study, the researcher uses the theory of liberal feminism approach.

John Stuart Mill was a liberal feminist who wrote 'The Subjection of Women' in 1869, a critical essay defending women's civil and human rights. Mill talks about three main elements of women's lives that he believes hold them back: society and the

construction of gender, education, and marriage. He argued that the oppression of women was one of the few relics of antiquity, a set of prejudices that greatly hindered the progress of mankind Stuart (1869). Mill stated, 'No one who knows anything about human history can dispute that all men are stronger and cleverer than all women. All women should try to do something even though the average woman cannot do something that the average man can do' Stuart (1970). Feminist liberals believe a just society is key to autonomous individuals. Therefore, equality and justice for women are necessary to support this. One of the common goals of liberal feminism is to create a just and caring society in which freedom can flourish. Both men and women can only flourish in such a society.

Mill states that even if all women are worse than all men at a particular thing, the prohibition against women trying to do that thing cannot be justified because any prohibition against what women naturally cannot do is excessive. Although women are great, they are not as strong as the men they compete with. In the movie in this study, the main character rebels against the prohibition for women to do activities commonly done by men, which supports this theory.

According to liberal feminism theory, women and men are not that different from one another because of biological distinctions; rather, their shared humanity outweighs their procreative differentiation. Men and women shouldn't be treated differently by the law if they are not different. Women ought to enjoy equal rights to education and employment possibilities as males. Lewis (2018) in Purwarno et al., (2021) states that liberal feminism is a philosophy and group that prioritizes equality in politics, the workplace, and the education system. In studying private sector issues, liberal feminism usually considers equality: how can one's private life promote or hinder public equality? As a result, liberal feminists also prefer men to be involved in marriage and childcare as equal partners. She goes on to say that the main goals of liberal feminism are gender equality in the public sphere, equal access to schools, equal pay, the elimination of sex discrimination in the workplace, and improved working conditions. These goals are largely achieved through legislative change. Due to the fact that they affect or hinder equality in the public sector, issues that arise in the private sector are of particular importance.

3. Research Method

Research design is a critical component that bridges the gap between conceptual research problems and empirical research questions. As noted by Asenahabi (2019), research design serves as the blueprint that guides researchers in structuring their inquiry to effectively address specific research questions. It involves a systematic, step-by-step procedure that researchers follow to achieve their research objectives before initiating data collection and analysis. According to Kerlinger (1986), research design is defined as the plan, structure, and strategy of a study, formulated to provide answers to research questions while optimizing control over variables to minimize potential biases.

In this study, a descriptive qualitative research approach was employed to analyze gender equality through the lens of liberal feminism as it pertains to the main character in the *Mulan* movie script. As Waruwu et al. (2023) explain, qualitative research seeks to understand the significance of various phenomena, symptoms, and social contexts by employing descriptive methods. This approach is ideal for examining the feminist themes in the *Mulan* script, as it allows for a nuanced exploration of the protagonist's character through her thoughts, dialogues, and actions.

Data for this study was collected through a close reading of the *Mulan* (2020) screenplay, focusing on key dialogues that reflect feminist resistance and gender expectations. According to Creswell (2018), the four basic types of qualitative data collection methods are observation, interviews, document analysis, and digital or audiovisual material analysis. In this research, document analysis was chosen for its ability to provide direct access to the language and words used in the screenplay, allowing for a detailed examination of the text.

The data collection process involved several meticulous steps to ensure alignment with the research objectives: (1) The movie script was read multiple times to ensure a thorough understanding. (2) Relevant parts of the dialogue, monologue, prologue, and key terms were identified and extracted, focusing on those pertinent to the research questions through the application of liberal feminist principles. This framework was used to analyze *Mulan's* challenges, particularly in scenes where she asserts her autonomy and rejects patriarchal constraints. (3) The data was then organized to align with the formulation of the research problem. (4) Finally, all relevant data was compiled for further analysis. This rigorous data collection process ensures that the research findings are based on a comprehensive and accurate representation of the *Mulan* movie script.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasize the importance of approaching data analysis as a series of sequential steps, starting with detailed examination and progressing to broader interpretations. The data analysis process for this study involved analyzing the feminist themes in the protagonist's thoughts, dialogue, and actions, with particular attention to specific sentences in the screenplay. The findings were evaluated to draw meaningful conclusions about the portrayal of feminism in the *Mulan* movie script. To enhance the validity of the study, bias was minimized by maintaining a consistent focus on the liberal feminist framework throughout the analysis, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the text. This structured approach to data analysis allows for a deep and thorough understanding of the feminist aspects of the script, providing a solid foundation for the study's conclusions. The source of this research comes from the movie script of *Mulan* 2020 (Rudnick, 2020).

4. Discussion

This chapter analyzes the challenges faced by the protagonist in Elizabeth Rudnick's *Mulan* (2020) to achieve the research objectives. The analysis focuses on the principles of liberal feminism embodied by the protagonist in the film. Furthermore, this study examines how the protagonist evolves as a character who challenges societal norms by adhering to the principles of liberal feminism. *Mulan's* rejection of traditional gender roles aligns with liberal feminism's emphasis on individual autonomy. Unlike earlier versions, this adaptation explicitly frames her defiance as a struggle for gender equality, reinforcing the importance of self-determination in feminist discourse

4.1 The Protagonist's Principles of Liberal Feminism

Gender equality can be addressed in two ways by liberal theory. First, it grants women the right to participate and own property by prohibiting legal discrimination. Second, liberalism incorporates its ideals into the private sphere to protect women from unique oppression (Gerson, 2002).

Chi, the naturally-aspirated life energy of every human being, can only be used by warriors (males). If a girl uses her chi, they will be considered a witch and ostracized

by society. The protagonist has chi, which only boys have because it is the form of his every move, so a girl faces the risk of shame, disgrace, and alienation. quoted as follows:

If you had such a daughter... her chi, the boundless energy of life itself... Speaking through her every motion... Could you tell her that only a son could wield chi? That a daughter would risk shame, dishonor, exile? (Rudnick, 2020: 1)

The quote above shows that *Mulan* is opposed to having “chi” because of the belief that chi can only be used by men who symbolize energy and strength. *Mulan* acts as a protagonist who reflects the principles of liberal feminism by believing that women have the same rights and capacity to utilize this energy. In addition, the risk of “shame, dishonor, and alienation” mentioned in the quote above, suggests that society expects women to take on traditional roles. However, *Mulan* chooses her own path in life and refuses to let these expectations stand in her way. This shows the basis of liberal feminism which emphasizes everyone's right to choose their own path in life despite being opposed by society which can be seen from the following:

Your chi is strong, *Mulan*.
But chi is for warriors...
Not daughters.
(Rudnick, 2020: 2)

The quote above highlights that “chi” is reserved for “warriors” and not “daughters,” implying that women are deemed unworthy of wielding such power. As the protagonist, *Mulan* uses her full potential to defy this belief. Liberal feminism advocates for gender equality by challenging societal norms that confine women to traditional roles, as illustrated in the previous quote. This idea is further emphasized by the following quote:

I will bring honor to us all. I'm truly blessed to be in the presence of such enchanting women. I have no doubt today will be a momentous day for the Hua... Never mind that. We must be on time. I'm starving
(Rudnick, 2020: 3)

In the quote above, *Mulan* shows that she has to fulfill her role in society because there are expectations that she has to fulfill, but she also tries to maintain her determination and desire to be herself, which reflects liberal feminism that emphasizes that women should have the right to vote and determine their own roles in a society that positions women as subordinates who do not have the freedom to express their opinions, as in the following quote:

When a wife serves her husband...
... she must be silent. She must be invisible.
(Rudnick, 2020: 5)

The quote above suggests that women in marriage are expected to be “silent” and “invisible” to men, denying them a voice. In such a context, women's empowerment becomes crucial. As the protagonist, *Mulan* seeks to empower herself by refusing to remain “invisible” or “silent.” She takes a bold step by disguising herself as a man and joining the army. Through her transformation into Hua Jun, *Mulan* demonstrates that

women can also be heroes and leaders. Despite her achievements, she faces injustice from those around her, who treat her differently compared to Hua Jun. This is further illustrated by the following quote:

You would believe Hua Jun.
Why do you not believe Hua Mulan?
She risked everything by revealing her true identity.
She's braver than any man here.
And she's the best warrior amongst us.
(Rudnick, 2020: 17)

In the previous quote, Mulan has “risked everything” by revealing her true identity to recognize that women have the same courage and strength as men. Women have the right to choose their own path, as shown by Mulan's initial decision to disguise herself as a man and fight on the battlefield. Mulan remains brave in revealing her true identity, no matter what the outcome. “She is braver than any man here” challenges gender stereotypes that assume that only men have courage and strength. This is reinforced by “And she is the best warrior among us”, which considers women's empowerment important because not only does Mulan fight for herself, but she can also prove their ability to contribute to activities that are dominated by men, which is then strengthened by the following quote:

You told me my journey was impossible.
Yet here I stand.
Proof that there is a place for people like us.
(Rudnick, 2020: 19)

In the quote above, Mulan receives rejection due to doubts about her ability, which is considered “impossible”. Instead, Mulan says that she is “proof” that there is a place for women like her who are able to show courage and determination to change the way her society sees women as inferior. As a representation of female empowerment, Mulan reflects the values of liberal feminism by not accepting barriers from society to achieve her goals. Mulan shows that women have an equal place in society by saying “a place for people like us”, hinting that society should change its perspective on an equal future but should also keep in mind the responsibility towards family which is supported in the following quote:

Your Majesty...
I'm deeply honored by this immeasurable invitation...
but with humble apologies...
I cannot accept it. I left home under cover of darkness...
and betrayed my family's trust.
I made choices I knew would risk their dishonor.
Since then...
I have pledged an oath...
to be loyal, brave, and true.
In order to fulfill this oath...
I must return home and make amends to my family.
(Rudnick, 2020: 20)

According to the quote above, Mulan firmly declined the invitation, saying “a great honor”, showing that she has the ability to make her own decisions, challenging the traditional view that women should be subservient. As the protagonist, Mulan demonstrates important principles of liberal feminism, namely recognizing that everyone has autonomy and has the obligation to make their own decisions, Mulan also emphasizes an attitude of integrity by saying “swear. Mulan emphasizes that she makes decisions not for her personal interest but also considers the impact on others, especially her family, therefore Mulan shows her commitment to the values of norms and ethics, this is reinforced by Mulan's phrase “I must return home and make amends to my family.”

4.2. The Protagonist's Development in Challenging Patriarchal Societal Norms

This section explores how Mulan, as the protagonist, evolves in her resistance to the patriarchal societal norms that limit women's roles and agency.

4.2.1 Protagonist's Patriarchal Norms in Society

The frequent allocation of orders, directions, and praise to male characters over female characters underscores the patriarchal dominance depicted in Mulan's society. This dynamic sets the stage for Mulan's journey to challenge these restrictive norms through her actions and choices. In patriarchal societies, women are usually unreliable, especially in public settings (Moghadam 1992). Women's work in patriarchal societies mainly centers on their roles as mothers and wives, raising children according to social standards, and providing emotional support to their husbands (Joseph S 1996). Based on Elizabeth Rudnick's 2020 *Mulan* movie script, women are judged based on their ability to marry and bring honor to their families, which means that Mulan must fulfill these societal requirements as a daughter, as mentioned below:

A daughter brings honor through marriage.
(Rudnick, 2020: 1)

The sentence above shows the custom of a patriarchal society that requires women to marry to maintain the good name of their family, which limits the value of women by getting married. Women are not given the freedom to choose their own path in life, so they have to be good wives to fulfill the traditional roles prescribed by society. The film's lead, Mulan, feels hindered by this custom, which will prevent her from realizing her dream of becoming a warrior. Bravely, Mulan develops into a character who defies the patriarchal norm by choosing to take on the unusual role of a woman and running away from home to replace her father on the battlefield. By doing this, Mulan defies patriarchal norms physically and socially as she becomes a cause of “dishonor” to her family according to traditional patriarchal views. Gender equality and individual freedom to choose what they want in their lives are principles emphasized by liberal feminism. Mulan can achieve gender equality by showing that she is brave and capable of protecting her family and their dynasty, not just being a wife. Mulan also has to develop her character to deal with the pressure of gender hierarchy, given her position as a daughter who has to accept the traditional roles expressed in the following quote:

You are the daughter!
Learn your place.
(Rudnick, 2020: 6)

The emphasis on the sentence “learn your place” above shows that the patriarchal norms that exist in this society not only limit women's freedom but also force women to accept gender inequality as they are not allowed to participate in activities that are more dominant or masculine. This quote puts Mulan under pressure not to do things that are considered brave or equal to men as it would be considered a violation of societal norms. When her father tells her that she is “a daughter” and she should “learn her place,” Mulan thrives on directly defying social norms. She believes she can do more than society's expectations of women. Mulan has to go against her father because her father believes that women are not fit to perform masculine tasks such as fighting, and Mulan refuses to accept her “place” and performs actions that go against the patriarchal norms of society that limit her simply because she is a daughter. However, this is what helps Mulan develop to achieve gender equality, because according to the patriarchal norms of society, women are expected to be submissive and prioritize the needs of their husbands, which is reinforced by the following quote:

When a wife serves her husband...
... she must be silent. She must be invisible.
(Rudnick, 2020: 5)

This statement depicts a situation in which women do not possess authority or a voice within their relationships. It relates to the preceding phrase “learn your places,” which suggests that Mulan should conform to the societal role designated for her as a woman, implying that women are appreciated solely for their service and support of their husbands rather than for their accomplishments. Mulan develops her character to contest this societal expectation by voicing her wish for freedom and asserting her identity in direct defiance of these norms, as she strives for acknowledgment of her talents and courage to prove that women can be viewed as strong.

4.2.2 Protagonist’s Initial Role in Society

In society, the expression “initial role” refers to the anticipated responsibilities, activities, and behaviors of an individual based on various factors such as age, gender, social status, and cultural norms. At the beginning of the movie *Mulan* (2020), Mulan is portrayed as a young girl who is constrained by the strict expectations of a male-dominated society. She is expected to fulfill her role as a woman and bring honor to her family through marriage, as emphasized by societal norms, which results in Mulan feeling trapped in a standard that mandates her role as a woman to uphold her family's honor through marriage, this is supported by the following quote:

A daughter brings honor through marriage
(Rudnick, 2020: 1)

In the Chinese culture that serves as the backdrop for the movie *Mulan*, women are expected to fulfill their traditional roles as mothers and wives. According to the quote above, a daughter should “bring good luck”, which means marrying a man of high social status and reputation. Mulan is expected to be an obedient woman who is ready to marry and live a life governed by others. Mulan faces many problems as she defies these norms. She has to face the internal conflict of not fitting into the role she is expected to play, and she also has to face the conflict from the society that values

women's luck by marrying and carrying out traditional roles, this is supported by the following quote:

Your job is to bring honor to the family.
(Rudnick, 2020: 2)

In a society dominated by patriarchy, Mulan's life choices are very limited, as her main goal is to get married. Mulan was growing up in an environment where family honor was very important, and she faced pressure to live up to the expectations of her society. Therefore, she must develop her character as the protagonist by understanding that maintaining her family's honor can be achieved by breaking free from these restrictions, taking the bold step of disguising herself and fighting in battle.

4.2.3 Protagonist's Catalysts for Change

A catalyst for change is someone who introduces new or transformative ideas and inspires others to embrace them. They play a crucial role in fostering an environment that facilitates change. Such individuals exhibit key qualities like courage and clarity, demonstrating their strength by daring to turn possibilities into reality when the moment calls for action. In addition, they are highly creative because they can patiently maintain the groundwork for change and make connections with the thoughts and feelings of others (Meta Karagianni, VP, and Research Director 2022). In her character development, Mulan demonstrates her courage to catalyze change by disguising herself as a soldier in the battlefield surrounded by a patriarchal society, as shown in the following quote:

She risked everything by revealing her true identity.
She's braver than any man here
(Rudnick, 2020: 17)

This brave act shows her attempt to overcome the customs that hinder gender expectations. Mulan risked her safety and the honor of her family. Her bravery shows that a brave person can initiate change. The previous phrase was expressed by Hua Mulan's friends who already knew that Hua Mulan's bravery was greater than that of men, thus changing their perspective on women. Mulan became a catalyst for change in an era of patriarchal society by participating in battles and daring to make decisions, as shown in the following quote:

- I believe Hua Mulan.
- I believe Hua Mulan.
- I believe Hua Mulan.
- I believe Hua Mulan.
(Rudnick, 2020: 17)

The quote above shows that Mulan has gained the trust of her friends on the battlefield. They see Mulan as a brave and capable warrior, not an imposter. They see Mulan as a warrior who should be respected for her bravery. Mulan becomes an inspiration to the community as they begin to realize that courage and ability can defeat patriarchal norms. By developing her character into a catalyst, Mulan is able to raise society's awareness of women's potential, which means they must be recognized and valued to allow women to fight for their gender equality rights, as shown in the following quote:

You have brought honor to us all
(Rudnick, 2020: 22)

The quote above describes Mulan's successful journey in proving herself as a warrior worthy of admiration. It shows that *Mulan* not only values herself, but also uplifts everyone around her, thus challenging patriarchal society's perception of women's capabilities. While disguised as a man, *Mulan* is initially perceived as an imposter; however, she bravely demonstrates her strength and courage, showing that women can earn the same honor as men. Through her bravery, *Mulan* gains acceptance and her abilities and courage as a woman are finally recognized.

5. Conclusion

This study contributes to feminist film analysis by demonstrating how *Mulan* (2020) embodies liberal feminist ideals through its protagonist's resistance to gender norms. Future research could explore how different feminist frameworks—such as intersectional feminism—offer alternative readings of Mulan's character."The conclusions are as follows: Firstly, the protagonist embodies the principles of liberal feminism by rejecting traditional societal expectations that confine women to subservient roles. Mulan's belief in her innate abilities, symbolized by her "chi," challenges the notion that women are inherently inferior or unworthy of participating in male-dominated spheres. Her courage and determination exemplify the core tenet of liberal feminism: the belief in equal opportunities for women to develop their potential. Secondly, Mulan's character evolves as she actively defies patriarchal norms that restrict women's roles to the domestic sphere. Her transformation into a skilled warrior and eventual recognition as a hero illustrate that gender equality is achievable when women are empowered to break through societal barriers. Her struggles emphasize the significance of perseverance and self-belief in overcoming gender-based discrimination. Thirdly, Mulan's actions serve as a catalyst for societal change, inspiring those around her to reevaluate traditional perceptions of women's roles and capabilities. By earning respect and recognition as a warrior, she redefines conventional notions of honor, paving the way for broader acceptance of women's contributions in both public and private domains.

Overall, *Mulan* exemplifies the ideals of liberal feminism by asserting her autonomy, challenging societal expectations, and demonstrating that women can be equally brave, capable, and honorable as men. Her story reinforces the importance of dismantling patriarchal systems and empowering women to realize their full potential.

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RADICAL AND LIBERAL FEMINISM IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*: AN INTERSECTIONAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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Abstract

This study explores feminist themes in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, with a particular focus on the character of Celie as a symbol of resistance and empowerment. It aims to identify and analyze various forms of feminism represented in the novel, emphasizing how Celie challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Employing a sociological approach to literature and drawing on feminist theories—specifically liberal and radical feminism—the research traces Celie's transformative journey toward self-liberation. The findings reveal that Celie embodies both liberal and radical feminist ideals through her rejection of patriarchal authority and her pursuit of personal autonomy and gender equality. Her evolution—from a silenced and oppressed figure to a self-reliant provider and assertive individual—demonstrates themes of self-determination and resistance to gender norms. Celie's portrayal as a resilient and resourceful woman, often exhibiting traits culturally coded as masculine, serves to critique gender stereotypes and advocate for a broader understanding of strength and leadership. Ultimately, *The Color Purple* stands as a powerful narrative that interrogates gender boundaries, promotes feminist discourse, and underscores the potential of individual agency to inspire social change. This qualitative study analyzes the original English version of the novel as its primary data source, with data—comprising words, dialogues, and key passages—collected through close reading and systematic note-taking. The analysis, grounded in the sociology of literature, identifies and interprets feminist elements to achieve the study's objectives.

Keywords: *feminism; feminist theory; literary work; societal norms; The Color Purple*

1. Introduction

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* stands as an influential work in feminist literature, offering a profound examination of themes related to gender, race, and empowerment. At the center of the novel is Celie, a character whose journey from subjugation to self-liberation exemplifies the resilience and agency of marginalized women. Through her narrative, Walker critiques patriarchal constructs and advances feminist ideologies, particularly those rooted in radical and liberal traditions. These

perspectives not only highlight Celie's personal growth but also shed light on broader systems of oppression (Diana, 2023).

Gender norms, constructed through binary paradigms of femininity and masculinity, have historically defined societal expectations. Femininity is often associated with passivity and submission, whereas masculinity is aligned with dominance and authority. Within this framework, women are positioned as subordinate, reinforcing systemic inequalities. However, *The Color Purple* challenges these constructs by redefining strength and leadership as qualities not confined to masculinity. Celie's journey toward independence and empowerment demonstrates Walker's deconstruction of these binaries, presenting gender as a dynamic and inclusive construct (Wade & Rochlen, 2013).

This research critically examines *The Color Purple* through the lens of feminist principles, emphasizing the intersections of race, gender, and class. Celie's resistance to the pervasive patriarchal systems reflects radical feminism's critique of oppressive structures, while her pursuit of self-fulfillment aligns with the ideals of liberal feminism. Additionally, the relationships between Celie and other female characters, particularly Shug Avery and Sofia, underscore the importance of solidarity and collective resistance in dismantling patriarchal norms. These relationships illustrate the transformative potential of female alliances, positioning women as active agents of change (Mukherjee, 2023).

Intersectionality is a pivotal framework in this research, providing insights into how multiple axes of oppression intersect to shape individual experiences. As an African American woman in the early 20th century, Celie's struggles cannot be analyzed solely through the lens of gender. The interplay of race, class, and culture profoundly influences her journey. Walker's narrative emphasizes the necessity of an intersectional approach to feminist analysis, challenging single-axis frameworks and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989).

While extensive scholarship has been devoted to *The Color Purple*, gaps remain in exploring the intersections of radical and liberal feminist ideologies alongside sociological perspectives. This research addresses these gaps by integrating literary and sociological analyses to offer a multidimensional understanding of the novel. It critiques traditional representations of masculinity and explores how Celie's empowerment disrupts binary narratives of gender and power, advocating for inclusivity and equity in feminist discourse (Bentley-Edwards & Adams, 2024).

The relevance of *The Color Purple* extends beyond its historical context, resonating with contemporary feminist movements and social justice initiatives. Issues such as gender-based violence, systemic racism, and unequal access to resources remain pressing concerns globally. By connecting the novel's themes to these ongoing struggles, this research highlights its enduring significance and contribution to feminist literature and activism. Walker's work continues to inspire critical reflections on identity, resistance, and collective liberation (Adelabu et al., 2024).

Through a sociological and interdisciplinary approach, this study deepens understanding of *The Color Purple* while positioning it as a transformative text that challenges established boundaries. By exploring the intersections of identity and systemic oppression, Walker advocates for a world grounded in inclusivity and equity, making her work a timeless contribution to feminist thought and practice.

Although numerous studies have analyzed *The Color Purple* and its feminist themes, several critical gaps remain unexplored. This research seeks to address these gaps through a multidimensional approach:

a. Comparative Analysis of Feminist Perspectives

Most existing studies tend to focus solely on either radical or liberal feminism. However, there is a lack of in-depth comparative analysis that examines how these ideologies intersect and collectively influence Celie's character development and the broader narrative of the novel.

b. Exploration of Gender Feminism and Masculinity

Research often highlights Celie's resistance to patriarchal structures, but limited attention is given to her subversion of traditional gender norms. By embracing traits associated with both masculinity and feminism, Celie challenges conventional definitions of gender—a perspective that remains underexplored.

c. Sociological Framework in Feminist Studies

The novel is widely studied through literary feminist criticism, yet the sociological dimensions of gender oppression and resistance within the story have been insufficiently addressed. Analyzing the novel through a sociological lens could reveal how external societal structures influence the characters' experiences and decisions.

d. Connection to Contemporary Feminist Movements

While *The Color Purple* is frequently praised for its literary and historical significance, its relevance to contemporary feminist discourse and activism is rarely discussed. Exploring these connections can offer valuable insights into how the novel resonates with modern gender struggles.

e. Interdisciplinary Approach to Empowerment

Current studies largely adopt either literary or feminist methodologies, often neglecting interdisciplinary perspectives. Integrating insights from psychology, gender studies, and political science could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Celie's journey toward empowerment and the societal dynamics within the novel.

This study seeks to address the identified research gaps by employing a sociological framework combined with an interdisciplinary approach to analyze *The Color Purple*. The research focuses on a comparative examination of liberal and radical feminist perspectives, highlighting their intersections and how they shape Celie's journey of empowerment. Additionally, the study delves into the novel's portrayal of gender fluidity, challenging traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, and critiques societal expectations of gender roles. By connecting the novel's feminist themes to contemporary feminist movements and integrating perspectives from sociology, gender studies, and literary criticism, this research aims to offer a multidimensional understanding of empowerment and resistance in literature.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

a. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender in *The Color Purple* influence Celie's feminist journey and personal transformation?

b. How do Celie's relationships with other female characters, such as Shug Avery and Sofia, contribute to her resistance against societal norms and her eventual empowerment?

2. Literature Review

Previous research on *The Color Purple* has primarily focused on singular feminist perspectives, either radical or liberal. For example, Mukherjee (2023) examines intersectional feminism in Celie's struggle against gender-based oppression, while Diana (2023) highlights Celie's journey as a symbol of liberal feminism. However, both studies lack a comparative analysis of how radical and liberal feminist ideologies intersect and collectively shape Celie's character development and the narrative of the novel. This article addresses this gap by providing a nuanced comparison, revealing the interplay between these ideologies and their contribution to the transformative journey of Celie.

Furthermore, studies such as Bentley-Edwards and Adams (2024) explore gender norms and masculinity in social contexts. However, these analyses often omit a comprehensive exploration of how Celie challenges traditional gender norms by adopting traits associated with both masculinity and femininity. This article fills this gap by emphasizing the fluidity of gender in Celie's narrative, offering a perspective that has been previously underexamined.

While Crenshaw (1989) introduced intersectionality as a core framework in feminist studies, most applications in *The Color Purple* remain confined to literary feminist criticism. The sociological dimensions of gender oppression and resistance within the novel have not been sufficiently analyzed. This article bridges this gap by integrating sociological insights, highlighting how external societal structures influence the characters' experiences and choices.

Additionally, literature such as Adelabu et al. (2024) underscores the relevance of feminism in contemporary media representation but does not explicitly connect feminist themes in *The Color Purple* with modern feminist movements. This research extends the scope by linking the novel's historical context to contemporary struggles for gender equality, thereby showcasing its enduring relevance.

Finally, this article adopts an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating perspectives from psychology, gender studies, sociology, and literary criticism. For example, Bilge (2024) provides valuable insight into modern feminist outlooks on intersectionality, which complements the integrated approach of this study. Unlike existing studies, which often rely on either literary or feminist methodologies, this approach provides a holistic understanding of Celie's empowerment and the societal dynamics represented in the novel. This integration of disciplines ensures a more comprehensive analysis of the novel's themes and contributions to feminist literature.

3. Research Method

This qualitative study utilizes *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker as the primary text, originally published in English by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. The research employs literary analysis, integrating sociological and feminist theoretical frameworks to examine how race, class, and gender intersect to shape Celie's journey of self-determination and resistance against societal norms. This methodology is grounded in narrative analysis and hermeneutic interpretation, providing a structured and contextual exploration of the text.

3.1 Data Collection

The primary data for this study comes from a close reading of *The Color Purple*. This includes an in-depth examination of feminist themes, character development, and

symbolic representations of feminist principles within the novel. Secondary sources, such as academic essays and journal articles that analyze feminist theories, gender roles, and intersectionality, are employed to provide historical and theoretical context for the study (Mukherjee, 2023). Creswell (2013), Stake (1995), and Braun & Clarke (2006) guide the qualitative methodological approach to ensure rigor and clarity.

3.2 Analytical Procedure

- a. **Close Reading and Textual Analysis**
A detailed close reading of the novel identifies key feminist themes, focusing on Celie's empowerment and resistance. Relationships with major characters such as Shug Avery, Sofia, and Mister are analyzed to understand their roles in Celie's development (Singh, 2024).
- b. **Feminist Theoretical Frameworks**
Liberal and radical feminist frameworks form the core of this analysis. These frameworks are employed to examine Celie's defiance of patriarchal authority, her pursuit of personal freedom, and her rejection of traditional gender roles (Bilge, 2024).
- c. **Intersectionality**
Intersectional theory is utilized to investigate how Celie's experiences are shaped by intersecting factors of race, class, and gender. These factors are contextualized within the socio-economic and cultural realities of early 20th-century America (Tyagi, 2023).
- d. **Character Relationship Dynamics**
The study examines Celie's relationships with Shug Avery and Sofia, emphasizing the importance of female solidarity in supporting Celie's resistance and transformation. These dynamics align with feminist perspectives that highlight collective empowerment among women (Roy, 2023).
- e. **Gender and Masculinity**
The research explores how Celie redefines traditional gender roles by adopting traits such as strength, independence, and leadership. Her empowerment through the rejection of conventional femininity is analyzed in her interactions with Mister (Wade & Rochlen, 2013).

3.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis is conducted using thematic coding and hermeneutic interpretation, as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). Key themes, such as resistance, empowerment, gender identity, and female solidarity, are systematically coded to understand their role in shaping Celie's transformation. Additionally, symbolic representations of strength, leadership, and femininity are analyzed to provide deeper insights into the narrative.

4. Discussion

This study examines feminist themes in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, focusing on Celie's journey as a symbol of resistance and empowerment. Celie's transformation from oppression to self-determination illustrates key themes of gender, race, and class-based oppression. This section delves into how Celie's experiences, relationships, and defiance of societal norms embody both liberal and radical feminist principles, drawing textual evidence from the novel to substantiate the analysis.

4.1 Celie's Empowerment and Feminist Ideals

Celie's personal growth represents a cornerstone of *The Color Purple*. Initially, Celie is portrayed as a victim of patriarchy, subjected to abuse by her father and later her husband, Mister. Her early letters to God reveal her feelings of voicelessness: "Dear God, he beat me today. He says I'm evil" (Walker, p.12). This depiction underscores Celie's powerlessness and conformity to patriarchal expectations.

Through her bond with Shug Avery, however, Celie begins to assert her identity and reclaim her autonomy. Shug's mentorship inspires Celie's transformation, as seen when Shug tells her, "You got to get man off your eyeball, girl" (Walker, p.181). Celie's eventual financial independence, achieved through her successful sewing business, exemplifies her rebellion against patriarchal constraints and her alignment with feminist ideals of self-sufficiency (Diana, 2023).

4.2 Intersectionality: Race, Class, and Gender

Intersectionality is a critical framework for understanding Celie's experiences. As an African American woman in early 20th-century America, Celie faces compounded oppressions of racism, sexism, and economic hardship. Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality explains how these identities intersect to create unique forms of discrimination: "All them years, I cry and cry and cry. Seem like nothing was ever gon stop" (Walker, p.152). Celie's struggles, shaped by her race and class, distinguish her experiences from those of white women (Crenshaw, 1989).

4.3 Female Solidarity and Support

One of the most empowering aspects of Celie's transformation is her relationships with other women, especially Shug Avery and Sofia. These women provide emotional and practical support that helps Celie break free from the confines of oppression. Shug's affirmation—"You worthy, Celie. You somebody" (Walker, p.178)—acts as a catalyst for Celie's self-worth and independence. Similarly, Sofia's defiant nature inspires Celie to embrace her own strength: "All my life I had to fight. But I ain't never thought I'd have to fight in my own house" (Walker, p.42). These relationships highlight the transformative power of female solidarity (Roy, 2023).

4.4 Redefining Masculinity

The Color Purple critiques traditional notions of masculinity through Celie's interactions with Mister and her eventual adoption of traits traditionally associated with masculinity, such as leadership, independence, and resilience. Mister's domination over Celie is portrayed as toxic masculinity, but her defiance disrupts these norms: "You nothing but a man. I'm here, and I'm free" (Walker, p.208). Celie reclaims these traits, redefining strength as not bound to gender. Her journey promotes a flexible understanding of power and identity, challenging the patriarchal structures that define and restrict women and men alike (Wade & Rochlen, 2013).

5. Conclusion

This study of *The Color Purple* offers critical insights into feminist discourse by examining Celie as a figure of resistance and empowerment. Through the frameworks of liberal and radical feminism, complemented by an intersectional lens, the research demonstrates how race, gender, and class collectively shape the lived experiences of

African American women. Celie's personal evolution embodies a broader narrative of liberation, underscoring the complexities of systemic oppression and the resilience necessary to confront it.

In terms of academic contribution, this research enriches feminist literary criticism by revealing how Alice Walker's narrative challenges patriarchal structures through a nuanced portrayal of intersecting identities. It emphasizes the transformative potential of female solidarity and redefines traditional conceptions of masculinity as essential components of empowerment and resistance. By centering Celie's journey, the analysis not only deepens our understanding of *The Color Purple* but also highlights the importance of community in overcoming structural barriers.

Looking ahead, future research may pursue queer readings of the novel, exploring how identities and relationships intersect with themes of gender, sexuality, and selfhood. Further engagement with Black feminist theory could also reveal additional layers of resistance and empowerment, thereby expanding the scope of contemporary feminist inquiry. These directions offer meaningful pathways for advancing scholarly conversations on gender, race, and social justice in literature.

Overall, this study positions *The Color Purple* as a profound work of social critique, illuminating the intersections of oppression and resistance, and contributing significant perspectives to feminist literary scholarship.

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LIFE STRUGGLE OF THE PROTAGONIST IN NARA LAHMUSI'S NOVEL *A SKY FULL OF STARS*

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Abstract

This study investigates the life struggles experienced by the protagonist in *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi, focusing on her journey toward achieving personal dreams while simultaneously addressing familial obligations. The research aims to analyze the internal and external factors that shape the protagonist's hardships. Internal factors include her perfectionism, strong sense of self-priority, and inner ambition, which drive her personal goals but also contribute to emotional and psychological pressure. In contrast, external factors such as economic limitations and societal expectations impose constraints that complicate her efforts. By examining the interaction between these two dimensions, the study reveals how the protagonist's development is influenced by the dynamic tension between individual aspiration and external reality. The findings suggest that the complexity of her struggle lies in the convergence of personal desires and external demands, which not only affects her decisions but also frames the broader thematic structure of resilience and self-determination in the novel.

Keywords: *external factor; internal factor; life struggle.*

1. Introduction

Literature is an imaginative work that reflects life and serves as a medium for expressing thoughts and emotions. It offers aesthetic enjoyment, understanding, and insight to the community. As Depita (2021) states, literature functions as a reflection of life and a form of human expression, grounded in language and the author's perspective on the human condition. The products of such expressions are called literary works, which are generally classified into fiction and non-fiction. Fiction includes creative narratives not based on factual events—such as novels, short stories, poetry, plays, and films. In line with Hornby (1995: 434), as cited in Anggraeni et al. (2018), a movie is “a story, recorded as a set of moving pictures to be shown on television or at the cinema.” In contrast, non-fiction refers to works based on real events, including essays, biographies, and historical accounts.

Among fictional forms, the novel holds a significant place. It typically presents complex narratives involving multiple events, developed through characters, plot, setting, theme, and point of view. Novels often mirror human experiences, with characters playing central roles in shaping the story. Characters are essential narrative agents whose development and interaction with the plot reveal both intrinsic and

extrinsic elements of a literary work. Their portrayal often reflects psychological, emotional, and societal dimensions, making them crucial for literary analysis.

This study focuses on the protagonist's life struggle in *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi. The analysis identifies two key factors that influence the character's journey: internal and external factors. These are reflected through the character of Raya, whose experiences illustrate the challenges of personal ambition and social expectation. The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to examine the internal factors—such as personality traits and individual motivations—contributing to the protagonist's struggle; and (2) to explore the external influences, including socio-economic and environmental pressures. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive understanding of the protagonist's life challenges as depicted in the novel.

2. Literature Review

Struggle generally refers to a significant and sustained effort made in the face of ongoing conflict, challenges, or obstacles. It involves perseverance and strong determination, often despite the difficulty of achieving one's goals independently. Struggle is an inherent aspect of human existence, demanding continuous effort in pursuit of personal development and the realization of one's aspirations. The notion that "life is a struggle" underscores the idea that progress and success require active engagement and persistent endeavor.

According to Nugroho et al. (1996: 94), as cited in the study by Wirda and Purwarno (2019), struggle is defined as hard work aimed at realizing one's dreams. They argue that much of human life is driven by such effort, where the desire to achieve—such as becoming wealthy—necessitates dedication, whether through intellectual or physical means. In this context, struggle is understood not merely as endurance in adversity but as proactive effort to overcome obstacles. It often manifests through challenges or difficult circumstances encountered at various stages of life. While struggle may reveal the limits of one's capacities, it also becomes a vehicle for personal growth. Through overcoming difficulties, individuals are able to reach their goals, acquire meaningful experiences, and undergo positive transformation.

2.1 Life Struggle

According to Purnomosari (2014), life struggle is an action taken by everyone to be able to struggle through everything occupation that they do. This means that life's struggles refer to the challenges and difficulties that individuals must face in their lives to achieve success. This is in line with the opinion of Simbolon (2020) that life struggle is a chain of action of a person or family based on social economy. Economic problems are a problem that is often encountered in life's struggles which can test a person's patience, strength and ability to adapt in various phases of life's journey.

Life struggles emerge spontaneously, catching individuals off guard with their sudden and natural occurrence. This notion underscores the unpredictability inherent in life, where challenges can arise without prior notice or preparation. Such spontaneity underscores the need for individuals to be adaptable and responsive in navigating the uncertainties and unforeseen events that populate their lives. This highlights the importance of resilience and flexibility in facing life's trials, as individuals must continuously adjust and respond to the ever-changing circumstances they encounter. It emphasizes the dynamic nature of life, where individuals must navigate a landscape characterized by unpredictability and sudden challenges. This perspective underscores

the necessity for individuals to cultivate resilience and adaptability, enabling them to respond effectively to the spontaneous struggles that arise. By embracing this mindset, individuals can better prepare themselves to tackle life's uncertainties and unexpected events, fostering personal growth and development in the face of adversity.

2.2 Factors of Life Struggle

Life struggles are an inseparable part of every individual's journey. These struggle factors not only include challenges and difficulties, but also become a driving force to achieve a better life. In this context, it can be expressed that the meaning or meaning of the life struggle factor is in line with efforts to create a better life. Life's struggle reflects a person's efforts and perseverance in facing various obstacles, while the desire for a better life motivates individuals to continue to develop and improve the quality of their life. In this way, the factors of life's struggle and aspirations for a better life complement each other, creating a dynamic that encourages personal growth and achievement. In Syahputro's (2023) research, two factors to get a better life were delineated, as per Maslow's (1970) perspective. They are: internal factor and external factor.

2.2.1 Internal Factor

Internal factors are factors that originate from within oneself. Intrinsically, individuals have the desire to do something for their life, because the result is in accordance with their belief system or fulfills a desire and is therefore important to do. Internal motivation is when someone performs a behavior because they find it beneficial. They carry out an activity for its own sake and not because of the desire to obtain external rewards. In this context, internal factors and motivation reflect internal aspects of individual behavior. In other words, when a person responds to intrinsic factors, such as personal satisfaction or congruence with self-values, they may be more likely to perform an action without depending on external rewards. This is in line with Maslow's perspective which emphasizes that individual satisfaction and fulfillment of basic needs can be an internal motivator for personal growth and development.

2.2.2 External Factor

External factors are external influences that propel individuals towards life goals. These stimuli, originating from sources outside oneself, shape the drive to accomplish objectives. It's noteworthy that, despite the external nature of these incentives, the results of the undertaken tasks remain personally advantageous. This concept aligns with Maslow's (1970) assertion that external motivations, such as rewards or avoidance of punishment, can significantly impact behavior. The pursuit of these external rewards becomes a driving force for individuals, steering their actions toward specific outcomes.

In light of the aforementioned, the interplay between internal and external factors becomes evident in understanding human motivations. While internal factors emanate from intrinsic desires and values, external factors introduce external stimuli into the motivational equation. Researchers leverage this theoretical framework to dissect the influences on the main character's journey towards a better life in Nara Lahmusi's novel *A Sky Full of Stars* by exploring both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, a comprehensive understanding of the character's motivations and actions can be unraveled.

3. Research Method

This research employed a qualitative approach, using the descriptive method as its principal framework. Qualitative research is characterized by its emphasis on obtaining an in-depth understanding of particular phenomena or contexts through descriptive and interpretative analysis. This aligns with the definition provided by Creswell (2023), who explains that qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This process typically involves emerging questions and procedures, data collection in natural settings, inductive data analysis moving from specific themes to broader generalizations, and the researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the data.

In this study, the primary objective is to explore and provide a detailed account of the qualitative aspects inherent in the phenomenon under investigation. The descriptive method is particularly appropriate, as it enables the researcher to portray systematically the characteristics, dynamics, and meanings embedded within the research context. Through this approach, the study aims to offer a contextual and interpretive understanding of the subject matter. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge, enhance scholarly discourse, and offer nuanced insights into the specific phenomenon being examined.

4. Discussion

This study examines two central aspects influencing the protagonist in the novel: internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to intrinsic motivations—personal drives originating from within the individual—that guide actions based on personal values, desires, or aspirations, often pursued for self-fulfillment rather than external recognition. In contrast, external factors encompass external pressures or influences that compel individuals to act in pursuit of life goals, such as social expectations, economic demands, or environmental conditions. A detailed analysis of these factors is presented in the subsequent sections.

4.1 The Internal Factor of the Protagonist's Life Struggle

Internal factors are one of the important aspects in the protagonist's struggle in the novel *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi. This factor refers to the inner conflict and drive from within the protagonist that influences her actions throughout the story. The protagonist is often faced with dilemmas and uncertainties that come from within herself.

a. Perfectionism Factor

Several quotes in the novel clearly show how internal factors are the main driving force for the protagonist. For example, the protagonist feels burdened by her own hopes and dreams, so she must be willing to do anything to make her dreams come true as seen in the following quote,

“Dia sangat bahagia, membayangkan nilai bahasa Indonesia yang buruk terselamatkan. Ya, walau buruk baginya adalah nilai 75. Namun, demi masuk jalur beasiswa SMA Harapan Bunda, dia siap melakukan apa saja”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 8)

(She was very happy, imagining that her bad Indonesian language grades had been saved. Yes, even though the score is 75, it's bad for

her. However, in order to enter the Harapan Bunda High School scholarship, she is ready to do anything). (Lahmusi, 2019: 8)

This quotation describes the protagonist who is very happy because she feels that her Indonesian language grades, which are considered bad, can still be improved. Although for some people a score of 75 might be good enough, for her this score is still below her expectations. This shows that she has quite high standards regarding her academic performance.

The happiness felt by the protagonist is not only related to her own grades, but also to the opportunities she can achieve, namely entering the scholarship pathway at Harapan Bunda High School. The desire to obtain this scholarship was very strong, so she was ready to do anything to achieve it. This shows that the character has great ambition and strong motivation to achieve success in the future, especially in terms of education. The protagonist has a strong motivation to continue her education as seen in the quote below,

“Saya memang suka mengajar dan sedang ngumpulin uang tambahan untuk melanjutkan pendidikan”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 15)

(I really like teaching and am currently collecting extra money to continue my education). (Lahmusi, 2019: 15)

Based on the analysis above, the protagonist has a deep interest in teaching activities. This shows that these activities are not only carried out because of financial needs, but also because of personal enjoyment. This interest becomes an internal driver that makes the character feel motivated and enthusiastic about teaching.

The protagonist has a goal to continue her education, which shows a strong drive to improve herself and her knowledge. This desire to continue her education came from within her, because she felt it was important to continue learning and developing. Efforts to "collect extra money" show that the character is aware of the importance of financial planning for her educational future. This reflects responsibility and discipline in managing existing resources to achieve long-term goals. Overall, the internal factors in this quote reflect strong intrinsic motivation, a sense of responsibility, and commitment to achieving personal and professional goals.

b. Self-Priority Factor

The following quote also emphasizes that internal factors greatly influence the protagonist's struggles.

“Catet, gue belum punya cowok. Dan gue nggak punya waktu buat pacaran. Hidup gue sudah berat. Impian gue jauh lebih penting daripada sekedar pacaran” (Lahmusi, 2019: 59)

(Note, I don't have a boyfriend yet. And I don't have time to date. My life is already hard. My dreams are much more important than just dating) (Lahmusi, 2019: 59)

The protagonist shows that she has very clear priorities in her life. For her, the dreams and goals she wants to achieve are much more important than having a romantic relationship. This reflects a strong understanding of what is important to her and a focus

on things she deems of greater value. She has a great commitment to her dreams and aspirations.

This internal factor shows a strong determination to make this dream come true, even if it means sacrificing social life or romantic relationships. This shows high dedication and focus on personal goals.

The statement *My life is already hard* reflects awareness of the challenges and pressures she is facing. The protagonist understands that the burden of life she is living requires full energy and attention, so there is no room for things that are considered less important in this context, such as dating. The character shows a firm attitude in choosing not to date. This shows self-confidence and determination in prioritizing dreams and rejecting things that might be considered a distraction from one's goals.

Moreover, the quote below is also one of the quotes that shows the internal struggle factor experienced by the protagonist in the novel,

“Bagaimana pun kondisi gue sekarang, gue nggak boleh ngeluh. Gue tetap kudu bisa meraih mimpi”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 60)

(Whatever my condition is now, I can't complain. I still have to achieve my dreams) (Lahmusi, 2019: 60)

From this quote, the protagonist shows mental toughness by not letting difficult conditions stop her. Even though she may be facing challenges, she has a never give up attitude and a strong determination to keep going and achieve her dreams. This toughness is an internal factor that allows the character to survive difficult situations without complaining. The characters have the belief that, regardless of the conditions they are facing, dreams can still be achieved. This optimism comes from within her, which encourages her to stay focused on long-term goals without being affected by negative circumstances.

The attitude *I can't complain* reflects self-discipline. The character is able to control her emotions and not let herself get trapped in despair. She chooses to remain productive and focused on achieving goals, even in situations that may not be ideal.

Then, the statement *I still have to achieve my dreams* shows strong determination. The character is very determined in achieving her dreams and does not let any obstacle be a reason to give up. This factor highlights her complete dedication to the life vision she has set.

c. Inner Ambition Factor

This quote provides strong evidence that internal factors are a key element in the main character's struggles and show her inner ambition in the novel, as is the case with the quote below,

“Ini masalah sikap, Dirga. BK yang nyeleksi. Kalau impian gue hancur cuma karena ini, percuma gue pupuk nilai dari kelas X”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 62)

(This is a problem of attitude, Dirga. BK made the selection. If my dreams are shattered just because of this, it's useless for me to get grades from class X). (Lahmusi, 2019: 62)

The protagonist understands the importance of attitude, not just academic achievement, in determining success in achieving dreams. This awareness shows that the character has a deep understanding of the standards that must be met, both in terms of academics and behavior.

The statement *This is a matter of attitude* shows that the character really cares about how she is perceived by other parties, especially by BK. This reflects an awareness of the importance of personal reputation and how attitude can influence opportunities to achieve dreams.

By saying that all her academic efforts since class X will be useless if her attitude is not up to standard, the character shows awareness of the importance of consistency between academic achievement and behavior. This shows that she understands that success does not only come from effort in one area, but also from a balance between academic values and attitude.

In addition, the drive to move forward is driven by personal beliefs and decisions taken based on internal values, not because of external coercion, which is one of the characteristics of internal factors, also found in the quote below,

“Raya kecewa. Mungkin bagi orang lain yang kaya dan punya akses untuk masuk universitas mana saja, masalah terlambat itu sepele. Tidak berpengaruh apa-apa bagi hidup dan cita-citanya. Namun, tidak buatnya. Raya paling tersinggung saat semua hal yang berkaitan dengan mimpinya disepelekan”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 62)

(Raya is disappointed. Maybe for other people who are rich and have access to any university, the problem of being late is trivial. It has no effect on his life and dreams. However, she didn't do it. Raya is most offended when everything related to her dreams is trivialized).
(Lahmusi, 2019: 62)

The quote above shows how the protagonist has a high sensitivity to injustice, especially regarding gaps in educational access. For a rich person, problems such as lateness may not have an impact, but for her, it has a big impact. This reflects a strong sense of justice and sensitivity to differences in opportunities based on social status.

Feeling offended when her dreams are trivialized shows that she has a very strong motivation to achieve her goals. She doesn't want obstacles or challenges to be ignored, because every aspect of the journey towards her dreams is considered important. This motivation is internal and driven by the awareness that success depends on every decision and action.

The internal factors in this quote reflect sensitivity to justice, high commitment to dreams, strong motivation, awareness of differences in opportunities, and high personal responsibility. The character really appreciates dreams and feels that every challenge must be faced seriously, and should not be taken lightly.

The above quote provides a clear picture of how internal motivation plays a role in the protagonist's struggle. The decision to move forward based on personal beliefs and internal values or without external coercion or pressure shows a strong internal drive. The protagonist shows determination and courage driven by a deep understanding of themselves and what they believe is right, which is a characteristic of internal factors in struggle. Thus, this quote provides evidence to support that internal motivation is a key element in the journey and struggle of the main character in the novel.

4.2 The External Factors of the Protagonist's Life Struggle

External factors are another important aspect for the protagonist in the novel *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi. External factors in the novel *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi refer to external influences that affect the protagonist's actions and decisions. These factors can be social pressure, expectations from people around them, or external situations and conditions that force the protagonist to act in a certain way. In this novel, the protagonist is faced with various external challenges that affect her life journey. For example, she may have to face pressure from family, friends, or society to meet certain expectations that conflict with her own desires. In addition, conditions or events that occur beyond her control can also force her to adjust or make difficult decisions.

a. Economic Factor

These external factors, as well as internal factors, play an important role in shaping the character of the protagonist and the direction of the story, creating complex and interesting dynamics in the development of the novel's plot as seen in the quote below,

“Setelah nekat mendaftar di *lowker@karierguru* yang memamerkan lowongan kerja dengan gaji termahal sebagai guru privat, dia tidak berani berharap lebih. Syarat iklan itu jelas. Selain CV, Raya harus menyertakan scan transkrip nilai. Mana dia punya? Lulus SMA saja belum. Namun, dengan keras kepala gadis itu tetap saja mencoba peruntungan”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 11)

*(After being determined to register at *lowker@karierguru* which showcased job vacancies with the highest salaries as private teachers, she didn't dare hope for more. The advertising terms are clear. Apart from the CV, Raya must include a scanned transcript of grades. Where does she have it? Haven't even graduated from high school yet. However, stubbornly the girl continued to try her luck). (Lahmusi, 2019: 11)*

Based on the quote above, the job advertisement displays the highest salary for a private tutor position, which shows that this position is very competitive. This external situation puts pressure on protagonist, because she has to compete with other applicants who may have higher or more complete qualifications. The high expectations from this vacancy show that job market conditions require qualifications that are difficult to reach for someone who has not graduated from high school.

Despite many external challenges such as job requirements and a tight job market, the characters still show the courage to try. These external factors create an unfavorable situation, but the character's determination to apply for the job even though she knows the requirements are difficult to fulfill reflects her enthusiasm to fight external obstacles.

This analysis shows how external factors can force the protagonist to make decisions that may conflict with his personal desires, giving rise to deep internal conflict. This also illustrates how pressure from the external environment can influence a person's life choices as shown in the following quote,

“Apa imbalan yang saya dapat kalau saya berhasil, Om?” (Lahmusi, 2019: 79)

(What reward will I get if I succeed, Uncle?) (Lahmusi, 2019: 79)

This question shows that the character expects external rewards for the efforts or success she will achieve. These rewards can be in the form of material, recognition, or other forms of appreciation from a more powerful party (in this case "Om"). This reflects motivation influenced by external factors, where the character wants concrete results from the efforts made.

The character emphasizes the importance of knowing what she will get if he succeeds. This reflects expectations of reward for effort, indicating that characters are motivated not only by internal factors such as self-satisfaction or personal achievement, but also by clear external rewards. This shows how external drives, such as the desire for recognition and success, can greatly influence one's life choices as seen in the case below,

“Dirinya sudah seperti pengganti Bapak. Merawat Ibu yang lelah bekerja sif menjadi cleaning service di rumah sakit, dan ikutan mencari nafkah untuk hidup mereka”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 79)

(She is like her father's replacement. Caring for mothers who are tired of working shifts as a cleaning service at the hospital, and helping them earn a living) (Lahmusi, 2019: 79)

This quotation shows that the character must take over the role usually carried out by the father, who may be the head of the family or the main provider. This indicates that external conditions, namely the absence or role of the Father, force the character to fill the void and take on additional responsibilities within the family.

By caring for her mother and helping her earn a living, the character tries to maintain the family's welfare and stability amidst challenging conditions. The external factors that influence the family's well-being, such as the mother's tiring job and financial needs, show the external pressures that the character and her family must face.

The quotation shows that the character's family faces economic challenges, which require extra efforts from all its members to earn a living. External factors in the form of economic pressure force the characters to be directly involved in earning a living, apart from caring for family members, in order to meet their daily living needs.

Moreover, the following quote shows how the protagonist's struggles in life are influenced by internal factors as seen below,

“Raya ingin menangis rasanya melihat ibu yang sangat disayanginya mendapat perhatian Dirga. Dia lalu memeluk ibunya, meminta maaf karena belum sanggup memberikan apa-apa, malah keduluan orang lain. Dia merasa menjadi anak gagal” (Lahmusi, 2019: 132)

(Raya wanted to cry when she saw the mother she loved so much receiving Dirga's attention. She then hugged her mother, apologizing because she had not been able to give her anything, instead someone else had done it first. She felt like a failure) (Lahmusi, 2019: 132)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how the protagonist feels marginalized and becomes a failure because she compares her abilities with other people (Dirga). External factors in the form of Dirga's actions or attention cause feelings of inadequacy

in her. This indicates that the protagonist compares her own achievements with what other people do or provide.

The protagonist's guilt about not having been able to provide anything and feeling like *other people are ahead* may reflect economic challenges or difficulty in providing desired support. External factors in the form of limited resources or opportunities make the character feel unable to fulfill her mother's hopes or needs.

There are expectations in the family regarding the role and responsibility of children to provide support and attention to parents. The character's inability to meet these expectations, coupled with the attention given her by others, adds to the stress and sense of failure she feels.

b. Social Pressure Factor

Other external factors that influence the protagonist's feelings show in the quote below,

“Raya berpikir keras. Dia menimbang-nimbang untung dan ruginya. Namun, karena dia yakin bisa menang, akhirnya mengangguk tanpa ragu”. (Lahmusi, 2019: 137)

(Raya thought hard. She weighed the pros and cons. However, because she was confident that she could win, she finally nodded without hesitation). (Lahmusi, 2019: 137)

When the protagonist thinks hard about her gains and losses, this shows that she is in a competitive or challenging situation. External factors such as competition or challenging conditions may influence her decisions, and she must consider what her chances of success are in meeting those challenges.

Even considering various factors, the character's decision to nod without hesitation shows confidence in her ability to win. External factors that support this belief may be influenced by information or feedback she receives from the surrounding environment, such as advice from other people, relevant data, or situational conditions that support her belief. These external factors help shape the protagonist's final decision. Moreover, the quotation below emphasizes how external factors are one of the factors experienced by the protagonist in her life's struggle,

“Sial! Kenapa karena Dirga dia bisa secengeng ini? Oh, mungkin karena dia takut dipecat Om Guna, takut tidak digaji, takut tidak bisa membantu Ibu, takut impiannya terhenti...” (Lahmusi, 2019: 166)

(Unlucky! Why is it because of Dirga that she can be this whiny? Oh, maybe because she's afraid of being fired by Uncle Guna, afraid of not getting paid, afraid of not being able to help Mother, afraid that her dream will stop...) (Lahmusi, 2019: 166)

The protagonist's fear of being fired by Om Guna reflects her dependence on external authority. Om Guna has significant authority in decisions regarding her work and income, so dependence on this authority's decisions influences the protagonist's feelings and attitudes.

The character's concern about not being paid shows that there are external factors in the form of financial uncertainty that influence her decisions. Financial well-

being, including salary payments, is an external factor that has a major impact on a person's sense of security and stability in life.

The fear of not being able to help Mother shows the external responsibility felt by the protagonist. Well-being and the ability to provide support to family members are external factors that influence the feelings and stress they experience.

Fear of having your dreams stopped reflects external factors related to personal opportunities and aspirations. Threats to the achievement of dreams, which may be influenced by factors such as work, superior decisions, or financial circumstances, influence the protagonist's feelings and motivations.

The uncertainty and sense of helplessness that the protagonist feels, as shown by the reaction "this crybaby," is influenced by social interactions with Dirga and external situations related to professional and personal relationships. The influence of other people and the social situation around her has an impact on her emotions.

Thus, it is clear that the protagonist in the novel *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi experiences a profound struggle, influenced by two main factors: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include inner conflict and personal drives that push the protagonist to make decisions that often go against her desires. Meanwhile, external factors involve external influences, such as the expectations of others, social pressures, or incentives that motivate the protagonist to take certain steps in her life. The combination of these two factors creates a complex dynamic in the character's journey, highlighting how both internal drives and external influences can shape and influence the protagonist's decisions and life direction.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the protagonist in *A Sky Full of Stars* by Nara Lahmusi reveals that internal factors serve as the primary driving force behind her life struggles and decisions. These factors—comprising perfectionism, self-prioritization, and inner ambition—illustrate a deeply rooted intrinsic motivation that guides her actions throughout the narrative. The protagonist's unwavering commitment to her dreams, often at the expense of social interactions or immediate comfort, highlights a profound personal discipline and goal-oriented mindset. Her self-imposed academic standards, resilience in the face of adversity, and sensitivity to social inequities underscore a character shaped more by internal convictions than by external validations. Furthermore, the protagonist's conscious choice to prioritize educational and professional aspirations over romantic or leisure pursuits reflects a mature understanding of long-term success, driven by inner ambition rather than circumstantial pressures. Her experiences suggest that intrinsic motivation, when coupled with emotional intelligence and a strong ethical compass, can empower individuals to overcome structural disadvantages and social obstacles. Thus, the novel presents a compelling portrait of how internal psychological constructs—particularly self-discipline, aspiration, and personal responsibility—can define and sustain one's struggle toward self-actualization.

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GUILT TRIPPING IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S *THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD*

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Abstract

This study examines the use of guilt-tripping as a form of psychological manipulation in Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. The analysis centers on identifying both the causes and the types of guilt-tripping enacted by the novel's manipulative character. Employing McPhillips' (2022) theoretical framework on manipulative behavior, the research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, with a focus on character and narrative analysis. The findings reveal that the primary motivations for guilt-tripping include emotional dependency, a desire to manipulate and control others, and underlying feelings of low self-esteem and insecurity. In addition, two specific types of guilt-tripping behaviors are identified: love bombing and direct guilt inducement. These manipulative strategies are not only critical to the progression of the plot but also offer deeper insight into the psychological construction of the characters. The study contributes to the field of literary psychological criticism by illustrating how emotional manipulation is intricately embedded in the structure of detective fiction.

Keywords: *guilt-tripping; manipulation; emotional dependency; psychological fiction; qualitative analysis*

1. Introduction

Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is one of her most acclaimed and controversial detective novels, renowned for its unexpected ending and psychological depth. Christie, born in Torquay in 1890, is widely celebrated as the best-selling novelist of all time, having authored 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections. Her works, including *The Mousetrap*, the world's longest-running play, have sold over two billion copies worldwide (Christie, 2018). Among her many contributions to the detective genre, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* stands out for its unique narrative perspective and complex character development.

The novel follows the story of Dr. James Sheppard, who befriends Roger Ackroyd and later becomes central to the murder investigation. Initially perceived as a trustworthy narrator, Sheppard is ultimately revealed to be the murderer—a twist that challenges readers' assumptions and narrative reliability. A particularly striking moment occurs when Sheppard, after committing the murder, deceptively reflects, "On leaving the room, I saw Roger asleep in a strange position. But I didn't have the heart to wake him up." This statement underscores the manipulative nature of his character and prompts a deeper psychological analysis.

This study is motivated by the need to examine how guilt-tripping—a subtle but powerful form of psychological manipulation—is represented in the novel. While Agatha Christie's works have been extensively analyzed for their intricate plots and detective techniques, less scholarly attention has been devoted to the emotional and psychological strategies employed by characters to control or deceive others. Drawing on McPhillips' (2022) theory of manipulative behavior, particularly guilt-tripping, this research investigates how emotional manipulation operates within the narrative framework of the novel.

The central objectives of this study are twofold: first, to identify the specific types of guilt-tripping behaviors employed by the manipulative character, and second, to explore the psychological motivations underlying such behaviors. The findings are expected to enhance readers' understanding of both the moral dimensions and the psychological intricacies embedded in Christie's fiction.

Theoretically, this study aims to contribute to literary criticism by enriching interpretations of psychological manipulation in fiction. Practically, it encourages readers—particularly students of literature—to engage more critically with character development and moral complexity in literary texts. Additionally, the analysis may offer general readers insight into how emotional manipulation can function in real-life social interactions, thereby broadening the impact of literary reflection.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Guilt-Tripping

Guilt-Tripping is one of 5 types of manipulative behavior. They are gaslighting, silent treatment, guilt-tripping, flattery, and love bombing McPhillips (2022). Mandara and Pikes (2008) stated that guilt trips along with manipulative strategies that tempted under psychological control patterns. According to Humeny (2013), holding a guilt trip is about someone holding a burden to change their actions opposing what they want. Guilt trips is a form of manipulative behavior aimed at making other people feel guilty or responsible for changing certain behavior or decisions. On the other hand, the perpetrator also seems to want to control other people's actions. Because the feelings of guilt that arise can make the perpetrator control the thoughts, behavior and feelings of the victim.

According to McPhillips (2022), guilt-tripping is a phenomenon when a person attempts to modify their behavior and acts as if they are trying to meet the expectations of the victim. The occurrence of guilt-tripping is because they have expectations to avoid negative emotions about the subject. Victims who feel guilty will feel they must take responsibility so that their behavior and emotions can be controlled by the perpetrator. Manipulators attempt to manipulate the victim's feelings by acting as if it is not their fault and psychologically manipulate the victim by using quality, reality, and ownership to make the victim feel guilty. This can lead to social control, which makes this phenomenon also a sociological phenomenon if it occurs in numerous people to lead them into the manipulator's desires (Scholz et al., 2021). Guilt-tripping has several factors, namely intersection and natural obligation. Guilt-tripping has the goals of social exclusion, anxiety and empathic arousal, both of which are interpersonal (Baldassar, 2014). Guilt is found to be adaptive and strengthens relationships. It triggers empathy in the observer, reduces conflict, encourages moral behaviours, interpersonal sensitivity, and good social adjustment, Leith & Baumeister (2008), Tangney (1994).

2.2 Types of Manipulative Behaviour

According to McPhillips (2022), there are 5 types of manipulative behavior. Those are gaslighting, silent treatment, guilt-tripping, flattery, and love bombing.

Gaslighting is psychological abuse that aims to make victims feel so wrong by creating a "surreal" interpersonal environment to capture the public attention (Sweet, 2019). The cause of gaslighting is the gaslighting perpetrator who wants to get recognition from the victim in order to satisfy the desire to be fulfilled. This happens when somebody starts to use their manipulated reality to fight against their victims. As a victim, you will feel helpless because you have shown weaknesses and strengths through manipulation.

Silent Treatment is relational violence that often occurs in a disappointment in communication or an interpersonal relationship (Rittenour et al., 2019). The feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction in a relationship is often seen when communication rarely ends up well.

Guilt-tripping is a phenomenon when the person is trying to modify their behavior and acts like they are trying to fulfill the victim's expectations. The occurrence of guilt-tripping is caused because they have expectations in order to avoid negative emotions of about the subject. Victims who feel guilty will feel like they have to be responsible so that their behavior and emotions can be controlled by the perpetrator (McPhillips, 2022).

Flattery is a manipulative strategy that involves the feeling that the other is believed to be special by consistently complimenting the victim out of nowhere and too much (McPhillips, 2022).

Love Bombing is an act of manipulation where the manipulator gives a feeling to their victims in the form of blossoming love in a massive amount of it. It makes the victim feel loved and forget about what just happened (Deck, 2017).

2.3 Reasons of Guilt Tripping

There are three reasons of guilt tripping that will be described below:

2.3.1 Emotional Dependency

Emotional dependency is a form of emotional needs that are not met but always strive to be met, causing maladaptive behavior towards others. It refers to a chronic pattern of affective demands, which individuals desperately seek to meet through close interpersonal relationships (Castello, 2005).

2.3.2 Power to Manipulate

Guilt may become a powerful tool for controlling other people's emotions in the context of the power to manipulate them. These manipulators could use this technique to get what they want or maintain their position of power in the relationship.

2.3.3 Low Self-Esteem and Insecurity

Low self-esteem refers to a negative perception of oneself and a sense of worth. It involves having a critical and often inaccurate view of one's abilities, appearance, and value as a person. Insecurity refers to a persistent feeling of uncertainty, self-doubt, and unease about oneself or relationships. Insecurity often contributes to low self-esteem but can also extend beyond self-perception to affect how individuals view their relationships with others.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method to analyze the manipulative behavior of guilt-tripping as portrayed in Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative research is inherently descriptive, focusing on the interpretation of data in the form of words, narratives, and contextual meaning rather than statistical figures. Accordingly, this study does not aim to measure phenomena numerically, but rather to explore and interpret psychological patterns embedded in literary texts.

The primary data source for this research is the novel itself, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Christie, 2018). The analysis emphasizes close reading of the narrative, with particular attention to the speech, behavior, and inner thoughts of the characters, especially Dr. James Sheppard. The researcher identifies and categorizes instances of guilt-tripping based on McPhillips' (2022) typology of manipulative behavior.

The study applies character analysis and narrative interpretation to uncover the psychological motivations and interpersonal tactics employed by the manipulator. The goal is to draw meaningful conclusions about the role of guilt-tripping in the development of the plot and the characterization within the novel. All findings are presented in the form of detailed descriptions, supported by textual evidence, to ensure analytical depth and academic rigor.

4. Discussion

4.1 Types of Guilt-Tripping Committed by The Manipulator Found in the Novel

The forms of guilt-tripping in novels are seen in every chapter. Dr. Sheppard as the manipulator to hide what he had done to Roger Ackroyd. According to McPhillips (2022), there are 5 types of manipulative behavior. Those are gaslighting, silent treatment, guilt-tripping, flattery, and love bombing, but in this research only some are discussed.

4.1.1 Love Bombing

There is a scene shows that Sheppard really cares about Ackroyd, like a mother who really cares and loves her son. Sheppard spoke and answered questions from Ackroyd. At that time, Ackroyd was discussing it with him and asked who the blackmailer was who had blackmailed Mrs. Ferraris. He alleged that the perpetrator was one of the people in the house, and it was true that the perpetrator was Sheppard, but Sheppard pretended not to know. It is seen in the following quotation:

“What did you say to her?” I asked.

“What could I say? She saw, of course, the awful shock it had been to me. And then there was the question, what was my duty in the matter? She had made me, you see, an accessory after the fact. She saw all that, I think, quicker than I did. I was stunned, you know. She asked me for twenty-four hours—made me promise to do nothing till the end of that time. And she steadfastly refused to give me the name of the scoundrel who had been blackmailing her. I suppose she was afraid that I might go straight off and hammer him, and then the fat would have been in the fire as far as she was concerned. She told me that I should hear from her before twenty- four hours had passed. My God! I swear to you, Sheppard, that it

never entered my head what she meant to do. Suicide! And I drove her to it” (Agatha Christie, 2018: 53)

The quote above clearly shows that Sheppard stole Ackroyd's heart with the intention of pretending to be good and instead of being someone who seemed to care about his problems. Ackroyd asked who the blackmailer was, and he turned out to be someone who always thought well of him.

4.1.2 Guilt Tripping

Sheppard had committed murder against Acroyd, because he did not want Ackroyd to find out that he had blackmailed Ms. Ferrars who made Mrs Ferrars commit suicide. Then he called the police on behalf of Parker, one of the residents and servants at the Ackroyd house. This can be seen in the quote below.

“Your master. Mr. Ackroyd. Don’t stand there staring at me, man. Have you notified the police?”

“The police, sir? Did you say the police?” Parker stared at me as though I were a ghost.

“What’s the matter with you, Parker? If, as you say, your master has been murdered—”

A gasp broke from Parker.

“The master? Murdered? Impossible, sir!” It was my turn to stare.

“Didn’t you telephone to me, not five minutes ago, and tell me that Mr. Ackroyd had been found murdered?”

“I, sir? Oh! no indeed, sir. I wouldn’t dream of doing such a thing.”

“Do you mean to say it’s all a hoax? That there’s nothing the matter with Mr. Ackroyd?”

“Excuse me, sir, did the person telephoning use my name?” “I’ll give you the exact words I heard. ‘Is that Dr. Sheppard?

Parker, the butler at Fernly, speaking. Will you please come at once, sir. Mr. Ackroyd has been murdered.’”

Parker and I stared at each other blankly.

“A very wicked joke to play, sir,” he said at last, in a shocked tone.

“Fancy saying a thing like that.”

“Where is Mr. Ackroyd?” I asked suddenly.

“Still in the research, I fancy, sir. The ladies have gone to bed, and Major Blunt and Mr. Raymond are in the billiard room.”

“I think I’ll just look in and see him for a minute,” I said. “I know he didn’t want to be disturbed again, but this odd practical joke has made me uneasy. I’d just like to satisfy myself that he’s all right.”

“Quite so, sir. It makes me feel quite uneasy myself. If you don’t object to my accompanying you as far as the door, sir—?”

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 60-61)

The above quote clearly describes who Sheppard is. He is a master manipulator and very dangerous. He killed Acroyd and called the police on someone else's behalf. Everything is manipulated by him and is like a director who is very good at making up stories that will happen next, full of calm as if he is innocent.

4.2 The Reasons of Guilt Tripping

The Reasons for Guilt-Tripping in novel are seen in every chapter of the novel. The perpetrator of the guilty trip was Dr. James Sheppard did this to the people around him in order to be free from accusations of the alleged perpetrator of the murder of Roger Ackroyd.

4.2.1 Emotional Dependency

The first quotation shows Sheppard has an emotional dependency on Dr. James Sheppard, as the murderer of Roger Ackroyd, always tries hard to keep his disgrace of killing. Because he was a doctor, James was able to hide all kinds of crimes against Mrs. Ferrars and Mr. Ackroyd. It makes him be a manipulative person. A manipulative man has an emotionally dependent character on everyone. At the end of the story, Hercule Poirot tries to reveal who the perpetrator of Roger Ackroyd's murder was by presenting Ralph Paton and his wife. Previously, Ralph was accused of being the perpetrator, but in this detective part, Poirot did not find the murderous side of Ralph and his previous statements. In this part, Ralph tells who Dr. Sheppard, actually as seen in the following quotation:

“It was a very uncomfortable minute for me. I hardly took in what happened next, but there were exclamations and cries of surprise! When I was sufficiently master of myself to be able to realize what was going on, Ralph Paton was standing by his wife, her hand in his, and he was smiling across the room at me.

Poirot, too, was smiling, and at the same time shaking an eloquent finger at me”.

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 328)

From the quote above, Dr. Sheppard hung up on his feelings for someone. In this quote it is very clear that Hercule Poirot has revealed that he was the perpetrator of the murder of Roger Ackroyd.

The next emotional dependency, when Ralph Paton told the truth, Dr. Sheppard began to be cornered and admitted the truth of the story he had told. This made him a little annoyed, which was proof that Dr. Sheppard came into view. It is seen the following quotation:

“I did,” I said ruefully. “I suppose I might as well make a clean breast of things now. I went to see Ralph that afternoon. At first he refused to take me into his confidence, but later he told me about his marriage, and the hole he was in. As soon as the murder was discovered, I realized that once the facts were known, suspicion could not fail to attach to Ralph—or, if not to him, to the girl he loved. That night I put the facts plainly before him. The thought of having possibly to give evidence which might incriminate his wife made him resolve at all costs to—to—”

I hesitated, and Ralph filled up the gap.

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 329)

The quotation above clearly shows that Dr. Sheppard began to feel sorry for his cunning and deception in keeping all the secrets of this murder case. Actually, on the other hand, based on what Ralph Paton told him, he still had good feelings towards Dr.

Sheppard. However, on the other hand, it was Hercule Poirot who studied and listened to Ralph's speech carefully and wisely. Until he forced Ralph to tell him detail by detail what had happened, which made Sheppard anxious and regretful. This makes his emotions chaotic and raging.

Next quotation, when Poirot seriously corners Sheppard to admit his actions. That's when Sheppard begins to become more unable to control his emotions. She is marked when Poirot discusses the notes written by him. In this part, Sheppard really regrets having helped him. It is seen in the following quotations:

I looked at him ruefully. "Caroline's Home Office expert," I murmured. "And to think I never guessed!"

"You see now why I drew attention to the reticence of your manuscript," murmured Poirot. "It was strictly truthful as far as it went—but it did not go very far, eh, my friend?"

I was too abashed to argue.

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 331)

The quotation above clearly shows that Sheppard's emotional dependency has been revealed. When he is pressured to confess all his actions by Poirot, he begins to be unable to escape and always feels remorse and remorse for having helped Poirot.

4.2.2 Power to Manipulate

Dr. James Sheppard is a great manipulator. At the beginning of the novel, he appears as if he were the main character in the story. Readers will also not suspect that he is the real murderer in this story. Part by part of the novel, the reader will be guided to know who Sheppard is. A man who has the power to manipulate everyone in Kings Abbot. He acts as a hero who helps Hercule Poirot as the detective to clear the murder of Ackroyd case. In the first chapter of the novel, Dr. Sheppard debates with his sister Caroline. Caroline argues that Mrs. Ferrars committed suicide and that was the real truth, but because he didn't want to be found out by Dr. Sheppard denied this by saying that Mrs. Ferrars died from drinking too much Veronal. It is seen in the following quotation:

My sister continued: "What did she die of? Heart failure?" "Didn't the milkman tell you that?" I inquired sarcastically.

Sarcasm is wasted on Caroline. She takes it seriously and answers accordingly.

"He didn't know," she explained.

After all, Caroline was bound to hear sooner or later. She might as well hear from me.

"She died of an overdose of veronal. She's been taking it lately for sleeplessness. Must have taken too much."

"Nonsense," said Caroline immediately. "She took it on purpose. Don't tell me!"

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 9)

From the quote above, it can be explained that Dr. Sheppard really wanted to keep the mystery of Mrs. Ferrars' death. Caroline had already suspected that she had heard the true cause of Mrs. Ferrars' death, but because Dr. Sheppard didn't want to

find out what he had done to Mrs. Ferrars, so he easily refuted his sister's opinion on that.

Next quotation, at the end of the story. Poirot tells the people who Sheppard tells. He is telling the results of his investigation into the Ackroyd murder case. There were many people watching and waiting for Poirot's words. He revealed the details and determined that the perpetrator of the murder was Sheppard, as it is seen in the following quotation:

"There was silence for a minute and a half.

Then I laughed.

"You're crazy," I said.

"No," said Poirot calmly. "I am not angry. It was that small difference in time that first drew my attention to you—right at the beginning."

"Time difference?" I asked, confused.

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 344)

The above quotation shows that Mr. Sheppard is truly an accomplished actor. He laughed and was not worried even though he was in an accused state. In this part, he tries to convey the facts so that Poirot really misjudged him. Sheppard's power of manipulation really made the situation even more raging. In this position he is always trying to explain what Poirot said about him. If Poirot tries to reveal the truth, then he will also try to manipulate Poirot's statements.

The next quotation shows the power of manipulation of a Dr. Sheppard. In this scene, he speaks with self-understanding to Poirot not to easily accuse him of being a murderer. In fact, he completely defended himself and emphasized that he was innocent. It is seen in the following quotation:

"My dear Poirot," said I in a voice that sounded strange and forced to my own ears, "you have been thinking about this case too long. What good would it do me to kill Ackroyd?"

(Agatha Christie, 2018: 345)

The above quotation shows that Dr. Sheppard is a master at manipulation. He distorts the facts as if he were innocent and exonerated by Hercule Poirot. In the quote above, it is very clear that he is denying himself and his efforts to counter Poirot's opinion by asking questions and making sure that he is not as evil as Poirot claims.

Again, in the next quotation, it shows the power of manipulation of a Dr. Sheppard. Poirot continues to pressure Sheppard to admit his cruel actions, saying that it is Sheppard who really knows the cause of his patient's death, Mrs. Ferraris. Despite this, he continues to criticize and continues to ask Poirot to defend himself. It is seen in the following quotation

"Safety. It was you who blackmailed Mrs. Ferrars. Who could have had a better knowledge of what killed Mr. Ferrars than the doctor who was attending him? When you spoke to me that first day in the garden, you mentioned a legacy received about a year ago. I have been unable to discover any trace of a legacy. You had to invent some way of accounting for Mrs. Ferrars's twenty thousand pounds. It has not done you much good. You lost most of it in speculation— then you put the screw on too hard, and Mrs. Ferrars took a way out that you had not expected. If Ackroyd had learnt the truth he would have had no mercy

on you—you were ruined forever.” “And the telephone call?” I asked, trying to rally. “You have a plausible explanation of that also, I suppose?”
(Agatha Christie, 2018: 346)

The quote above makes it very clear that Sheppard is trying to defend himself against Poirot's accusation of being the perpetrator of the murder. Poirot repeatedly tries and proves the truth, he also repeatedly denies it for various reasons, even arguing with each other. The quote above shows Poirot's skill as a detective in asking for detail after detail in the case of Mrs. Ferrars against Sheppard. Sheppard tries to manipulate everything and argue with Poirot so that he is exonerated and not proven to be the perpetrator of the murder.

4.2.3 Low Self-Esteem and Insecurity

Even though Sheppard is able to manipulate quite well and has emotional dependence, the feeling of guilt is incomplete if Sheppard does not have an insecurity of himself. In this part, Hercule Poirot, a detective who has just retired from his job, is forced to investigate the case of Roger Ackroyd's death. He went to see Sheppard and the others. It made him uneasy. This is the first time Sheppard's low self-esteem shows. It is seen in the following quotation:

I was a little nervous when I rang the bell at Marby Grange the following afternoon. I am very curious about what Poirot wants to know. He had entrusted the job to me. Why? Was it because, as in questioning Major Blunt, he wanted to remain behind the scenes? That desire, understandable in the first case, seems to me meaningless here. My meditation was interrupted by the arrival of an intelligent parlor maid.
(Agatha Christie, 2018: 161)

From the quote above, it can be explained that it was very clear that Dr. Sheppard was starting to feel restless and less confident that what he was hiding would stay up forever. He was worried that Poirot would find out the real truth sooner or later. The low Self-Esteem and Insecurity of Sheppard shows that in the Guilt Trip theory, humans also have weaknesses.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted in this study, it can be concluded that guilt-tripping is a significant psychological and narrative element in Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. The manipulative character, Dr. James Sheppard, demonstrates various tactics of emotional manipulation that align with McPhillips' (2022) framework of guilt-tripping behavior. The findings reveal two primary types of guilt-tripping in the novel: love bombing—where affection is used to manipulate trust—and direct guilt inducement, where the manipulator makes others feel responsible for outcomes they did not cause. These behaviors are instrumental in concealing the character's true motives and maintaining control over others. Furthermore, the study identifies three core psychological motivations behind the guilt-tripping: emotional dependency, the desire to manipulate and control, and low self-esteem coupled with insecurity. These psychological traits deepen the complexity of Sheppard's character

and contribute to the novel's enduring intrigue. This research underscores how psychological manipulation operates not only as a narrative strategy but also as a lens for understanding human behavior in literature. By examining such elements, readers and scholars alike can gain greater insight into the moral ambiguity and emotional dynamics that shape fictional and real-life interactions.

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REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE IN LEILA S. CHUDORI'S *LAUT BER CERITA*

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Abstract

This study explores the representation of violence in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* through the theoretical lens of Johan Galtung's typology of violence—direct, structural, and cultural. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research examines how acts of violence are constructed and conveyed through the narrative strategies and language choices of the novel. Findings reveal that violence is not only experienced by the protagonist, Biru Laut, but also by a wider circle of student activists, portraying a collective trauma rooted in Indonesia's New Order regime. The novel encapsulates various forms of violence: physical torture, psychological torment, and functional oppression—all of which are embedded in both the characters' lived experiences and the oppressive sociopolitical systems that surround them. Chudori's work serves as a literary vehicle to represent silenced histories and resist institutionalized injustice. This research underscores how literature can function as a medium of historical testimony and cultural critique, contributing to the broader discourse on human rights and collective memory. The findings also reinforce Galtung's theory, affirming its relevance in analyzing representations of systemic and symbolic violence in post-authoritarian literary texts.

Keywords: *structural violence; direct violence; cultural violence; Laut Bercerita.*

1. Introduction

Laut Bercerita is a novel by Indonesian author and journalist Leila Salikha Chudori, published in 2017. The narrative centers on themes of friendship, familial bonds, political violence, and personal loss, drawing from the turbulent political period of Indonesia's Reformasi era in the late 1990s. Although presented as historical fiction, the novel is grounded in real-life testimonies and events. Prior to writing, Chudori conducted interviews with former political detainees and the families of the disappeared, thereby lending a documentary quality to her work.

The novel is divided into two parts. The first is narrated from the perspective of Biru Laut, a student activist involved in political resistance against the New Order regime. It chronicles his activism, evasion, arrest, and eventual disappearance. The second part shifts to the viewpoint of Laut's younger sister, Asmara, and captures the emotional turmoil experienced by the families of the missing. This narrative structure highlights the dual suffering—both of the victims and those they leave behind.

This study focuses on the representation of violence in *Laut Bercerita*. The term “representation” refers to the depiction or interpretation of life events through various semiotic modes, including language, imagery, and narrative (Mulyana, 2014: 96). Representation is not merely about imitation but involves the active construction of meaning within specific cultural and political contexts (Barker, 2004: 9; Mulyana, 2014: 97). According to Hall (1997: 15), representation entails producing meaning through language, linking concepts with signs to express both real and imagined events.

Violence, as defined by Putri (2012), is the unjust and harmful use of force, often marked by anger or cruelty. It encompasses physical, verbal, psychological, structural, and symbolic forms (Galtung, 1971). In literary discourse, violence is not limited to action but includes representations that reflect systems of power and marginalization. This study adopts Galtung's framework of direct, structural, and cultural violence (1990) to examine how *Laut Bercerita* portrays state violence and its psychological and social repercussions.

The choice of this novel stems from its vivid and multilayered depictions of violence under authoritarian rule. The researcher aims to analyze these representations critically, both to understand how violence is framed in literature and to contribute to the broader dialogue on political memory and justice. Ultimately, the study hopes to offer insights into how literature can document and resist violence through the power of storytelling.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Representation

Representation comes from English representation, which means representation, picture, or depiction. Representation can be interpreted as a description of something found in life that is depicted through a medium. Representation can take the form of words, pictures, stories, and others that represent ideas, emotions, facts and some of them. Representation is the use of signs as a process of recording ideas, knowledge, or messages in some physical way. Wibowo (2011: 148) defines representation as the use of signs that connect, describe, imitate something that is felt, understood, imagined, or felt in some physical form. According to Baker (2004: 9) representation is a social construction that requires us to explore the formation of textual meanings and aims to trace the way meanings are produced in various contexts. Cultural meanings and representations have a certain materiality. Both are inherent in sounds, inscriptions, images, objects, magazines, books and television programs. They are displayed, produced, used and understood in specific social contexts.

According to Stuart Hall (1997:15) representation is a production of meaning concepts in the mind through language in the relationship between concepts and language that describes objects, people, or even real events into objects, people, and fictional events. Representation can be said as we use language in using or conveying something meaningfully to others. Faruk (2012), reveals that representation as part of literary works is a combination of fictional and imaginative powers. These two forces are able to directly capture the social world building that is outside and beyond the world of direct experience, objects, and movements.

2.2 Violence

According to (Putri, 2012), violence is the use of physical strength and power, threats or actions against oneself, an individual, or a group of people or society. The

term violence comes from the Latin language, namely *violentia*, which means ferocity, persecution, and rape. According to H. Jamaludin. (2022), violence is an attack or abuse of physical force against a person or animal; a very violent, violent, cruel, and vicious attack or destruction of property or something that could potentially belong to someone. Violence indicates the existence of pressure that is beyond the ability of the object affected by violence and can result in physical or psychological damage or psychiatry. Violence is any physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual condition, as well as any behavior, attitude, policy or condition that disempowers, dominates or destroys ourselves and others (Galtung, 1971).

Violence, in a broad sense, is said by Galtung, as a barrier that should be avoided which causes a person not to be able to actualize themselves naturally. According to Galtung, this barrier can actually be avoided, so that violence can also be avoided if the barrier is removed (Muchsin, 2006). Galtung (1980) defines violence as an avoidable impediment to self-realization. So, violence is something that causes people to be prevented from actualizing their potential. Based on Galtung's conceptualization, two types of violence can be separated: direct or personal and indirect or structural. Direct violence is that which is perpetrated by one or a group of actors against another party (violence - as - action). Direct violence can take many forms. In its classic form, it involves the use of physical force, such as murder or torture, rape and sexual violence, as well as beatings. Verbal violence, such as insults, is also widely recognized as violence (Galtung, 1971). Meanwhile, indirect violence is something that is built-in in a structure (violence - as - structure). The misuse of resources, insights and the results of progress for other purposes or monopolized by a few people, then there is violence in this system. This is because the situation causes the level of actualization of society to be below its potential level, referred to by Galtung as indirect violence. Borrowing Galtung's thinking, a conceptualization can be developed that allows discussion of violence that is not only committed by a group of community members, but can also be committed by state officials and controllers of private capital.

Based on these various opinions, physical, verbal, and biocratic violence is commonly found. The most widely recognized violence is physical violence (physical violence) Baryadi (2012: 35-36). Physical violence is the most popular violence. This violence involves the limbs against the opponent. Examples of physical violence are beatings, abuse, rape, stabbings, murder, arson, raids, shootings, beatings, massacres, bombings, deprivation, and so on. Violence that uses words, sentences, and other elements of language. This violence is called verbal violence. Djawanai (in Baryadi, 2012: 36) states that language acts are part of human behavior and in that behavior it is very possible for people to do something that can be categorized as a verbal attack. An attack using words on others is an act of violence. Symbolic violence is violence that is symbolic in nature. Bureaucratic violence is violence carried out by power holders who have formal institutions with legal rules authorized by the government (Latifah, Syahrotul & Putra, C.R.W., 2020). Symbolic violence can be divided into two types, namely violence carried out through non-verbal symbols or also known as non-verbal symbolic violence and violence carried out through verbal symbols or also known as verbal symbol violence or verbal violence (Baryadi, 2002: 20).

Violent behavior or aggression, according to Stephan & Stephan (1985), contains the intention of making others suffer and there is a legal and normative rejection of this behavior. According to Gurr (1970), violent behavior is more emphasized in political violence, namely all events whose main element is the threat of

using power. Based on this understanding, political violence is not carried out by the ruler but by those who oppose him. Whereas in reality, the ruler also commits many acts of violence against the people or his followers. According to Syamsul (2010:191), violent behavior does not only include aspects of physical action, but also includes verbal, psychological, and symbolic violence or a combination of all these aspects. Verbal violence is violence that uses language, namely violence that uses words, sentences, and other elements of language.

Djawanai Baryadi (in the journal *Metakom* 2017: 41) states that language acts are part of human behavior and in that behavior it is very possible for people to do something that can be categorized as a verbal attack, meaning an attack using words (verbal attack) on others which is nothing but an act of violence. Violent acts are actions that harm others, such as murder, looting, beatings, and others. Jehel (2003: 123 in Haryatmoko (2007: 119-120) describes violence as follows.

"Violence involves the domination of others in various forms: physical, verbal, moral, or through images. The use of force, manipulation, slander, untruthful reporting, adverse conditioning, discouraging words, and insults are real expressions of violence. The logic of violence is the logic of death, because it can hurt the body, hurt psychologically, harm, and can be a personal threat".

2.3 Types of Violence

2.3.1 Structural Violence

According to Galtung, the injustice created by a system that causes humans to be unable to fulfill their basic needs is the concept of structural violence. This model of violence can be shown by insecurity due to the pressure of military institutions controlled by authoritarian political policies, unemployment due to the system not accepting human resources in its environment, discrimination by social or political structures to the absence of the right to obtain free and fair education (Galtung, 1990).

2.3.2 Direct Violence

Direct violence can be seen in cases where one person beats another and causes bodily harm. A riot in which another group invades is also direct violence. Threats and terror from groups that cause fear and psychological trauma are forms of direct violence. In direct violence there is a subject-action-object relationship (Galtung 1990).

2.3.3 Cultural Violence

Galtung (1996: 196) defines cultural violence as aspects of culture that we can use to legitimate structural and direct violence. Cultural aspects are the 'symbolic sphere' of our existence. Symbolic spaces, such as language, always mark our social identity as a nation, community, religion, and ethnicity.

2.4 Representation of Violence

There are three kinds of representation of violence, namely: 1. Physical violence is violence perpetrated by the perpetrator against the victim by hitting, slapping, choking, kicking, throwing objects at the body, stomping, injuring with bare hands, or with empty hands, or with tools or weapons, persecution, torture, killing and other things that are relevant. 2. Psychological violence is violence committed by the perpetrator against the victim's mental by yelling, swearing, threatening, demeaning,

ordering, harassing, stalking and spying, or other actions that cause fear (including those directed at people close to the victim, for example family, children, husband or others).
3. Functional violence in the form of social role restriction. Doing something that is not in accordance with their will, obstructing or inhibiting certain activities or certain work, forcing an unwelcome presence, helping without being wanted and others that are relevant. For example, a woman is only a wife, housewife and performer of other reproductive functions (Devina Natalie, & Cosmas Gatot Haryono, 2024).

3. Research Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the representation of violence in *Laut Bercerita*. As a work of library research, the study centers on textual analysis of the novel and draws upon theoretical frameworks, particularly Johan Galtung's typology of violence, as well as supporting literature relevant to the research problem. The qualitative method is appropriate for interpreting narrative data and uncovering patterns, themes, and representations embedded within the literary text.

Descriptive research, according to Kothari (2004:7), includes surveys and fact-finding inquiries that describe the state of affairs as they exist at present. Similarly, Nazir (2014:43) defines descriptive research as a method used to examine the condition of a group, object, system of thought, or class of events, aiming to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate depiction of the investigated phenomenon. In this case, the phenomenon is the representation of violence in the novel.

The data collection process involved several stages. First, the researcher identified and selected relevant data from the novel *Laut Bercerita* by marking passages related to various forms of violence. Next, the data were organized according to the types of violence being analyzed—structural, direct, and cultural. Finally, selected words, phrases, and narrative excerpts were quoted and examined in light of Galtung's theoretical lens and other scholarly perspectives.

The method adopted in this study facilitates a deep textual reading, allowing for an interpretative analysis of how violence is thematically and linguistically constructed within the novel's discourse.

4. Discussion

4.1 Types of Violence

4.1.1 Structural Violence

Structural violence is arguably a very complex violence because it is not only related to individuals, but also often occurs within groups. The perpetrator can be a group or a person using the legal system, economic system, or norms that occur in society. The following is an excerpt from the novel *Laut Bercerita* that tells about structural violence.

The arrests of activists for possession of a number of banned books including the work of Pramoedya Ananta Toer that occurred three years ago still haunt us. (Chudori, 2017: 16)

In the quotation above, the activists do not have the freedom to read books as they like, so if they violate, the regime will arrest them so that from the arrest there could be violence.

"Bram and I were arrested with several other friends when accompanying Kedung Ombo residents who survived in loksai..." Kinan told how Kedung Ombo residents were promised compensation of three thousand rupiah per square meter and it turned out they were only given 250 rupiah per square meter. Some desperate residents received compensation, but about 600 berthan families and suffered intimidation. " Just a few weeks after that, we were arrested. About seven people, one by one interrogated and slapped, doused with water, stripped naked."
(Chudori, 2017: 25)

The quotation above proves that people who had higher power during the New Order era could commit structural violence.

4.1.2 Direct Violence

Direct Violence is a form of direct violence committed by the actor. This form of violence is seen from the physical and psychological sides, where there are perpetrators and victims. In the *Sea Speaks* novel, the regime committed a lot of direct violence against student activists during the New Order era. This can be seen in the following quote.

I was kicked for walking fast. (Chudori, 2017: 3)

The Red Eyes pushed me forward. (Chudori, 2017: 5)

The bully kicked me in the back until I fell down in front of the car.
Ah! Shit. (Chudori, 2017: 54)

Suddenly my stomach was hit by an unusually hard fist.
Before I could get up, my body was suddenly trampled and tended,
probably by two or three people. (Chudori, 2017: 55)

As soon as I tried to open my mouth again, a jagged shoe stepped on
my mouth. (Chudori, 2017: 57)

I could feel a hand the size of a log gripping my wrist.
(Chudori, 2017: 93)

Just a few steps away a foot kicked my back
Suddenly one fist flew into my stomach. Ah!! (Chudori, 2017: 94)

The man on my left is as big as a tree, and his hand is as big as my
head. (Chudori, 2017: 96)

The red-eyed man angled his cigarette into my right arm, left arm,
right palm, left palm. Slow down and burn. (Chudori, 201 : 99)
The tree man punched my head through the trellis and I fell.
(Chudori, 2017: 160)

After that it was my turn to kick back Lars the gunner's shoes earlier so that I could return to my ranks. (Chudori, 2017: 166).

The quotations above explain that the main character experienced so much violence committed by the New Orde apparaturs during the arrest and investigation of Winatra. Direct violence is done in several ways, such as pushing, stepping, slapping, kicking. The media used to commit violence are the hands and feet.

4.2 Representation of Physical Violence

Physical violence is violence committed directly by the perpetrator against the victim with physical injuries. In the novel *Laut Bercerita* there are many stories about physical violence experienced by student activists who were arrested during the new order. This is seen through the words conveyed by the author of the novel.

4.2.1 Beating

Beating is one of the acts of physical violence through the medium of hands as a tool to hit. A quotation states that: "Suddenly my stomach was hit by an unusually hard fist head" (Chudori, 2017: 55). It can be concluded that the physical violence experienced by the main character, *Biru Laut*, received a very hard blow. The physical violence experienced is a blow by the use of hand media. This violence is obtained when the main character, *Biuy*, is arrested and imprisoned in one place by New Order officers. Another quote shows that: "The man next to me was as big as a tree, and he held my head with his big hand" (Chudori, 2017: 96). In the second quotation, there is a form of physical violence in the form of beatings experienced by the main character, *Birlik*. When viewed from the analysis of the text, there is a word sprawl in the Indonesian dictionary *menggampar* means to hit. The word is a representation of an action that uses a limb as a medium to carry out acts of violence against another person.

4.2.2 Trampling

Trampled is one form of physical violence that uses the feet as a medium of action to commit violence.

I wanted to open my eyes, but it was so hard. Not only because of swelling and pain, but slowly I remembered that one of them stepped on my head with *bergeri* shoes. (Chudori, 2017: 5).

The violence experienced by the main character is physical violence that uses feet and shoes as tools of violence to step on the head. This physical violence is carried out by elements of the New Order regime when the main character is caught and taken to one of the dark rooms.

4.2.3 Persecution

Persecution is a cruel act committed by a person arbitrarily with the aim of torturing or oppressing another person. This action can be done in various ways so that the victim feels tortured. The persecution is represented in the following quotation.

I close my lips, pretending to be deaf. This time another man, probably a tree man, shouted in my ear. Where's the love, where's the passion. I remained silent and even tried to smile mockingly. Maybe

they were upset, maybe they were angry with me. There was a rustling of clean hands and suddenly a stick that released an electric shock hit my head. I screamed to the end of the sky. All my bones are falling out. I cried out God's name. But my voice is hard to get out. The electric stun was like holding everything in my throat.
(Chudori, 2017: 57)

It says that Biru Laut is being questioned by New Order officials about his activist friends named Kasih Kinanti and Gala Pranaya. The act of violence experienced by Biru Laut is cruel persecution. There is the word whack in the great Dictionary of Indonesian whack. In the sentence, the electric shock hitting my head means that Biru Laut was hit with an electric shock that caused him to scream until he mentions the name of God, stating that the event is tormenting him very much.

This time one of the torturers pressed two flat pieces of metal to my thigh, the pain went all the way to my chest. I'm looking for air. My breath was cut off. (Chudori, 17: 58)

In the quotation above, Biru Laut experienced physical violence in the form of persecution carried out by new order officers using metal media as a tool to torture Biru Laut. This makes it difficult for Buu to breathe air. The event makes him persecuted.

4.3 Representation of Psychological Violence

Psychological violence is of the utmost importance from a political point of view. Racism and sexism have been indeed analyzed as forms of violence that a government, or a sect of society, is inflicting on some individuals. From a legal perspective, to recognize that racism is a form of violence even when no physical damage is provoked to the victim of racist behavior is an important instrument for putting some pressure.

The following sentence is a form of representation of psychological violence contained in the novel the *Sea Speaks His Name*.

All of a sudden, my heart stopped and my body started to shake. My legs were tied and hung like grilled chicken sold in warungwarung petak Sembilan. This time the electric whip hit my legs and back. The pain pierces the nerve. I screamed and *asked to be killed because, really, the sting on this nerve was unbearable*.
(Chudori, 2017:110-111)

The sentence above explains the main character, Biru Laut, who is being interrogated by New Order regime elements about his activist friends. The incident experienced by the sea is a form of physical violence that results in body and psychological distress. We can see that the elements of the regime bind bu like animals and, in the last sentence, he felt pain, so he asked to be killed.

4.4 Representation of Functional Violence

Functional violence is violence that violates the forms of human rights that a person exercises with a specific purpose and then justifies.

Along the way, I bowed my head not because of their orders, but because the whole body was bowed by the pain of stun, iron ruler tab, and the kick of lars jagged shoes. But perhaps the least I can say is the feeling of humanity that is slowly being peeled off layer by layer because they treat us like nuisance mosquitoes. (Chudori, 2017: 171)

The sentence above explains that the main character has been subjected to physical violence. The sentence represents the form of the sentence “tabokan”, which means hit, and “tendangan sepatu Lars bergerigi” means Biru Luat kicks using long shoes and on the soles of the shoes are serration-like apparatus shoes. From the next sentence, “perlahan - lahan terkelupas selapis demi selapis karena mereka memperlakukan kami seperti nyamuk-nyamuk pengganggu”, which means a sense of humanity that begins to disappear little by little because of the treatment of New Orde officers against student like bully animals. It can be concluded that the violence experienced is in the form of physical violence that takes away human rights, so it is also called function violence.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of Leila S. Chudori’s *Laut Bercerita*, this study concludes that the novel offers a complex and layered representation of violence, particularly within the socio-political context of Indonesia's New Order era. The forms of violence depicted are not limited to the main character, Biru Laut, but extend to the broader community of student activists, underscoring the collective trauma inflicted by authoritarian repression. The impact of this violence manifests in both physical and psychological forms, including anxiety, fear, injury, disability, discrimination, and even death. These consequences illustrate the profound and lasting harm that state-sponsored violence imposes on individuals and families alike. The causes of violence, as identified in the novel, are rooted in political resistance—such as student movements, prohibited readings, and acts of civil disobedience. These acts are met with oppressive responses that reflect the regime’s intolerance toward dissent. This study, employing Galtung’s framework, categorizes the violence into three primary types: structural, direct, and cultural. Each type is represented through narrative language that conveys physical, mental, and functional suffering. Through vivid literary techniques, Chudori reveals how violence operates not only through bodily harm but also through symbolic and institutionalized oppression. Ultimately, *Laut Bercerita* serves as both a literary testimony and a form of resistance. It illuminates the historical silencing of dissent and affirms literature’s role in preserving collective memory and challenging systems of violence.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN COLLEEN HOOVER'S *IT ENDS WITH US*

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Abstract

This research examines the portrayal of domestic violence in Colleen Hoover's novel *It Ends with Us*, focusing on the experiences of the protagonist, Lily Bloom, who endures various forms of abuse both in her childhood and adulthood. The study identifies four major categories of domestic violence depicted in the narrative—physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual—by employing Tulangow's theoretical framework on domestic violence. Conducted through a qualitative descriptive method as outlined by Creswell (2012), this study analyzes textual evidence drawn from the novel to understand the psychological, emotional, and social consequences of abuse on the main character. The findings reveal that domestic violence in the novel not only results in physical injuries but also generates long-lasting psychological trauma, fear, anxiety, and diminished self-worth. Furthermore, the narrative exposes the cyclical nature of abuse and its intergenerational impact, especially through Lily's reflections on her childhood and her concerns about her unborn child. This study demonstrates how literary fiction can serve as a powerful vehicle for raising public awareness of gender-based violence, offering insight into the lived realities of survivors, and prompting critical reflection on emotional resilience, agency, and social intervention.

Keywords: *domestic violence; literary representation; psychological abuse; gender studies; It Ends with Us; trauma narrative*

1. Introduction

Marriage is ideally perceived as a union grounded in mutual respect, emotional support, and shared responsibilities. The dream of a harmonious family and growing old together remains a fundamental aspiration for many couples. However, this ideal is often disrupted when one or both partners fail to uphold the essential rights and obligations of marital life. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2023), marriage is defined as “a legal bond between two people by establishing their rights and obligations between them, their families and society in a legal and social union” (para. 1). When these rights and responsibilities are disregarded, it can lead to relational dysfunction, conflict, and in many cases, domestic violence.

Domestic violence (DV) is a serious form of abuse that occurs within the home, often characterized by coercion, manipulation, and control. Tulangow et al. (2022) assert that among the most significant causes of divorce is domestic violence—

encompassing both physical and psychological harm. The *Office on Violence Against Women* (2023) defines domestic violence as a “pattern of abusive behavior which can be in the form of physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, or technological actions or threats of action or other coercive behavior patterns that affect other people in a couple relationship” (para. 1). Notably, domestic violence disproportionately affects women; Komnas Perempuan (2020) reports that 90.4% of domestic violence victims in Indonesia are women.

The causes of domestic violence are multifaceted, including personality and psychological disorders, economic stress, generational trauma, cultural norms, and entrenched gender inequality (Kemthong, 2021). The impacts of such violence are equally complex, resulting in physical injuries, mental health deterioration, loss of self-worth, trauma, and fear. Furthermore, domestic violence has lasting effects not only on the immediate victim but also on children and other family members, contributing to a cycle of violence that may extend across generations (Obaegu, 2019; Idris et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, literature becomes a significant tool for portraying and critiquing societal issues, including domestic violence. Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* (2016) presents a poignant narrative that reflects the lived reality of many women. The protagonist, Lily Bloom, is a young woman who has endured violence from her father during her childhood and later from her husband, Ryle, as an adult. Despite her initial hope for a different future, Lily becomes trapped in a cycle of abuse, mirroring the experiences of her mother. Her journey of resilience and difficult decision-making provides a compelling lens through which to examine the manifestations and impacts of domestic violence.

This study analyzes *It Ends with Us* as a literary representation of domestic violence, aiming to understand how the novel articulates the psychological, emotional, and physical consequences of abuse. By employing Tulangow's typology of violence (2022) and utilizing Creswell's (2012) qualitative descriptive method, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on gender-based violence and demonstrate how literary fiction can illuminate hidden societal traumas and provoke critical awareness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides the definition of violence as “intentionally manifested action, coercion, empowerment against oneself and others to cause injury, death, and shock or being abandoned” (World Health Organization, 2021).

2.2 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a type of abusive relationship. Abusive relationships do not involve trust, respect and consideration for the other person. The relationship is characterized by disrespect, mistreatment, or physical violence. Tulangow, D. S. et al. (2022: 2) explains that “Domestic violence, which is also known as domestic abuse, battering, or family violence, is defined as physically injurious assault by highlighting the interrelated range of abusive, coercive, controlling behaviours, causing psychological, sexual or physical harms, which often accompany or precede the use or threat of physical force”.

Pingley in Kemthong (2021: 1) mainly explains “that domestic violence is a problem where someone in a family harms or neglects another person. This can happen

between spouses, children, relatives, or any other people who live in the same household. "Domestic violence can have a big impact on the happiness of everyone in the family, especially children".

According to Kemthong (2021: 2), "domestic violence is usually caused by disagreements between a husband and wife. They may not realize that their actions are causing problems for other people in the family, especially their children. "It's true that domestic violence does happen because it affects everyone in the family". English et al. & Kertesz et al. in Kemthong (2021: 3) indicate that "violence in a family is often caused by several factors, including the offender's history of violence in their own childhood. This makes them likely to behave in a violent way in the present. In other words, domestic violence is any behavior, the purpose of which is to gain power and control over a spouse, partner, or intimate family member. Domestic violence in marriage is conducted by the husband to his wife".

2.3 Types of Domestic Violence

The criteria for inclusion in the study required that participants in this study had to be in a physically abusive relationship or had to have been in such a relationship during the six months prior to the study, as mentioned earlier. "The range of abuses that women may suffer is wide and can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, as well as stalking, forced isolation in the home and other controlling behaviors" (Tulangow et al., 2022: 2). Domestic violence generally occurs in the form of the following types of abuse: physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual. These four types of domestic violence experienced by women are discussed in the following sections:

2.3.1 Physical Violence

Physical violence can be controlled or impulsive and consists of physical attacks. These assaults result in injuries ranging from "bruising, blistering, burning and puncturing" to deep cuts, cracked ribs or broken bones. Constant blows to the head can lead to serious head injuries that often go undetected and untreated. "Some perpetrators will ensure that they injure parts of the body that are not normally visible, such as the torso, rather than risk leaving marks on the face or limbs" (Tulangow, D. S et al., 2022: 2). Not only does physical abuse cause physical harm, but it can also lead to mental health difficulties, including an increased risk of suicide attempts as well as a greater risk of psychiatric disorders as post-traumatic stress and anxiety disorders, substance abuse disorders, dissociative disorders, mood disorders, and depression. Such mental health issues can also lead to antisocial behavior, specifically aggressive antisocial behavior for those who are physically abused versus more general antisocial behavior for those who experience neglect (Braga et al. in Rodriguez, 2020: 4).

2.3.2 Emotional Violence

According to Capezza et al. in Sriavastav (2021: 10), "Emotional violence is a technique used to exert power over another person by criticizing, humiliating, blaming, or otherwise manipulating them with their emotions. In general, a relationship is considered emotionally abusive when a pattern of abusive language and bullying actions wears down a person's self-esteem and jeopardizes their mental health. Additionally, while mental or emotional violence is most prevalent in dating and married relationships, it can occur in any relationship, including those between friends, relatives,

and coworkers. One of the most difficult types of violence to identify is emotional abuse. It may be covert and deceptive or overt and manipulative. Nevertheless, victims experience a reduction in their self-confidence as a result, which makes them question their own beliefs and reality. Emotional abuse is usually used to exert authority over the victim by discrediting her, isolating her, and silencing her. Survivors end up feeling bound. Often, they are too hurt to stay in the relationship, but also often too afraid to leave. Therefore, the circle never stops until something is over.

Emotional violence can also occur when the abuser puts his partner in a position where she has to earn his favor through her submissive behavior, like a misbehaving child. "Intentional exclusion from family, friends, and neighbors is another type of emotional abuse" (Tulangow, 2022: 2).

2.3.3 Verbal Violence

Verbal Violence is a form of emotional abuse where a person uses words to instill fear in others and gain control over them. According to Karakurt G and Silver KE (2013:804), "Verbal violence happens when someone uses their words to attack, dominate, ridicule, manipulate, and/or demean another person, which negatively affects that person's mental health. To control and dominate others, a person uses verbal abuse. Calling names, criticizing, highlighting, and threatening are all examples of verbal abuse".

2.3.4 Sexual Violence

Sexual violence does not only occur in intimate relationships, but also in the family, between colleagues and friends or may be committed by strangers. Most sexual harassment is perpetrated by people the victim knows or trusts. "Several studies have indicated women's discomfort regarding certain sexual acts expected by their partners, while continuing to comply with these behaviors, because they see it as an obligation towards their partners" (Tulangow et al., 2022: 2). According to Ocviyanti et al. (2019: 90), "Victims of sexual harassment experience unwanted sexual behavior that disturbs them. Behaviors that are categorized as types of sexual harassment include coercion of sexual acts, demeaning attitudes towards the perpetrator's sexual orientation, requests for sexual acts that the perpetrator prefers, and sexual speech or behavior. These acts may occur directly or indirectly".

2.4 Domestic Violence Effect

These range from physical health impacts to psychological and emotional problems. Idris et al. (2018: 87) states that "battered women are not the only people who suffer the damage inflicted by domestic violence. Children are commonly found in cases of violence and are particularly vulnerable to the long-term effects of family violence, just like the mothers themselves". According to Obaegu (2019: 3), the impact of domestic violence can be devastating to individuals, families, and society as a whole. Some of the effects include:

2.4.1 Physical health consequences

Domestic violence can cause a range of physical health problems, such as chronic pelvic pain, vaginal infections, menstrual pain, sexual dysfunction, urinary tract infections, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

2.4.2 Sexual and reproductive health problems

Women who experience intimate partner abuse are more likely to have gynecological problems and may face difficulties with their reproductive and sexual health. These can include unwanted pregnancy, induced abortion, miscarriage, stillbirth, premature labor, low birth weight, and neonatal death.

2.4.3 Psychological and emotional impact

Domestic violence can have severe psychological and emotional consequences. Victims may develop mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and low self-esteem. They may also experience sleep difficulties, eating disorders, emotional distress, and changes in behaviour and cognition. Because emotionally exploited people often worry about how others see them and whether they really like them, emotional abuse can also affect friendships.

Victims eventually stop making friends and feel that no one cares about them. In addition, emotional abuse can cause many health problems, including depression and anxiety, stomach ulcers, heart palpitations, eating disorders, and insomnia. When emotional abuse is prolonged and intense, a person can lose all sense of self, often without leaving marks or scars. Moreover, the wounds are hidden behind doubt, helplessness, and self-hatred, making them invisible to others.

In fact, there is evidence that psychological abuse has similar consequences to physical abuse. Victims gradually lose confidence in themselves as a result of accusations, physical intimidation, name-calling, criticism, and gaslighting. At some point, victims may not be able to see themselves objectively. The victim may end up developing internal criticism and begin to agree with the perpetrator. Once this happens, most victims become trapped in abusive relationships, believing that they will never be good enough for anyone else.

2.4.4 Impact on children

Children raised in families where domestic violence is present are at risk of developing a range of behavioral and emotional disorders. They may develop aggressiveness, anxiety, and increased difficulty in socializing with others. Exposure to domestic violence may also increase their risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence in the future.

2.4.5 Social and societal impacts

Domestic violence has a ripple effect throughout society. It places an undue burden on women's mental and psychological health, leading to high levels of stress, fear, and anxiety. It also contributes to the continuity of violence from one generation to the next. In addition, domestic violence can strain social relationships, disrupt family dynamics, and negatively impact the well-being of society. Overall, domestic violence has far-reaching implications for individuals, families and communities, affecting physical health, mental well-being, reproductive and sexual health, and economic stability. It is critical to address and prevent domestic violence through education, counseling and support services.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method as outlined by Creswell (2012), which aims to provide a detailed, systematic description of phenomena

based on textual data. Qualitative descriptive research is particularly appropriate for analyzing literary texts, as it facilitates a nuanced interpretation of characters, themes, and narrative structures within their social and psychological contexts. In this case, the method is used to explore the various forms of domestic violence depicted in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* and to examine their impact on the protagonist, Lily Bloom.

The primary data source for this study is the novel *It Ends with Us* (Hoover, 2016), from which selected excerpts, dialogues, and narrative passages are analyzed. These excerpts are chosen based on their relevance to the four types of domestic violence identified in Tulangow's framework (2022): physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual violence. The secondary data comprises scholarly articles, books, official reports, and online sources that provide theoretical, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives on domestic violence, including works by Idris et al. (2018), Kemthong (2021), and the Office on Violence against Women (2023).

The research process follows several stages. First, relevant quotations from the novel were identified and categorized according to the specific type of violence portrayed. Second, these textual data were interpreted using content analysis to explore the psychological, emotional, and narrative significance of each violent episode. Third, the findings were contextualized through comparison with existing literature and theoretical insights on domestic abuse. The analysis also considers the protagonist's personal development, her responses to violence, and the broader implications of her experiences for understanding gendered trauma and resilience.

This methodology allows for a comprehensive interpretation of the literary text not merely as a fictional narrative but as a reflection of real social issues. It also provides space to explore the ways in which literary fiction contributes to public awareness and understanding of the complexities of domestic violence. By integrating literary analysis with social research, the study underscores the value of interdisciplinary approaches in exploring human experiences conveyed through literature.

4. Discussion

This section presents the analytical findings of the study by examining various forms of domestic violence as experienced by the protagonist in *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover. The analysis centers on specific issues within the scope of the study, namely physical violence, emotional violence, verbal violence, and sexual violence. These categories form the core analytical framework through which the narrative is explored. Each form of violence is identified through close textual analysis, drawing on relevant excerpts that illustrate how abuse is manifested in the protagonist's relationship with her husband. The analysis not only highlights the overt expressions of violence but also considers their psychological and emotional consequences for the victim. By situating these textual findings within Tulangow's (2022) theoretical typology and supported by relevant literature on domestic abuse, this section seeks to demonstrate how the novel reflects the complexities of abusive relationships and offers a poignant commentary on gendered trauma, resilience, and the cycle of violence.

4.1.1 Physical Violence

Physical violence is usually defined as a physical attack that results in injury by leaving scars on the body and occurs in person or can be seen and felt. In this case, his partner used physical violence against Lily Bloom.

I close my eyes again and try to remember why he's angry. Why he's hurt. My phone. Atla's number. The stairwell. I grabbed his shirt. He pushed me away. (Hoover, 2016: 174-175)

Based on the quotation above, when Lily tries to get Ryle to talk to her nicely by grabbing her husband's shirt, she receives physical violence. Ryle pushed Lily down the stairs and refused to listen to her. Lily does not remember what happened next. Lily does not remember what happened to her some time earlier, which left her injured and unconscious when she regained consciousness. When she tried to remember what happened, she realized that it was Ryle who left her injured and unconscious. She received the effects of Ryle's violence after she realized what he had done.

I can feel my whole body start to shake with the sobs. I have no idea how bad I'm hurt, but I don't even care. No physical pain could even compare to what my heart is feeling in this moment.“You might have a concussion,” he says, matter-of-fact. “You have a small cut on your lip. I just bandaged up the cut on your eye. You don't need stitches.” (Hoover, 2016: 175)

From the above quotation, we can see that Ryle's violence does not only involve physical injury, but also the hurt and disappointment of the person who did such a bad thing to her. Ryle's physical violence does not stop there.

He slowly runs his finger over the heart and a shudder runs over my whole body. His lips meet my skin, right over the tattoo, and then he sinks his teeth into me so hard, I scream. I try to pull away from him, but he has such a tight grip on me he doesn't even budge. (Hoover, 2016: 200)

The above quotation shows that Lily's bite was another instance of physical violence against her. The incident occurred when Lily thought that Ryle was just trying to tease her by kissing her shoulder. Without knowing his real purpose, Ryle suddenly bit Lily's body right on the part of Lily's body that had a tattoo. Not only that, Ryle also grabbed Lily's body when she tried to move away after Ryle bit her. From this incident, there was an effect that Lily received.

The pain from his teeth piercing my collarbone rips through my shoulder and down my arm. I immediately start crying. Sobbing. (Hoover, 2016: 200)

Ryle's bite left Lily with physical injuries, namely tears in her shoulder and arm. The pain was too much for Lily to bear and caused her to cry. Physical violence continued to occur to Lily, namely the impact of Ryle's head on Lily.

Ryle tries to muffle my screams with his mouth. I bite down on his tongue. His forehead comes crashing down against me. In an instant, all the pain fades as a blanket of darkness rolls over my eyes and consumes me. (Hoover, 2016: 201)

This was the last physical violence that Ryle used on Lily. This happened when Lily screamed because she remembered her childhood where her father was violent

towards her mother, and it happened to her. Lily's screams were silenced by Ryle's mouth. But her hatred and anger, which could no longer be expressed, caused her to resist Ryle's treatment by biting her lower tongue. Lily's resistance was met with physical violence in the form of a blow from Ryle. The blow temporarily knocked Lily unconscious and injured her head.

My heart is racing, my whole body is still shaking, my tears are still somehow falling and I'm gasping for air. His words are crashing against my ear, but the pain is throbbing in my head too hard for me to decipher his words. I try to open my eyes, but it stings. I can feel something trickling into my right eye and I instantly know it's blood. My blood. (Hoover, 2016: 201)

The quotation above can be described that Lily felt shocked by her trembling body, which indirectly showed her fear of Ryle and the physical injury she got to her head was the effect of physical violence.

From the above description, it can be concluded that Lily was not just physically abused by her husband once or twice. Lily did not expect her home life to be so horrible for her. The physical violence she experienced resulted in physical injuries to her, deep disappointment in Ryle, emotional uncontrollability, and fear of Ryle.

4.1.2 Emotional Violence

Emotional violence is violence that is done verbally by instilling fear in someone through harsh words, blaming, denial, demeaning, and manipulating the truth. Emotional violence can be found in the violence Lily Bloom received.

He crumbles the number in his fist. "I thought. 'Huh. That's weird. Lily doesn't hide things from me.'" He stands up and picks up my phone. "So I called it." He tightens his fist around the phone. "He's lucky I got his fucking voice mail." He chunks my phone clear across the room and it crashes against the wall, shattering to the floor. (Hoover, 2016: 173-174)

Emotional violence occurs when Ryle finds someone's cell phone number in Lily's cell phone case when he accidentally drops Lily's cell phone, causing the cell phone case to come loose. Ryle, being curious, then tries to call the number, which turns out to be Atlas' number. Feeling disappointed and angry with Lily because he thought Lily was still in a relationship with Atlas, his first love, he slammed Lily's cell phone on the floor to show that he did not like what he knew. The above emotional violence has an effect on Lily. "There's a three-second pause where I think this could go one of two ways. He's going to leave me. Or he's going to hurt me" (Hoover, 2016: 174). The quotation shows the effects of emotional violence, namely the fear that came when Ryle slammed his cell phone and felt intimidated by Ryle's treatment, making her think if Ryle was going to leave her or hurt her. The emotional violence occurred again when they debated whether or not to stay in Boston.

He was offered a job in Minnesota at the Mayo Clinic and he wants us to move there. He said Mass General is rated the second best neurological hospital in the world. Mayo Clinic is number one. He said he never intended to stay in Boston forever. ... I can't leave Boston. The fight

continued to escalate and both of us were getting angrier by the second. At one point, he knocked a vase full of flowers off the table and onto the floor. (Hoover, 2016: 186)

The above quotation can be described as Ryle finally realizing his career dream by getting an offer to work at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, opening their debate by inviting Lily to move to Minnesota. Lily, who disagrees with Ryle, has a reason why she can't move from Boston, especially since she can't leave her mother and her flower shop. Ryle, not happy with Lily's opinion, gets angry and knocks over a vase of flowers. The incident made Lily feel the effects. "I was scared, wondering if I had made the right decision to stay" (Hoover, 2016: 186). The effect Lily received was her fear, which made her recall the previous violent incident and feel intimidated by thinking about whether her choice was the right one.

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the emotional violence that happened to Lily began as a minor argument that was exaggerated into emotional violence. However, it had a major impact on Lily with her fear, trauma, and intimidation.

4.1.3 Verbal Violence

Verbal violence is violence that targets a person's feelings by saying harsh words, yelling at them, or demeaning them without doing anything physical. It can happen to anyone, even in a household. Verbal violence is found in Lily Bloom where her husband swears at her.

"You fell," he says calmly. "About five minutes ago. Right after I found out what a fucking liar I married." He places something on my pillow next to me. "If you need anything, I'm sure you can call this number." I look at the crumpled up piece of paper by my head that holds Atlas's phone number. "Ryle," I sob. What is happening? I hear the front door slam. (Hoover, 2016: 175)

The above quotation shows that Ryle gave Lily an expletive, clearly insulting Lily by saying that she was a lying asshole. The words were said by Ryle because of his jealousy of Atlas, even though Lily never lied or cheated on him. Lily, who tried to explain to Ryle, was unable to do so because Ryle left her by slamming the door. The incident had an effect on Lily.

My whole world comes crashing down around me. "Ryle," I whisper to no one. I cover my face with my hands and I cry harder than I've ever cried. I am destroyed. Five minutes. That's all it takes to completely destroy a person. A few minutes pass. Ten, maybe? I can't stop crying. I still haven't moved from the bed. I'm scared to look in the mirror. I'm just...scared. (Hoover, 2016: 176)

It is clear from the quotation above that the effect of emotional violence on Lily is to destroy her feelings, make her depressed and hurt by what Ryle has done, and make her fear Ryle. The crying that Lily could not stop showed how devastated she was. The inability to see herself in the mirror was an effect that affected her self-confidence and caused her to hate herself. This was the second time Lily had experienced this incident.

“Why is he still here, Lily?” His voice isn't as composed as it was in the kitchen. He's really angry now. “He's in everything. The magnet on the fridge. The journal in the box I found in our closet. The fucking tattoo on your body that used to be my favorite goddamn part of you!” (Hoover, 2016: 200)

Ryle's yelling is a form of verbal violence. His excessive jealousy that does not go away makes him yell at Lily when he reads Lily's old diary and learns that Atlas is a significant person for Lily, making him jealous and angry. His yelling showed his emotions and cornered Lily. So Lily felt afraid and unable to explain to Ryle. The effect of verbal abuse was also felt by Lily. “Ryle.” I beg. “I can explain.” Tears streak down my temples and into my hair. “You're angry. Please don't hurt me. Walk away, and when you come back, I'll explain.” Ryle's screaming is verbal violence that has an effect on Lily, namely her fear, with her screams begging him not to hurt her, making her feel intimidated and frustrated.

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the verbal violence experienced by Lily occurred because of Ryle's jealousy and uncontrolled emotions, while it could have an effect on Lily, namely her fear of Ryle, intimidation that made her beg Ryle, and could also affect her mentally.

4.1.4 Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a situation in which a person is forced to engage in sexual activity to satisfy his or her desires. This violent behavior can cause physical injury to the partner's sensitive body parts. In this novel, we find sexual violence against Lily.

His hand grips my ankle and he yanks me until I'm beneath him. “I'm not angry, Lily,” he says, his voice disturbingly calm now. “I just think I haven't proved to you how much I love you. “His body comes down against mine and he takes my wrists with one hand above my head, pressing them against the mattress. “Ryle, please.” I'm sobbing, trying to push him off of me with any part of my body. “Get off me. Please.” No, no, no, no. “I love you, Lily,” he says, his words crashing against my cheek. “More than he ever did. Why can't you see that?” (Hoover, 2016: 201)

Based on the above quotation, Ryle pulled Lily and forced her to have sex on the grounds that he wanted to show how much he loved Lily. The treatment was done by Ryle, again due to his jealousy, which made him angry, so he vented everything by forcibly having sexual intercourse with Lily. It can be seen that Lily refuses to have intercourse with Ryle, while a good sexual relationship should be with both partners who are both willing. It can be concluded that the above quote is sexual violence. Sexual violence has several effects on Lily.

I release a quick breath, and then drag in more air. I start shaking my head. and when his arms come down around me. I cry harder than I knew my body was even capable of. He holds me the entire time I cry. He holds me through my hatred. I did this to myself. I allowed this' to happen to me. (Hoover, 2016: 206)

The above quotation is one of the effects of the sexual violence experienced by Lily, knowing that she was declared pregnant after the sexual violence made her shocked and hate herself for doing it. Her shock when she found out about the declaration made her think for a moment that she did not want her child and had a fear that her child would have the same character as her husband. Not only that, but Lily was still feeling the effects when she was in the bathroom.

I remain in the bathroom for thirty minutes. Some of those minutes are spent staring at my reflection in the mirror. Some of those minutes are spent in the shower. The rest are spent over the toilet as I make myself sick with thoughts of the last several hours. I cry so hard, I don't even make a noise. I immediately want to cry again, so I force myself off the bed. I focus on the hollowness in my stomach as I use the bathroom, and tell myself I can cry after I eat something. I need to eat before I make myself sick again. (Hoover, 2016: 208-209)

The quotation above is a statement from Lily, who is lamenting herself in front of the mirror, thinking that her life is so sad now, thinking of some bad memories that are affecting her health and emotionally with her sadness that she cannot control. When she writes a letter to Ellen, or arguably writes her diary, there are words where she feels she has lost confidence in how people will react to her current situation.

The things I've thought about women like me are now what others would think of me if they knew my current situation. "How could she love him after what he did to her? How could she contemplate taking him back?" It's sad that those are the first thoughts that run through our minds when someone is abused. (Hoover, 2016: 214)

Lily's thoughts about herself and how people responded to her, because after what her husband did to her, she felt depressed and unsure of herself, so she lost confidence in herself. The effect of Lily's emotional instability.

I'm lying on Atlas's guest bed, staring up at the ceiling. It's a normal bed. Really comfortable, actually. But it feels like I'm on a water bed. Or maybe a raft, adrift at sea. And I scale over these huge waves, each of them carrying something 24 different. Some are waves of sadness. Some are waves of anger. Some are waves of tears. Some are waves of sleep. (Hoover, 2016: 215)

The emotional waves that Lily experienced made her uncontrollable, she suddenly felt sad for herself, some time she felt angry at herself, which suddenly shed tears by accident, and after that she felt sleepy. This is the effect of violence on a person's emotional state.

Aside from the sexual assault and its aftermath, knowing that Lily was now pregnant with Ryle's child made her think many times about making the right decision for her and her future child with Ryle.

"I would never keep you from your child, Ryle. I'm happy you want to be involved. But..." He leans forward and buries his face in his hands with that last word. "What kind of mother would I be if a small

part of me doesn't have concern in regard to your temper? The way you lose control? How do I know something won't set you off while you're alone with this baby?" So much agony floods his eyes. I think they might burst like dams. He begins to shake his head adamantly. "Lily, I would never..." "I know. Ryle. You would never intentionally hurt your own child. I don't even believe it was intentional when you hurt me, but you did. (Hoover, 2016: 260)

The quotation above explains how violence can affect children. Lily's fear that if she continued her relationship with Ryle, and if Ryle continued to be violent toward her, it would affect her child, made Lily think twice about making a decision. From that decision, for the sake of her child's bright future, Lily decided to separate from Ryle without limiting Ryle's love for her child later.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the representation of domestic violence in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us*, focusing on the experiences of the protagonist, Lily Bloom, who becomes entangled in a cycle of abuse that parallels her childhood trauma. Using Tulangow's typology of domestic violence, the research identified and analyzed four primary forms of abuse portrayed in the narrative: physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual violence. Each form is illustrated through specific incidents that not only contribute to the narrative tension but also offer a realistic portrayal of the complex and often concealed nature of domestic abuse. The findings reveal that domestic violence is not limited to physical harm but also encompasses deeply rooted psychological and emotional consequences, including fear, trauma, low self-esteem, and emotional instability. The narrative further illustrates how victims internalize blame, struggle with societal judgment, and face moral dilemmas when deciding whether to remain in or leave an abusive relationship. Lily's eventual decision to end the cycle of violence—motivated by a desire to protect her child from similar trauma—represents a significant act of agency and resilience. By presenting these themes within a popular romance novel, Hoover contributes to the broader social discourse on domestic violence, using fiction as a powerful medium to foster empathy, raise awareness, and challenge harmful norms surrounding intimate partner abuse. This study underscores the value of literary texts as both cultural artifacts and educational tools in understanding the nuanced realities of domestic violence. Future research may consider comparative analyses of similar themes across multiple literary works or explore how genre conventions influence the portrayal of abuse and recovery.

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EXPLORING THE PROTAGONIST'S SUFFERING IN DENNIS BOCK'S *THE ASH GARDEN*

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Abstract

This research explores the multidimensional suffering of the protagonist, Emiko Amai, in Dennis Bock's novel *The Ash Garden*, using Quilao's theoretical framework on human suffering. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, the study identifies five types of suffering—physical, psychological, social, existential, and ethical—as reflected in Emiko's experiences before, during, and after the Hiroshima bombing. The analysis highlights how Emiko, as a war survivor, embodies the traumatic effects of violence, displacement, and physical disfigurement. Her journey reveals not only the pain and isolation endured in the aftermath of war but also the gradual process of resilience and self-redefinition. Emiko's coping strategies—both physical and psychological—demonstrate how human beings attempt to restore meaning and identity in the face of profound loss. By situating her suffering within a literary and humanistic context, this study contributes to the discourse on trauma narratives and deepens the understanding of war-induced suffering in postmodern literature.

Keywords: *Dennis Bock; literary analysis; postwar fiction; psychological resilience; trauma literature;*

1. Introduction

Human life is often marked by unavoidable challenges and suffering, particularly during times of conflict. War, as a form of large-scale violence, brings profound physical, psychological, and social consequences. According to Cassell (2004, in Tate & Pearlman, 2019, p. 96), suffering is defined as a state of severe distress resulting from events that threaten a person's integrity. It encompasses loss, both tangible and intangible, and often leads to a sense of absence and disconnection (Frank, 2001). The World Health Organization (2016) reports that one in sixteen individuals in conflict zones experiences mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Children, in particular, are highly vulnerable to the consequences of war. Their dependency on caregivers and disruption in education add to their developmental trauma. Barbara (2006, p. 891) identifies several war-related impacts on refugee children, including death, injury, disability, illness, sexual exploitation, psychological trauma, and cultural loss. These factors can cause lasting fear, instability, and identity disruption.

Suffering, as Cassell (2004) argues, is also shaped by personal interpretation. Two individuals experiencing similar symptoms may process and respond to suffering differently. The psychological impact can, in some cases, overshadow the physical symptoms, ultimately threatening relationships, diminishing desire, and eroding the sense of life's purpose.

The focus of this study is the suffering caused by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945—an event intended to force Japan's surrender before the Soviet Union entered the Pacific War. As Brown (1995, p. 2) reports, approximately 78,000 of the 343,000 people in Hiroshima were killed, while more than 51,000 were injured or went missing. The destruction extended beyond immediate casualties, leaving long-term trauma and homelessness in its wake.

Such historical tragedies are often explored through literature. Prose, particularly in the form of the novel, serves as a vehicle for expressing human experiences and social concerns. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, prose refers to written language in its ordinary form, excluding poetry. Ate (1972) further categorizes prose into narrative and non-narrative forms, with novels falling into the former. Through character, conflict, and narrative, novels offer insight into the human condition.

Characters are central to any narrative. Laughlin (1989, p. 375) notes that fictional characters may serve as heroes, villains, allies, or victims. They are typically divided into major and minor roles, with the protagonist playing the central role in driving the narrative. Minor characters, meanwhile, serve to support or illuminate the protagonist.

In this context, Dennis Bock's novel *The Ash Garden* (2001) offers a compelling portrayal of human suffering through its protagonist, Emiko Amai. As a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, Emiko embodies the multifaceted impact of war—physically disfigured and emotionally scarred, she endures loss, trauma, and identity fragmentation. Her suffering is compounded by her inability to seek justice or closure. She becomes a symbol of silent endurance, struggling to move forward in the aftermath of catastrophe.

This research focuses on Emiko's experience of suffering and the strategies she employs to survive. The study is guided by Quilao's (2018) theoretical framework, which identifies five dimensions of human suffering: physical, psychological, social, existential, and ethical. Through this lens, the research aims to explore how suffering is represented in literature and how it contributes to broader discussions of trauma, healing, and human resilience.

The significance of this study lies in three key aspects: first, it highlights a universal human issue—suffering—through the lens of a literary narrative; second, it examines the enduring impact of war on individuals, particularly women and children; and third, it contributes to the academic discourse on trauma literature by applying Quilao's framework to a contemporary postwar novel. By understanding Emiko's journey, readers are encouraged to reflect on the broader implications of war, memory, and recovery in both personal and collective contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Protagonist

One of the intrinsic elements included in a literary work is character. As stated by Minderop (2005: 2), character can also be a person, community, race, mental and

moral attitude, the quality of reasoning, and famous people and characters in literature. Characters are divided into three roles, such as protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist (Lutters, 2006: 81). The protagonist becomes the central figure in the scene. Meanwhile, an antagonist is the opposite of a protagonist. It represents negativity in the story. When a protagonist is created to elicit sympathy, an antagonist is created to elicit hatred from the audience. Another supporting character is the tritagonist. Its role can be that of a protagonist's supporter or opponent. This character is called the mediator as it defends the figure they accompany. In a literary work, the story revolves around the protagonist. It becomes more important than the other characters involved. In other words, the protagonist becomes the central figure of the story. Those events that occur in the story are viewed from the perspective of the protagonist.

There are some definitions of protagonist. As stated by Perrine & Arp (1988: 42), the protagonist is the central character in the conflict, whether a sympathetic or an unsympathetic person. Protagonist, according to Gagan Raj (1991: 134), refers to the first actor in a play. This definition is similar to the previous one, as stated by Arthur Ganz (1990: 27), in which the protagonist is defined as the first actor who plays the leading part. Based on the definitions, it can be inferred that the protagonist is the main character who becomes the central part of a literary work.

2.2 Suffering

Suffering is an intimate experience. Meanwhile, the sufferer is often isolated from her surroundings and peers (Tate & Pearlman, 2019: 96). It can lead to frustration and withdrawal (Back, 2015). The definition of suffering is the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person (Cassell, 2004). There are various causes of suffering, such as pain, humiliation, diagnostic uncertainty, constrained perceptions of the future, or the actions of the physician, and it can occur with either the threat of injury or the actual injury to a person's intactness or integrity (Cassell, 1991).

Frank (2001) stated that suffering is unspeakable and impossible to reveal. Suffering is a loss. Through the experience of suffering, the sufferer has the opportunity to find the meaning of life, even though it is challenging and painful (Quilao, 2018). This is related to what Frankl (1992) has stated that life has meaning up to the last moment of one's life when people accept the challenge to suffer bravely.

According to Quilao (2018), suffering is not a homogenous concept. Instead, it is a diffuse term that includes innumerable ways of dealing with depression, pain, loss, and adversity.

There is an article written by Quilao (2018) that states that suffering arouses painful isolation and the feeling of being worthless. The unbearable feeling of fear that the sufferer might burden and bring shame to their family is so unbearable that it may lead to the desire to commit suicide. In this article, it is said that suffering occurs when an impending destruction of the person is perceived. This suffering continues until the threat of disintegration has passed or the integrity of the sufferer can be restored in some other manner.

As stated by Shaygan and Jaber (2022), sufferers have different reactions to pain. Internal reactions are invisible to other people. For example, sufferers have terrible thoughts about their pain, thinking that it is their fault and that the suffering cannot be healed anymore. These terrible thoughts can cause sufferers to become overwhelmed with sorrow and grief. Sometimes, they fear being unable to fit in with their peers.

Meanwhile, other sufferers can have positive internal reactions to pain, such as trying to replace negativity with positivity in order to not become more anxious.

The other reaction to pain is an external reaction. It is observable or can be seen by people. For example, when sufferers consider that their pain lasts too long and the help that they receive is ineffective, it leads to aggression. The hormonal change causes aggression. Another example of an external reaction to pain is crying, since sufferers feel that they accept less empathy from people.

2.3 The Kinds of Suffering

According to Quilao (2018), there are five dimensions of suffering: physical, psychological, social, existential, and ethical. These dimensions of suffering can be described as follows:

2.3.1 Physical Suffering

Physical suffering is the suffering experienced when a physical symptom is overlooked (Quilao, 2018). Forms of physical suffering can take the form of hunger, disability, disease, thirst, etc. As in disease, excessive pain can cause any number of symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, and dependency on family. This can also cause sufferers relationships with other people to become bad. The conflict might arise when sufferers feel that their peers do not listen to what they have to say. Being ignored by peers as they consider the pain one has to be not serious impacts sufferers badly. Being an alcoholic to numb the pain, having the desire to stab themselves to cut the pain out, and having a sense of being a burden can lead to hopelessness.

2.3.2 Psychological Suffering

Psychological suffering or psychological distress is a lasting, unsustainable, and unpleasant feeling resulting from a negative appraisal of an inability or deficiency of the self (Meerwijk & Weiss, 2011). One of the reasons it can occur is when sufferers feel isolated from their families. They consider the treatment they receive to not be enough for them as human beings. Therefore, sufferers feel neglected.

Depression is a consequence that sufferers might have as a result of losing good health, experiencing excessive pain, or having a traumatic life experience. Sufferers also feel embarrassed when they feel that health professionals do not listen to them. (Hagedorn & Quinn, 2004). Therefore, health professionals are required to serve with openness and an approachable attitude so that sufferers will not feel ashamed.

2.3.3 Social Suffering

Social suffering, as stated by Woods et al. (2019), is collective and individual human suffering associated with life conditions shaped by powerful social forces. Family and peers are often considered a gift to sufferers. But if the support is not enough, it affects those who suffer. It can impact bad relationships, insensitive communication, and the fear of being rejected by loved ones. Therefore, family and peers have a crucial role.

2.3.4 Existential Suffering

Existential suffering is an experience that includes the following: loss of personal meaning, loss of purpose in life, fear of death, anxiety, hopelessness, fear of

burdening others, loss of dignity, and loneliness (Boston et al., 2011). Sufferers usually feel worthless, which may result in a desire for a hastened death (Quilao, 2018).

2.3.5 Ethical Suffering

Ethical suffering is a loss of dignity (Quilao, 2018). A person who faces ethical suffering feels that their respect or value is being violated. For example, according to Baumann et al. (2013) in their research, two men with Hansen's disease in Korea lived in a prison-like shelter. It violates a human's dignity. Therefore, this case is included as one of ethical suffering.

2.4 Overcoming Suffering

Pain caused by suffering takes a long time for a person to heal. Pain is an unpleasant sensory or emotional experience. Therefore, sufferers attempt to find an effective strategy to manage their pain. According to Shaygan & Jaber (2022), there are three factors that affect pain management: gender, family education, and the subjective burden of pain.

First, gender plays a big role in managing pain. Males and females have different personality traits. When the majority of males avoid expressing their pain, females have a more difficult situation, and they try to cope with pain by crying. The way they cope with emotional pain is different than the way they cope with physical pain. Males are more impatient and aggressive, while females are calmer.

Second, family education plays a significant role in managing pain. Family is important. Based on his or her tolerance, an individual who has faced difficulties since childhood has a greater pain tolerance. A child with a father also tolerates pain better than one who does not.

Third, there is the subjective burden of pain. Sufferers' perception of pain plays an important role in managing pain. Therefore, patients are always encouraged to believe that they can overcome the pain.

To overcome suffering, according to Devik et al. (2013), each person needs to demonstrate a strong will and hope for survival. One must get used to it or accept it. People have strategies to conquer the pain and fight it. There are two attempts to overcome pain as in suffering described according to Shaygan and Jaber (2022), namely physical and psychological strategies.

2.4.1 Physical Strategies

According to Shaygan and Jaber (2022), the strategies applied by sufferers to manage pain are analgesics, heat therapy, and topical ointments. The use of herbal medicine is also recommended in this strategy.

2.4.2 Psychological Strategies

Besides physical strategies, there are psychological strategies. By using this strategy, sufferers attempt to forget the pain by thinking about other things. The activities they can do to avoid or distract themselves from pain can be watching television, singing, painting, communicating with friends, going to the beach, going on a trip, keeping pets, etc. The two examples of psychological strategies are described as follows:

a. Resilience

Even though sufferers have survived the bad experiences in their lives, that does not mean that the negativity will haunt them forever. According to the perspective of the American Psychological Association (2014) in a research article by Denckla et al. (2020), resilience is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. Therefore, in developing resilience, sufferers think that their pain is trivial, so they try to tolerate it.

Resilient people consider themselves survivors because they believe that when the situation gets hard, they are still able to keep going. They still recognize and experience strong emotions like anger, sadness, and fear. Those emotions are controlled until they pass.

Resilient people have the ability to regulate their emotions. They have good coping skills to deal with their problems. Sufferers treat themselves with kindness so that they have good self-acceptance when they face problems in life.

The availability of a support system plays an important role in overcoming suffering. It empowers sufferers to move forward and adapt to the situation.

b. Optimism.

By using this strategy, the participants involved in the research done by Shaygan and Jaberi (2022) attempt to have positive thoughts that the pain or suffering will not be permanent. So, they could avoid stress, anxiety, and negative thoughts. Therefore, they are optimistic about continuing their lives.

As stated by Lyubomirsky (2007: 102), there are six approaches to increasing personal optimism. First, imagining a bright future and setting goals. Second, looking for the good things that will happen. Third, savoring the presence. In line with this, Seligman (2002) defines savoring as focusing on thoughts or behaviors that create, intensify, and prolong enjoyment. Fourth, reframing the negativity and replacing it with positive thoughts. Fifth, contemplating the alternatives by thinking back on positive moments in life. Sixth, being grateful helps people cope with stress.

In order to overcome the suffering, the sufferers expect support. There are three kinds of supports, namely as follows:

a. Family support.

Sufferers expect their family to provide them with sympathy or to provide them with professionals if needed. For example, talking about good memories, playing, giving massages, and telling stories are all kinds of kindness that a family member can give.

b. Peer support.

Sufferers expect their peers to never avoid them. They require their friends to give them emotional support without making fun of them.

c. Spiritual management.

Some sufferers consider resorting to spiritual or religious rituals to make themselves feel better. For example, a sufferer likes listening to someone recite the Holy Book.

3. Research Method

Bhattacharya (2006) defines research as a careful and systematic process aimed at solving problems and acquiring new knowledge. In line with this, research design, as explained by Hakim (2000), involves the aims, purposes, intentions, and plans of a study, all within the practical constraints of location, time, financial resources, and the availability of the researcher. According to Asenahabi (2019), the research design also determines the type of analysis to be conducted in order to obtain the desired results.

Generally, research design is categorized into three main approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. This study adopts a **descriptive qualitative method**, as the analysis centers on quotations extracted from Dennis Bock's novel *The Ash Garden*. Mitchell and Jolley (2007) state that the purpose of descriptive research is to test hypotheses and answer questions. However, unlike experimental research, descriptive research is not designed to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Instead, it is more appropriate for answering questions related to "what," "who," and "where" (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007, p. 234). Similarly, Kim et al. (2017) argue that the descriptive qualitative method produces data that portray the "who, what, and where" of events or experiences from a subjective perspective.

The subject of this study is the protagonist's experience as a sufferer. The descriptive qualitative method is considered appropriate for this research because it focuses on exploring "**what**" kinds of suffering are depicted and "**how**" the protagonist overcomes them. Thus, the analysis and conclusions are presented within the framework of this method.

In terms of data collection, this study follows several systematic steps to ensure the validity and relevance of the findings. The primary data are drawn from *The Ash Garden*, specifically by identifying and highlighting passages that relate to the protagonist's experiences of suffering. The process involves:

1. Identifying key excerpts that reflect different types of suffering;
2. Gathering textual evidence that corresponds to these themes, supported by relevant theoretical perspectives; and
3. Categorizing the data by grouping the quotations according to the types of suffering and the strategies used to overcome them.

The analysis is presented in the fourth chapter of this research. It begins by classifying the collected data in relation to the research questions. The analytical process includes several steps:

1. Identifying relevant themes in the data,
2. Organizing the data according to the stated problems,
3. Interpreting and explaining the findings, and
4. Drawing conclusions based on the analysis.

This structured approach enables the researcher to comprehensively explore the dimensions of suffering experienced by the protagonist in *The Ash Garden*, using a descriptive qualitative method that aligns with the aims of the study.

4. Discussion

4.1 Kinds of Suffering

4.1.1 Physical Suffering

Physical suffering is one of the kinds of suffering described in Quilao's theory. The symptoms of this kind of suffering are visible to others. The examples of physical suffering quoted from Dennis Bock's novel *The Ash Garden* are as follows:

I was left with only my grandfather to take care of me, a scarred and disfigured girl of six with only half a face. (Bock, 2001, p. 23)

The quote above explains that Emiko's parents passed away due to the Hiroshima bombing. Before her grandfather dies, her younger brother is also hospitalized. Therefore, her grandfather is the only family member who can take care of her. As a result of the bombing and radiation, her face is broken. As a result of this, Emiko's grandfather asks her to go to America for reconstructive surgery. In line with this, the aftereffects of the medication are quoted below:

Many nights I could not sleep for the pain that occupied my body like a razing army and for the news my grandfather had brought soon after he found us here, almost three weeks after the bomb.
(Bock, 2001, p. 29)

4.1.2 Psychological Suffering

The effects of the atomic bombing caused Emiko, the protagonist, to have a broken face. Scars are all over her skin. Anger, fear, guilt, and shame are felt by her. Due to her suffering, she feels unfortunate because she is still alive. Before her grandfather died, he made her promise to begin a journey to America to get surgeries. Emiko's grandfather wants her to get her face back. This is shown in the following quotation:

Before I left for America, he had made me promise I would not, no matter the circumstance, return to him before the surgeons had completed their work and I was again, his beautiful granddaughter.
(Bock, 2001, p. 23)

During the process of recovery, the thoughts of her family being killed at war kill her silently. In America, Emiko gets information that says that her parents were killed at war. She tries to remove as many negative thoughts as she can in order to relax herself.

He told me that our parents had been killed. ... I tried to destroy the image of their deaths that I held in my head. I did all I could to forget the feeling that came over me. (Bock, 2001: 30).

Emiko Amai also faces psychological suffering. Since war made her lose her beautiful face, she is getting used to the idea that she deserves to feel guilty. This is in line with the following quotation:

By the age of fifteen, I was already used to the idea that I was not special, so this knowledge did not disturb me. I was accustomed to the doctors and their tests and to the whispered taunts that followed me wherever I went. "Oni," the other children called me, something like "ogre" or "blackface." I cannot say I blame them; ignorance and fear

had made them treat me this way. I might even have reacted the same way if the shoe had been on the other foot. But it was not.
(Bock, 2001, p. 109)

Because of her terrible condition, people around Emiko often make fun of her. Being called a monster is what she has to face. Based on the quotation, it implies that before this, Emiko found it difficult to accept her condition. But Emiko is getting used to it. She responds to the negativity with ignorance. Emiko, in other words, believes that she deserves to be called ugly. Based on the quotation, Emiko has been facing many pressures in her life.

4.1.3 Social Suffering

Living in a prolonged war makes the sound of sirens, the drone of high-flying airplanes, and men in uniform seem normal. Men are forced to join the army, with an exception in some cases. Emiko's father is unable to join the army because of his health condition. This problem makes Emiko's father feel worthless.

One night I heard my father admit to my mother that he had brought shame to his family and to himself by failing to gain entry into the war. (Bock, 2001, p. 24)

Emiko's father is embarrassed since he is not qualified enough to join the army. He thinks that he has brought shame to his family. In the novel, Emiko is envious because she does not get the same special treatment as her friends whose fathers joined the war. This impact is shown in the following quotation:

It would have been a great honor for us. The fathers of many of the children in our neighborhood were away at war, and at school, these children were awarded a special status that I envied.
(Bock, 2001, p. 26)

From the quote above, it shows that children get different treatment. Having a father who joined the army is considered a big honor. Emiko's friends get special status at school. This problem leads to social suffering, where Emiko feels she is unable to fit in with society. It happens because she cannot make the same sacrifice as other people do during war.

4.1.4 Existential Suffering

The impacts of war experienced by Emiko, the protagonist, lead to existential suffering. Due to unbearable pain, sufferers may doubt their own existence. In the novel, Emiko experiences a loss of purpose in life.

No healed bodies ever left this place. The dead were wheeled away at all hours of the day on that endlessly squeaking gurney. There was no use in trying to obscure their presence from the many children whose home this place had become. Death was now more common than life, and soon those lifeless forms wheeled along the single corridor splitting the ward in half did not matter to me either way.
(Bock, 2001, p. 34)

The above quotation describes Emiko as having witnessed many deaths around her. In the Red Cross Hospital where she is recovering, she rarely sees fully recovered people. She lost her family. She loses her motivation to live. Her grandfather is the only reason she is in America for plastic surgery. But, after her surgery, the nurse tells her that her grandfather died.

Next, in the story, the hopelessness of Emiko, the protagonist, increases. Emiko finds out that her brother Mitsuo is not in bed. She does not even know when or how Mitsuo died. She only remembers that last night she tried to comfort him by telling him stories before bed. Emiko is alone now.

“Your brother died in the night,” the lilac-smelling nurse told me. “I am sorry. Many people have died. You must remain strong.” I closed my eyes and attempted not to cry. (Bock, 2001, p. 39)

4.1.5 Ethical Suffering

Emiko the protagonist feels a loss of dignity when she is in recovery. In this case, the suffering occurs because the person feels their right to be respected has been removed by another person. Dignity is the right of a person to be valued and respected. The ethical suffering that Emiko faces can be shown in the quotation below:

One morning, an American leaned over my back and began to inspect my burns. I was an object of fascination. He spoke to the man beside him, another American. I could not understand their language. The first man touched my shoulder. I turned my head away. He lifted the light gauze that covered my wounds. I bit my lip until it bled—yet his hands continued. He spoke to his colleague with great calm. He did not stop what he was doing to me. Another man approached and began to make photographs. (Bock, 2001, p. 31)

Based on the quotation above, Emiko, the protagonist, feels uncomfortable being treated that way. Most of the time, people holding notebooks and cameras come to Emiko to record what is happening. It triggers her pain, but she chooses to remain silent.

4.2. Overcoming Suffering

4.2.1 Physical Strategies

The use of external medication is important for overcoming suffering. Consuming medicines, applying topical ointments, and doing therapy are needed. In the novel, it shows that Emiko feels down when the nurse tells her about her younger brother's death. Because of her weak condition, the nurse urges her to drink tea in order to feel better. This description can be seen in the quotation below:

I closed my eyes and attempted not to cry. “Take your tea. You must keep your strength.” (Bock, 2001, p. 39)

Emiko, in the novel, is also forced to make a big decision in her life. Her grandfather gets her to fulfill the promise that she is about to get her face restored in America. The process of the surgery is painful. But Emiko is ready to face this challenge in order to fix her broken face. This description can be seen based on the following quotation:

She turned her head back.

Do you know these procedures will mean more time in the hospital?
There will be more operations.
Yes.
Some of these operations will be painful.
Yes.
You are willing to undergo these painful operations?
Yes.
(Bock, 2001, p. 260)

4.2.2 Psychological Strategies

Besides physical strategies, Emiko, the protagonist, also needs psychological strategies in order to survive. To overcome suffering, Emiko attempts to be optimistic that the pain does not last forever. This description can be seen in the following quotation:

Be silent, put your thoughts elsewhere until this goes away. There will be better times. One day, the pain will be gone. (Bock, 2001, p. 38)

From the quote above, it can be explained that even though Emiko suffers alone, she still believes in what her mother says that there will be better times.

But I would never really understand. Clearly, I'd never see things as he did or as he wanted me to. Some facts, I decided, and most lives must remain mysterious and unsolvable. Intentions were forever obscure. But who could look at me now and see more than a burned child, fully grown, held hostage in another world? Who could see beyond the history I have survived and factor into that the loves and terrors and banalities of normal experience? (Bock, 2001, p. 275)

The quotation above shows that Emiko is tormented by the prolonged negativity that has become her question all of this time. She has chosen to keep some things mysterious to be at peace. Emiko realizes she has gone through rough times. The image of her being a burned child whose history is bad keeps remaining in her mind. Emiko realizes that she has survived. She tries to start a new life as a new person.

I would truly never know who I'd been before being brought here. Sure, certain memories of myself would remain; but they suggested another person's life to me now, not my own. Yet somehow, I was not saddened by this thought. Now that the girl I'd been was released from me, I felt unburdened by her pain and solitude and by my need to remain that girl. At once, the stern and brutalized face with which I'd confronted the world was no longer representing me. I was someone else now. My history was no longer my own. (Bock, 2001, p. 276)

The quotation above says that Emiko realizes she cannot forget the terrible events in her life. The memory will always remain. Emiko, as quoted from the novel, tries to learn to accept her fate. Emiko finds that there is hope in her life. She does not draw herself as a disfigured young girl anymore. Meanwhile, she describes herself as a stronger person. Emiko released herself from the negative thoughts that used to be in her mind. She feels free from the burden. She finds her life more peaceful.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of *The Ash Garden* by Dennis Bock through the lens of Quilao's theory of suffering reveals the profound and multifaceted nature of trauma experienced by individuals, especially those deeply affected by war. Emiko, the central character, endures not only physical suffering caused by the Hiroshima bombing and its aftermath, but also grapples with psychological wounds—feelings of anger, shame, guilt, and isolation that linger long after the physical injuries fade. The narrative also uncovers Emiko's social suffering, where societal judgments and unequal treatment based on wartime contributions deepen her sense of exclusion and alienation. Furthermore, her experiences are marked by existential suffering, as repeated encounters with death and loss challenge her sense of meaning and purpose. Lastly, ethical suffering emerges from the loss of dignity and autonomy during her medical treatment, where she is reduced to a spectacle rather than treated with empathy and respect.

Despite the immense pain she faces, Emiko demonstrates resilience through both physical and psychological coping strategies. She endures painful surgeries with determination and combats despair by clinging to the belief that healing—though slow and uncertain—is possible. The novel ultimately portrays suffering not merely as an experience of pain, but as a transformative process that shapes identity, challenges ethical boundaries, and tests the limits of human endurance. Through Emiko's journey, Bock illustrates that recovery from suffering requires not only medical intervention but also emotional strength, dignity, and, above all, the will to move forward despite overwhelming loss.

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ADDRESS SYSTEMS AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN BATU BARA MALAY SOCIAL INTERACTION

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Abstract

Language is more than a communication tool; it embodies cultural identity, social hierarchy, and shared values. In the Batu Bara Malay community, address systems function as structured linguistic expressions of age, rank, kinship, and familiarity, with respect and politeness being integral to interpersonal interactions—especially in addressing elders or individuals of higher status. However, the advent of globalization and social media has introduced new modes of communication among the younger generation, creating tension between traditional norms and emerging language practices. This study investigates the address systems and politeness strategies in the Batu Bara Malay community, focusing on how these are used and transformed in social interaction. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach and linguistic ethnography, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving native speakers across varying ages and social strata. The findings highlight the complex variety of address terms and politeness strategies that reflect deep-rooted cultural values and social order. Despite generational shifts, the community continues to uphold linguistic traditions as a means of preserving cultural identity and maintaining social cohesion.

Keywords: *address system; Batu Bara Malay; cultural values; linguistic ethnography; politeness techniques*

1. Introduction

Human communication encompasses both verbal and nonverbal dimensions. According to Gordon and Druckman (2025), nonverbal communication is best understood within its social and cultural context, underscoring how deeply language is influenced by cultural norms—whether spoken or expressed through gestures, tone, or body movement. In the Batu Bara Malay community, these norms are reflected in verbal strategies such as indirect speech and respectful forms of address, often accompanied by culturally grounded nonverbal cues. Together, these modes of expression reinforce the role of language as both a communicative instrument and a marker of cultural identity.

Batu Bara Malay holds a significant place in Indonesia's rich linguistic and cultural heritage (Efrizah, 2023). Beyond its phonological and structural features, this language functions as a repository of local values and social codes. Notably, the systems

of address and politeness strategies reflect a deeply ingrained respect for age, kinship, and social hierarchy. These communicative practices are not only linguistic in function but are also key mechanisms for maintaining social harmony and cultural continuity.

In everyday interaction, the Batu Bara Malay community employs a nuanced address system grounded in relationships based on age, social rank, familial ties, and levels of familiarity. This is evident in how individuals address elders, respected figures, and those with close emotional connections. The use of specific terms reflects both reverence and interpersonal sensitivity. However, with the rapid pace of technological development and the pervasiveness of social media, traditional forms of address and politeness are increasingly challenged. As Panjaitan and Patria (2023) argue, digital communication has had a profound impact on language use, especially among younger generations, with broader implications for linguistic preservation and the negotiation of cultural identity.

This generational tension reveals a critical intersection between tradition and transformation, as more casual and flexible styles of communication challenge established norms. The shift highlights not only a linguistic evolution but also a sociocultural negotiation wherein younger speakers reinterpret politeness and hierarchy. In a culturally rich and hierarchical society such as that of the Batu Bara Malays, these changes prompt concern over the potential erosion of long-standing values expressed through language.

Given these dynamics, there is an urgent need to study and document the address systems and politeness strategies of the Batu Bara Malay community. Such efforts contribute to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and deepening scholarly understanding of how language evolves in tandem with social change.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the forms and functions of the address system used in social interactions within the Batu Bara Malay community?
2. What politeness strategies are employed in Batu Bara Malay speech practices?
3. How do generational and technological changes influence traditional address systems and politeness norms in this community?

2. Literature Review

The proverb "language reflects a nation" conveys that language mirrors personal and cultural identity, encompassing an individual's character, cognitive patterns, behavioral habits, and intellectual capacity (Rosida, 2024). This notion is strongly reflected in the sociolinguistic practices of Batu Bara Malay community, particularly in their systems of address and politeness strategies. These forms of linguistic expression do not merely facilitate communication but serve as markers of social hierarchy, familial ties, and respect for cultural values. Through specific address terms and polite utterances, speakers embody and reinforce social norms, thereby illustrating how language functions as a reflection of collective identity, as Rosida (2024) suggests. Thus, using address forms and politeness strategies in Batu Bara Malay can be understood as a linguistic representation of the community's cultural worldview and interpersonal ethics.

In line with Efrizah's (2023) findings on the role of accents in Batu Bara Malay communication, which highlight the urgency of preserving the region's linguistic and cultural heritage, this study expands the focus to other sociolinguistic elements, such as

address forms and politeness strategies. These aspects are vital in maintaining Batu Bara Malay community's cultural identity and social harmony.

The study of address systems and politeness strategies in Batu Bara Malay community is best examined through a multidisciplinary theoretical framework. At the core is the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), which introduces the concept of “face” as a fundamental social need that individuals aim to preserve during communication. Their distinction between positive and negative face and the associated politeness strategies provides a valuable lens to understand how speakers in Batu Bara Malay community mitigate potential threats to social harmony through culturally appropriate language use. These strategies are not used arbitrarily but are embedded in a broader sociolinguistic structure. Azizova (2025) states that politeness is a universal element of human communication critical to maintaining social harmony and mutual respect. This principle resonates in the culturally informed interactions within Batu Bara Malay society. As Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) discussed, sociolinguistics explores how language reflects and shapes social structures such as age, status, and kinship. Within the Batu Bara context, specific addresses and polite expressions align with deeply rooted social hierarchies, reinforcing respect, seniority, and familial roles. This sociolinguistic behavior demonstrates that language in this community is more than a communication tool; it symbolizes cultural identity and social cohesion.

Cultural pragmatics further enriches this understanding by explaining how communicative acts are influenced by culturally constructed meanings and social expectations (Alexander, 2004). Batu Bara Malay people do not merely greet or address each other for functional purposes; their linguistic behavior carries symbolic meanings that reflect collective norms, values, and shared history. These speech practices are shaped by implicit cultural scripts, which determine appropriate conduct across various social contexts.

Finally, linguistic anthropology provides a holistic view of how language functions as a component of cultural behavior and identity formation. As Bucholtz and Hall (2004) emphasize, language is instrumental in constructing social identity and transmitting cultural values across generations. In Batu Bara Malay community, the system of address and politeness strategies serves as a cultural mechanism through which societal norms are upheld and the continuity of tradition is ensured.

Together, these theoretical perspectives show that the address systems and politeness strategies in Batu Bara Malay are not merely linguistic phenomena but are also key to understanding the community's cultural logic, social structure, and identity.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive linguistic ethnography method to explain the linguistic behaviors of Batu Bara Malay community, particularly the address system and politeness methods. This approach was chosen because it allows academics to comprehend language within the socio-cultural context of the community in question. According to Yahya, Arif, and Awan (2023), qualitative research in applied linguistics seeks a thorough knowledge of linguistic phenomena within a sociocultural framework. Linguistic ethnography, a popular approach in this discipline, combines ethnographic observation with detailed language analysis to reveal how communication works in everyday interactions. This concept applies primarily to investigating address systems and politeness techniques in Batu Bara Malay society,

where language is inextricably linked to cultural norms, social hierarchy, and interpersonal interactions. Linguistic ethnography allows researchers to analyze how specific address and politeness expressions are contextually ingrained in community members' experiences, revealing how language reflects and maintains traditional values and social harmony. This study was carried out at a village in Batu Bara, especially Batu Bara Malay community in Batu Bara Regency, North Sumatra. Traditional authorities, community leaders, youth, and community members of diverse ages and socioeconomic backgrounds participated in the study. The data collection method utilized was the first to use in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted with key informants familiar with the community's address structure and politeness customs. Then, perform participatory observation. In this scenario, researchers interact directly with the community to monitor the use of address and politeness practices in real-world situations. Following that, documentation was completed by recording and collecting instances of using the address and polite language in various situations within the community. Data was analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2020) interactive analytic model. This model has three major components. The first step is data reduction. The data reduction process entails sorting, simplifying, and translating raw data into a more organized format based on the research topic. The second step is to present data. The reduced data is organized into descriptive narrative forms, tables, and thematic divisions to aid comprehension and analysis. The third step is verification. The third phase understands language patterns and cultural values repeatedly shown in the data and confirming the findings to assure their authenticity. The triangulation methodology of sources and techniques is utilized to ensure data authenticity, which entails comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation from many informants.

4. Discussion

4.1 Address in Batu Bara Malay Community

The address system in the Batu Bara Malay community serves as a linguistic reflection of deeply held social and cultural values. Far beyond mere labels, these forms of address are embedded in complex layers of age hierarchy, kinship networks, and customary social roles. Individuals are addressed differently based on their position within the community, signaling both respect and relational proximity. Age-based terms such as *Mak Long*, *Tok*, *Awak*, *Kau*, *Abang*, and *Adik* function not only to distinguish age categories but also to articulate deference, familiarity, or endearment. For instance, *Mak Long* (aunt) or *Tok* (grandparent) are terms typically reserved for elders and convey a socially expected reverence, while *Awak* and *Kau* denote more informal interactions, with *Kau* being highly context-sensitive and potentially impolite if misused with superiors.

In the domain of kinship, forms such as *Andak*, *Iyong*, *Anga*, *Alang*, *Ido*, *Ucu*, and *Pak Uteh* signal blood relations, birth order, or clan affiliations. These terms are employed not only to identify individuals but also to maintain familial intimacy and uphold the traditional structure of lineage-based respect. The careful use of such terms reinforces emotional closeness while preserving inherited modes of social regulation within families and extended kin groups.

Meanwhile, in formal and customary contexts, titles like *Datuk*, *Tuan*, and *Yang Dipertua* are utilized to signify social rank, institutional authority, or ceremonial status. These forms are crucial in maintaining a polite distance and acknowledging the formal

roles individuals hold in religious, governmental, or communal spheres. Such titles function as performative linguistic tools—bestowing legitimacy and respect while organizing interactions according to established protocols.

These address forms collectively illustrate how language not only communicates identity but also constructs and sustains the social order. According to Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), variations in address forms are clear indicators of an underlying social structure, where language acts as a medium through which values such as hierarchy, respect, and belonging are encoded and reproduced. In the Batu Bara Malay context, the deliberate choice of address term is rarely arbitrary; it is a culturally ingrained strategy that aligns with both normative expectations and interpersonal dynamics. The persistence of these address forms in daily life signifies the community's ongoing commitment to preserving tradition while navigating evolving societal frameworks.

4.2 Politeness Strategy in Language

Politeness strategies in the Batu Bara Malay community play a pivotal role in sustaining harmonious interpersonal relationships and social cohesion. These strategies are culturally situated linguistic behaviors that reflect values such as respect, modesty, and deference. In line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which conceptualizes politeness as a means of managing face—the public self-image that individuals strive to maintain—Batu Bara Malay speakers employ a range of linguistic tactics to preserve both positive and negative face. Positive politeness strategies are used to express solidarity and affirm closeness, while negative politeness strategies aim to show respect by minimizing imposition or threat.

In everyday discourse, indirectness is a hallmark of politeness. Speakers frequently avoid direct commands or refusals, instead opting for softened expressions that reduce the risk of face-threatening acts. For instance, phrases like “*Boleh awak bantu...*” (Would you mind helping...) or “*Maaf nak tanyo...*” (Sorry, may I ask...) illustrate how speakers use hedging and modal verbs to frame requests or inquiries in a non-imposing manner. These utterances are carefully crafted to maintain the interlocutor's autonomy and dignity, aligning with the negative politeness strategies described by Brown and Levinson (1987).

In addition to indirectness, the Batu Bara Malay community relies heavily on ritualized expressions of politeness that mark the beginning and end of conversational exchanges. Greetings such as *Assalamualaikum*, apologies like *maaf yo*, and expressions of gratitude such as *terimo kasih banyak* are commonly used not only as formalities but as symbolic enactments of cultural values. These expressions reflect the community's emphasis on harmony, humility, and mutual respect. As Alexander (2004) notes in his theory of cultural pragmatics, communicative acts are not merely functional but are shaped by shared cultural expectations and social performance. Within the Batu Bara Malay context, such expressions carry layered meanings that reinforce communal norms of courteous behavior.

Moreover, politeness strategies are context-sensitive and vary depending on the interlocutor's age, status, and relationship to the speaker. For example, the same speech act—such as giving advice or making a request—may be linguistically restructured when addressed to an elder versus a peer. Younger speakers are expected to display deference through tone modulation, respectful address forms, and the use of mitigating

language. This reflects the deep interconnection between politeness and social hierarchy, where linguistic behavior is tailored to uphold community ethics.

Importantly, these strategies are not static; they are actively negotiated within the shifting socio-cultural landscape. As younger generations become more exposed to informal and direct styles of communication through digital platforms, there is an observable tension between traditional politeness norms and contemporary language use. While some youth continue to adopt inherited strategies out of respect or obligation, others may inadvertently deviate, leading to intergenerational misunderstandings or perceptions of rudeness. This dynamic demonstrates the evolving nature of politeness in response to broader sociolinguistic influences, raising questions about how core values are adapted or contested over time.

Thus, politeness strategies in the Batu Bara Malay community serve not only to avoid conflict or offense but also to affirm group membership, enact cultural scripts, and sustain the moral fabric of social life. As Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) affirm, such strategies are integral to sociolinguistic behavior, reflecting how language functions as a tool for negotiating social relationships within particular cultural settings.

4.3 Reflected Cultural Value

The address forms and politeness strategies employed by the Batu Bara Malay community are not merely pragmatic tools of interaction but are also emblematic of deeper cultural values embedded in daily life. These linguistic practices encapsulate key dimensions of the community's worldview, particularly in regard to social hierarchy, harmony, and collective identity.

The first and perhaps most prominent cultural value reflected in these practices is respect for hierarchy and seniority. The consistent use of age-specific and status-sensitive address terms, such as *Datuk* for leaders or *Mak Long* for older female relatives, signifies an entrenched belief in the importance of recognizing and honoring one's social position. This linguistic behavior mirrors a hierarchical worldview where age and rank are central to social organization. As Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) observe, such practices are common in communities where language is not only descriptive but prescriptive—defining appropriate behavior in relation to others.

A second core value is the preservation of social harmony through politeness. The avoidance of direct confrontation, reliance on hedging, and frequent use of apologies and gratitude illustrates the community's collective emphasis on maintaining interpersonal equilibrium. These strategies are not incidental but are governed by implicit cultural scripts that prioritize relational balance and emotional sensitivity. Alexander's (2004) theory of cultural pragmatics helps explain this phenomenon: communicative acts are deeply tied to symbolic cultural meanings, and in Batu Bara Malay society, linguistic politeness becomes a ritual performance of social ethics.

The third value manifested in linguistic practice is communal solidarity. The frequent use of inclusive pronouns such as *kami* (we-exclusive), *kito* (we-inclusive), and *awak* (you) in various social contexts reflects a deep-rooted sense of togetherness and collective responsibility. This linguistic preference not only facilitates cooperation but also reinforces a shared identity. As Bucholtz and Hall (2004) note in their work on linguistic anthropology, language plays a constitutive role in shaping group identity and reproducing cultural norms across generations.

These cultural values, as realized through address systems and politeness strategies, function as a form of cultural continuity—preserving traditional norms amid a changing sociolinguistic landscape. Even as modern communication trends begin to alter linguistic behavior, these values remain embedded in language use, offering insight into the community’s efforts to balance heritage and adaptation.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that the address systems and politeness strategies of the Batu Bara Malay community are intricately tied to the social structures and cultural values that define communal life. The use of address terms is closely aligned with indicators of age, familial hierarchy, and social rank, demonstrating a linguistic reinforcement of social order. Likewise, politeness strategies—marked by indirectness, respectful greetings, and honorific language—function as tools for preserving interpersonal harmony and mutual respect. These practices are informed by, and in turn reinforce, broader cultural values such as reverence for hierarchy, social harmony, and collective identity. Drawing on theoretical insights from Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, sociolinguistic frameworks (Holmes, 2013; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015), cultural pragmatics (Alexander, 2004), and linguistic anthropology (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004), this study underscores the multifunctional nature of language in sustaining social cohesion and transmitting cultural heritage. While modernization and digital communication continue to influence younger generations, potentially challenging traditional norms, the Batu Bara Malay community’s enduring use of address systems and politeness strategies illustrates an active negotiation between continuity and change. These linguistic traditions serve not only as communicative conventions but also as cultural mechanisms for maintaining identity, fostering solidarity, and articulating respect in an evolving world. Therefore, beyond its descriptive scope, this study offers broader implications for cultural preservation efforts, language education policy, and intergenerational dialogue, encouraging further inquiry into how traditional linguistic practices can be meaningfully sustained in contemporary societies.

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SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTS AND THEMATIC DEPTH IN ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY'S *THE LITTLE PRINCE*

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Abstract

This study explores the symbolic constructs and thematic intricacies in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, with a particular focus on the novel's most significant symbols and their interpretive depth. Recognizing that literary symbolism often transcends literal meaning, the research aims to analyze how specific symbols in the novel function not only as narrative devices but also as representations of broader philosophical and emotional themes. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study contrasts the denotative meanings of selected symbols with their connotative and symbolic significance, using direct textual evidence from the novel. The analysis reveals that *The Little Prince* is rich in symbolic imagery—such as the fox, the rose, the baobab tree, the desert, and the stars—all of which serve as allegorical elements reflecting themes of love, loss, connection, responsibility, and existential insight. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that these symbolic elements contribute to the novel's enduring emotional resonance and its philosophical depth, inviting readers to engage with its meaning on multiple interpretive levels.

Keywords: *domestication; enlightenment; loneliness; symbolism*

1. Introduction

Symbolism in literature functions as a powerful narrative device, enabling authors to communicate layered meanings and evoke deeper emotional resonance in readers. Through symbolic constructs, writers can express abstract ideas, moral values, and philosophical reflections in a way that transcends literal interpretation. As Green (2013) observes, symbolism intensifies the expressive potential of literary messages, while O'Neal (2013) emphasizes its role in revealing an author's underlying philosophies. A simple statement—such as “The best part of you is your eyes because I can see myself in them”—illustrates how symbolic meaning enhances communication. While one reader may interpret “eyes” literally, others may view them as metaphors for intimacy, reflection, or soul connection (Bayley, 2009).

This research endeavors to explore the symbolic dimensions within Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, a narrative often categorized as a children's book yet celebrated for its philosophical richness and universal appeal. First published in French and English in the United States in 1943, the novel draws from the author's own experiences as a pilot and as a reflective observer of human nature. Despite its simple narrative style, the book contains a wealth of symbolic elements that reflect themes of

love, loneliness, responsibility, and the meaning of life. Critically acclaimed and translated into more than 250 languages, *The Little Prince* has become a literary classic recognized for its allegorical depth and the resonance of its symbols with adult audiences.

This research aims to identify and interpret key symbolic elements in *The Little Prince*, guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the major symbols used in the novel;
2. To interpret the thematic meanings these symbols convey;
3. To explore how these symbolic elements enhance the narrative's philosophical and emotional depth.

To achieve these aims, the study is directed by the following research questions:

1. What are the major symbols employed in *The Little Prince*?
2. What thematic meanings do these symbols represent within the context of the novel?

By addressing these questions, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper literary understanding of Saint-Exupéry's symbolic framework and its role in shaping the novel's enduring significance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Symbol

A symbol is an object, person, or idea that represents something else beyond its literal meaning. Authors create symbols to facilitate a deeper and more direct understanding of complex concepts. An expression can also function as a symbol, conveying individuals' beliefs or feelings about life and death. For example, the Ankh is an Egyptian symbol representing immortality and life (Mark, 2016). Symbols are also prevalent in everyday life, such as a red traffic light signifying "stop" for road safety. Even personal names can serve as symbols for broader concepts. However, symbols are particularly prominent in literary works such as poems, songs, and films (McCormack, 2020).

2.2 Symbolism

Symbolism refers to the literary and artistic movement, theory, or practice associated with the Symbolists of the late 19th century (Akter, 2013). The term "symbolism" was initially applied to the visual arts before its adoption in literary studies. According to Ostashchuk (2017: 88), symbolism is a literary device employed by authors to aid readers in comprehending their works.

2.3 Kinds of Symbol

Sylvan Barnet, in *Literature: Thinking, Reading and Writing Critically* (1997: 906), distinguishes between two primary types of symbols: natural symbols and conventional symbols. Natural symbols derive their meaning from nature and can have varying interpretations across different cultures. For instance, the moon might symbolize wisdom in one culture while representing strength and perseverance in another. In contrast, conventional symbols are widely understood within a particular culture or across many civilizations to represent something beyond their literal form. The traditional interpretation of the heart as a symbol of love is a prime example of a conventional symbol.

Symbols manifest in diverse forms and can be categorized in various ways based on their significance. Christian symbolism, for example, comprises symbols whose meanings are rooted in biblical contexts. An apple, in this tradition, often symbolizes temptation or original sin. Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996) have compiled an extensive study of conventional or traditional symbols. According to their work, some examples include:

- a. **Colors:** (1) Blue: calmness, coolness, peace. (2) Red: vitality, the life principle, bravery, and blood, often associated with fire.
- b. **Nature:** (1) Summer: maturity, knowledge. (2) Oak tree: strength, wisdom. (3) Moon: a feminine symbol.
- c. **Directions:** (1) West: the land of evening, old age, and the setting sun. (2) South: the side on the Sun's left, associated with fire, warmth, and comfort.
- d. **Weather:** (1) Winds and storms: violent human emotions. (2) Thunder: the voice of God or gods.
- e. **Animals:** (1) Fox: slyness, cleverness. (2) Salmon: instinct, sacred wisdom.
- f. **Walls:** (1) Barriers: separation between people, isolation from the world.
- g. **Human body parts:** (1) Bones: the framework of the human body; containing bone marrow, they symbolize strength and virtue. (2) Eyes: windows to the soul.
- h. **Clothing:** (1) Mask: externalized demonic tendencies. (2) Cloak: a symbol of human trickery.
- i. **Objects:** (1) Ladder: symbols of ascension and realization of potential. (2) Chain: symbolizes bonds connecting heaven and earth, uniting extremes and beings.
- j. **Journeys:** (1) Quest: often represents the search for truth, peace, or immortality.
- k. **Settings:** (1) Forest: a place of evil or mystery. (2) An isolated place: loneliness.

3. Research Method

The researchers employed a qualitative research method to identify and interpret the symbolic meanings within Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novel, *The Little Prince*. This approach is suitable for gaining an in-depth understanding of the subject matter, as qualitative research focuses on gathering and interpreting non-numerical data to explore human and social contexts (Adedoyin, 2020). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative methods are valuable for developing theories when existing ones are limited or fail to capture the complexity of the problem, situations where quantitative research with its numerical and statistical analysis is not appropriate.

Data collection involved several key steps. Initially, the researchers engaged in a close reading of the novel, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, which served as the primary data source. This thorough reading process allowed for an initial immersion in the text and the identification of potential symbolic elements. Subsequently, the researchers identified specific data relevant to the study's focus on symbolism. This involved highlighting and categorizing information from both the primary source (the novel itself) and secondary sources to distinguish pertinent data from non-relevant material. The primary data consisted of words, sentences, and dialogues extracted directly from *The Little Prince* that exhibited symbolic qualities. Complementing this, the researchers gathered secondary data from various books, e-books, magazines, e-journals, dictionaries, and articles that were related to the study of symbolism and provided supporting context.

The process of data analysis, a crucial step in research, involved making sense of the textual data obtained from the novel (Creswell, 2007). The researchers analyzed the collected data, which is presented in a subsequent chapter of this study. This analysis was conducted by classifying the identified symbolic elements into subcategories that directly addressed the research questions of this study. The researchers began by questioning the specific symbols present in *The Little Prince* and their corresponding meanings. To answer these questions, the researchers systematically examined the novel to uncover and interpret the intended symbolism.

4. Discussion

4.1.1 Types of symbols found in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery

After analyzing Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novel, *The Little Prince*, the researchers identified two major categories of symbols: Animal Symbols and Natural Symbols. Drawing upon Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant's (1996) theory of symbols, the researchers individually describe each of these categories. The Animal Symbol primarily focuses on the Fox, while the Natural Symbols encompass the Desert, Stars, Baobabs, and the Rose. To ensure readers grasp the fundamental meaning of these symbols, the researchers initially discuss the denotative meaning of each within the first one or two paragraphs of the analysis. Subsequently, the significance of these two symbol categories is explored in the following section. Finally, the researchers categorize each symbol according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's theory. These are the two primary types of symbolism found in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*.

4.1.2 Symbols of Animal

4.1.2.1 Fox

Foxes, small to medium-sized omnivorous animals belonging to the Canidae family, are characterized by their long, bushy tails, pointed, slightly upturned noses, upright, triangular ears, and flattened skulls. The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), with approximately 47 recognized subspecies, is the most widespread and prevalent species (Lloyd, 1981). Found across the globe, foxes' reputation for cunning has made them prominent figures in popular culture and mythology in numerous countries. While a fox can live up to 10 years in the wild, their average lifespan is typically between one and three years. Unlike many canids, foxes are not always pack animals; they often live in small families, although some species, such as Arctic foxes, are known to be solitary.

Despite its brief appearance, the fox plays a crucial role in *The Little Prince*, imparting wisdom to the prince, which is then shared with the readers. The little prince's initial encounter with the fox is marked by the following words:

"You are very pretty to look at." (Saint-Exupery, 1943: 5).

One of the most crucial things he says to the young prince is:

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." (Saint-Exupery, 1943: 36).

The fox approaches the young prince and asks him to "tame" him the first time they meet. When the prince asks what the word means, the fox explains that 'taming' means 'making a connection'. In the process of their "taming," he continues, they will begin to depend on each other and develop a sense of each other's importance. This can be seen in the following monologue:

“To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world...” (Saint-Exupery, 2943: 58)

The fox describes what being tame is and how it transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary through lengthy rituals. The little prince concurs with the fox's assertions, so he starts the routine of visiting the fox's home daily to form close bonds. The Little Prince occasionally uses different rituals to tame the fox. The Little Prince simply wants to tame the fox; the fox does not desire the Little Prince. The Little Prince is unaware of the consequences of taming the fox for the fox. This can be seen in the following monologue:

“... but if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? ...”
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 58)

And when the hour of his departure drew near, the fox said that he would cry. The Little Prince had never wished for the fox to suffer harm. But the fox explained that every time he missed the little prince, he would see a cornfield as bright as his hair. Additionally, he claimed that the Little Prince's footsteps would forever be heard in his heart. That is why, in *The Little Prince*, the fox symbolizes cleverness.

In the novel *The Little Prince*, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's theory, the fox symbolizes slyness and cleverness, and the fox is categorized as a symbol of nature (1996: 50). This is because the fox was the one who taught the little prince an understanding of what it means to have a connection with someone. The fox tells him that this interaction creates a vital link between the tamer and the tamed; rather than being like anything else, a thing's or a person's relationship to another thing or person makes it special.

4.1.3 Symbols of Natures

There are 4 symbols that the researchers found in *The Little Prince* novel, such as:

4.1.3.1 Desert

In the novel, the desert represents an environment that is both beautiful and desolate. The word "desert" originates from an Egyptian hieroglyph pronounced "tésert" and the Latin verb "deserere," meaning "to abandon." This etymology informs our current understanding of the word "desert" (Middleton, 2009: 1-2). In *The Little Prince*, the Sahara Desert serves as the story's primary setting. Covering nine million square kilometers in North Africa, the Sahara is the world's largest hot desert. Due to its vast size and location spanning ten North African countries, different regions of the Sahara are known by various names, such as the Ténéré desert, the Libyan desert, the Egyptian desert, the Nubian desert, and the Bayuda desert (Middleton, 2009: 7). The term "Sahara" itself comes from the Arabic word for "desert." Located in North Africa, the

Sahara Desert experiences extreme temperature fluctuations, with daytime highs reaching 50 degrees Celsius and nighttime lows dropping to 0 degrees. Consequently, the desert is intensely hot during the day and bitterly cold at night.

The aviator narrator of *The Little Prince* experiences a plane crash in the Sahara Desert. Unfortunately, he was flying alone when his plane's engine failed. To survive, the pilot works independently to repair his aircraft. The harsh temperatures of the Sahara limit the flora and fauna that can survive there, resulting in scarce food and water resources for humans. Prolonged exposure to this environment can lead to death from thirst and hunger. While humans can survive without food for an extended period, water is essential for survival. In a typical climate, a person cannot survive without water for more than a week (Burch, 2021), but in an environment as extreme as the Sahara, survival without water would only be a matter of days. This is evident in the following monologue:

“It was a question of life or death: I had barely enough drinking water to last a week.” (Saint-Exupery, 1943: 7)

In this first section, the aviator declares that he is stranded in the Sahara Desert. Because it is nearly impossible to find water supplies nearby, he will not survive if he cannot complete his repair work in less than a week. The pilot believes that by fixing the engine, he can at least escape a terrifying region like the Sahara Desert and seek assistance elsewhere. Given that virtually no living creature can survive in such harsh conditions as the Sahara Desert, the desert serves as a metaphor for death in this context.

As the pilot is all by himself in the Sahara Desert with little chance of encountering other people, the desert in this scene is a metaphor of both loneliness and death. It can be seen through this monologue:

"On the first night, then, I went to sleep on the sand a thousand miles from all human habitation I was more alone than..."
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 8)

The narrator expresses his loneliness. When the aviator is stranded on his own in the desert, he demonstrates his desperation. In the opening of the story, the narrator repeatedly uses the phrase "a thousand miles away from all human habitation" to highlight his feelings of isolation. The narrator wishes to convey his fear of being trapped in an unfamiliar environment like the Sahara Desert and facing death. The narrator prompts the reader to consider the possibility that humans can become lost and perish alone in the Sahara Desert, with no one to discover their remains. They also long for their loved ones and their home. One day after sleeping in the Sahara Desert, the Little Prince surprises the narrator by waking him up.

The narrator describes not only how he became lost in the Sahara Desert but also the first time the little prince arrived on Earth and settled there. The snake that the little prince encountered upon his arrival on Earth informed him that he had landed in a desert where no one lived, even though he had not yet seen any humans. The little prince expresses his loneliness by asking the snake,

"Where are the people?... It's little lonely in the desert..."
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 59)

The Little Prince and the Aviator spend time together in the Sahara Desert after an unsettling encounter when they are both on the verge of death. The Little Prince slowly tells the Aviator about himself, his origins, his voyage, and the type of planet he comes from. When they initially arrived in the Sahara Desert, they both felt lonely, but once they met, they experienced a different kind of loneliness. The Little Prince fears being alone, while the aviator fears death. This can be seen in the following dialogue:

“It is a good thing to have had a friend, even if one is about to die. I, for instance, am very glad to have had a fox as a friend... ”
“He has no way of guessing the danger,” I said to myself. “He has never been either hungry or thirsty. A little sunshine is all he needs...” (Saint-Exupery, 1943: 65)

The aviator later develops a love for the desert, much like the Little Prince, and ceases to view it as a place of death, instead describing it as a stunning location that bestows upon him something potent in stillness. This can be seen in the following dialogue:

I replied, “Yes, that is so.” And, without saying anything more, I looked across the ridges of sand that were stretched out before us in the moonlight ...“Yes,” I said to the little prince. “The house, the stars, the desert– what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!” (Saint-Exupery, 1943: 66)

Ever since the aviator met the Little Prince, luck has been on his side. In the Sahara Desert, they unexpectedly discover a well with water. The pilot then successfully completes his repair work the following day. As the aviator prepares to share the good news with him, the Little Prince is bitten by a snake. The Little Prince must be bitten by the snake on the day he returns home, to his star, in order to travel back to his origins. Since that time, the Sahara Desert has changed; it is no longer the Aviator's place of death or loneliness; rather, it is the saddest location because it is where he lost his one and only friend. Because of his lovely recollections with the Little Prince, it is also the most cherished place.

The author uses the aviator's initial experience of being lost in the desert to represent death and loneliness. However, when the little prince's voice awakens the aviator the following morning and asks him to draw a sheep, the meaning of loneliness is transformed. The aviator recounts his encounter with the Little Prince. Even after seeing the Little Prince, he repeatedly emphasizes how far away from any human environment he is. After spending a considerable amount of time together, the aviator eventually seems to forget the threat of death. With the Little Prince around, good things happen.

The author aims to demonstrate at the outset that the desert represents loneliness and death. According to Michael Ferber's *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, a forest, which is "traditionally dark, labyrinthine, and filled with dangerous beasts" (1999: 78), or simply full of mystery and frightening elements, has the same connotation as a desert. It implies that when individuals become lost in a desert or a forest, their survival is precarious. In reality, while the desert is not labyrinthine, those who wander there often have no sense of direction. Deserts feature harsh temperatures and venomous snakes, whereas woodlands are overrun with creatures.

According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's theory, the desert is a symbol of nature, representing a remote area seldom visited. The desert symbolizes loneliness (1996: 45). Typically, the desert represents a mysterious and dangerous location. Therefore, when a reader of *The Little Prince* imagines a desert, they imagine death. However, the desert as a symbol of loneliness is disrupted by the Little Prince's presence, and the desert as a symbol of death is countered by the good fortune that arises from the Little Prince's presence.

4.1.3.2 Rose

The Rose represents a lover. The rose is a flowering plant belonging to the family Rosaceae. Its extensive use in various aspects of human life distinguishes the rose from an average plant, evident in celebrations, supplements, and cosmetics. This widespread application elevates the rose's value. The stem of the rose plant bears thorns. Certain roses, such as "Rosa indica L.," possess pleasant scents and are utilized as room fresheners or in perfumes (Leghari, 2016). People have traditionally cultivated roses in their gardens due to their lovely flowers in a variety of colors and tones. The Rose makes its first appearance in *The Little Prince* before the little prince arrives on Earth, on his own planet, B612.

The Little Prince harbors a deep fondness for his rose plant—specifically, the single, unique rose on his planet, not roses in general. The Little Prince inquires:

“A sheep— if it eats little bushes, does it eat flowers, too?”

(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 21)

As a result, the aviator is aware of the Little Prince's rose. The Aviator then responds by saying that sheep consume whatever they come upon, including thorny flowers. The Little Prince is shocked and asks what purpose the thorns serve if they cannot shield the rose from the outside world. The pilot, still fearing death, is attempting to repair his aircraft and is irritated by the Little Prince's incessant questions about the thorns, which, in his opinion, are less significant than his repair work.

The Little Prince discovers Rose after tending to and tidying his planet. He keeps a close eye on the small sprout that has begun to bloom. Rose is unique among the flowers that bloom on the Little Prince's planet. The rose that the Little Prince finds is a representation of a feminine lover; she develops more slowly because she wants to blossom flawlessly. The Rose does indeed awaken in a wonderful way. The delicacy of the Rose astounded the Little Prince, who recognized her allure. Despite how much the Little Prince adored his Rose, he eventually began to doubt her. Rose's naive falsehoods and the way she speaks demonstrate her perceived invulnerability, but she is reluctant to acknowledge it. She consistently makes the Little Prince feel guilty and depressed.

Before landing on Earth, the Little Prince is unaware that the flower he adores most is a common rose. When he learns that his flower is just an ordinary flower, he is inconsolably unhappy. When he visits the rose garden, he discovers that his rose is not unique; it is simply like all the other roses. The Little Prince is still uneasy about Rose's behavior and begins to recall how bothersome she was. The Little Prince then grows more depressed as he contemplates the situation. He cries a lot because he believed he was a magnificent prince due to his rare flower, but he is not. The Little Prince encounters the fox by chance, and the fox teaches him about the process of taming or building connections, which subsequently causes him to rethink his opinion of his beloved Rose.

Rose represents a lover in *The Little Prince*. Rose is blooming on the Little Prince's planet, and the Little Prince was drawn to her beauty. The Little Prince falls in love with the Rose from the moment she blossoms, and the Little Prince must take care of the Rose since she cannot survive without him. The Little Prince occasionally finds Rose's behavior irritating, which leads him to decide to leave Rose and set off on his quest to discover new things. The Little Prince eventually understands the significance of his Rose after traveling to Earth. Since meeting the Fox, who teaches him a lesson about always being accountable for what one loves, the Little Prince learns how to love his Rose. The Little Prince leaves his lone friend, the Aviator, in order to return to his planet because he misses his rose so much.

In the novel *The Little Prince*, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's theory, the rose symbolizes love and is part of the symbol of nature (1996: 78). The rose is the plant that recurs until the end of the story. The flower language of the rose is not only the plant that the prince wants to protect but also the plant that the prince loves the most.

4.1.3.3 Baobab trees

Baobabs symbolize problems. *Adansonia digitata* is the scientific name for the baobab tree. The genus name *Adansonia* was given in honor of Michel Adanson, a French naturalist who traveled to Senegal in Africa in the eighteenth century and documented baobabs in 1771. The name was provided by Linnaeus. Baobabs can reach heights of 18 to 20 meters, with stiff-looking branches and roots that extend 10 meters into the earth. The Baobab tree's size is evident from this description. Baobab trees naturally thrive south of the Saharan Desert and have since spread both within and beyond Africa. Due to its hollow trunk, the enormous Baobab tree is used as a water storage facility. It is important to consider the amount of water that can be obtained from a Baobab's hollow.

If the hollowed trunk is completely sealed, individuals can conserve 200 to 4000 gallons of water and keep it fresh for years. A baobab's hollow not only conserves water but also serves as a refuge or storage space for humans and small animals. Aside from their longevity and water-conserving properties, every part of the baobab tree offers health benefits. Baobab leaves are a significant source of iron and various minerals, often consumed cooked or raw by native Africans. The fruit pulp of the baobab, rich in vitamins and seeds that can improve protein digestion, is another beneficial component of the tree. The value of every part of the baobab creates an ecosystem that sustains life all around it. It is understandable why the Baobab is considered the true Tree of Life for Africans.

The Little Prince depicts baobabs as enormous trees that grow on the little planet where the Little Prince originates. In contrast to African beliefs, the tree carries a different connotation in the novel. The aviator learns about baobabs on the third day of being stranded in the Sahara Desert. Baobabs are exceptional plants in this story. This is highlighted when the Little Prince inquires whether sheep eat small bushes. The aviator agrees that sheep do consume bushes. But the little prince added:

“Then it follows that they also eat baobabs?”
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 15)

The aviator finds this assertion odd because he is aware that baobabs are not little shrubs. People are aware that baobabs are enormous plants, larger than elephants, hence

it is not conceivable for sheep to consume baobabs. The baobabs cannot be consumed in their whole, not even by an elephant. The Little Prince is reminded of it by The Aviator. The Little Prince, however, responds cleverly:

"Baobabs, before they grow big, start off small."
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 19)

The Little Prince wants the sheep to consume the young baobabs, but the aviator is still baffled by this. As baobabs are a significant issue on the world of the Little Prince. The true baobab, however, is a large plant that grows enormously over many years without destroying the land with its roots. The baobab tree's roots infiltrate the world of the Little Prince and obliterate it. Bad plants grow from bad seeds, and Baobab seeds, which are abundant on the Little Prince's world, produce bad plants.

While the baobab is an essential part of African culture, it represents a significant issue in *The Little Prince* novel. The Little Prince removes young baobabs and cleans up to prevent calamity on his world. The Aviator clarifies that there are good plants and evil plants when the Little Prince refers to baobabs as terrible plants. It can be seen through this monologue:

"...good seed come from good plant and bad seed from bad plant."
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 16)

Both in real life and in the novel, baobabs are large plants that have a lifespan of 100 years and are difficult to destroy. The Little Prince uses baobabs to represent troubles, yet in Africa, they serve as the source of all life. According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's Theory (1996), baobabs in *The Little Prince* classifies as nature symbol and it stand for generative power, and constancy. The author alters the picture of the baobab throughout the entire novel and labels it as a harmful plant. The author's message is that people should not ignore a tiny issue since it will only get worse. No matter how little the issue, people must resolve it before it destroys their lives. Problems are similar to baobab trees, which grow in tight spaces and destroy their pots. The planet might then be destroyed as the trees get larger. The Little Prince informed that after people wash and dress themselves up, they should wash and dress their planet. It demonstrates the need of having self-control for both oneself and others in order to prevent tiny problems from growing into larger ones.

4.1.3.4 Stars

Stars represent the abode of purer spirits. Stars are spheres of gas that produce energy through nuclear fusion, resulting in the emission of light. The sun is another star, formed from fused hydrogen and helium, making it heavier. A dying star might have dispersed dust into the universe. The hues of stars indicate their temperatures; for instance, red denotes the coldest stars, and blue, the warmest. A supernova explosion is the most significant way a star can die, as it releases its heavier elements into space. Currently, the exact number of stars in our cosmos is unknown, as is the number visible to the naked eye on a clear night. Many civilizations consider the stars in the sky to be heavens because they shine brightest at night.

Although stars have multiple meanings in this book, there is only one meaning that the author wants to emphasize. The Little Prince expresses his awe upon landing on Earth for the first time by asking:

“...does the stars glow so that someday everyone can find a way back to their own?...”
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 58)

The Little Prince's story explains that each person's interpretation of the stars is unique. However, the Little Prince, the story's primary character, never shares other people's viewpoints. Stars hold significant meaning for the Little Prince. His home is one of the stars in the sky. He believes that the stars are shining so that people might find their way home afterward. People may understand that stars are the dwelling place of purer souls in *The Little Prince*; that souls will return to the stars and that bodies will pass away and return to earth. By declaring:

“... , I send back to the earth from whence he came e,” the snake spoke again. “But you are innocent and true, and you come from a star. . .”
(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 50)

The serpent seems to be talking just about the Little Prince, but it matches what the Little Prince says that everyone will reach that stage when they die, and that stars are the home of all purer souls. It can be seen through this following monologue:

And he took me by the hand. But he was still worrying.
“It was wrong of you to come. You will suffer. I shall look as if I were dead; and that will not be true. . .”(Saint-Exupery, 1943: 74).

According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's Theory (1996), stars in *The Little Prince* are a type of natural symbol, representing guidance and enlightenment. As previously mentioned, stars have historically represented spirits or connections between the earth and other worlds. According to the author, stars stand for the homes of purer spirits. The book's interpretation of stars aligns with the idea that they are souls from another realm. Although the author emphasizes how the "home" in the narrative feels, it depicts people's belief that the universe is the other world, and that souls or spirits originate from stars. That is the unique significance of stars as explained by the author to the audience. The author again underlines that stars in the story also represent the residence of purer souls.

5. Conclusion

In the story *The Little Prince*, the researchers identified two major categories of symbols: Animal Symbols and Natural Symbols. The researchers use Chevalier and Gheerbrant's (1996) theory of symbols to describe each of these categories individually: Animal Symbol is the Fox, and Natural Symbols include the Desert, Stars, Baobabs, and the Rose. The researchers' initial symbol discovery was the animal symbol, the fox. Foxes are small, cunning creatures in the Canidae family, with 25 extant or extinct species. They are important in mythology and popular culture, with an average lifespan of one to three years. In *The Little Prince*, the fox teaches lessons about domestication and rituals, while the Little Prince spends time daily at the fox's home to develop strong relationships. The fox represents nature and slyness, emphasizing the importance of relationships and connections.

Second, the researchers discover the symbol of nature, the desert. In reality, the desert is a desolate region with unfavorable weather where nobody wishes to reside. However, in contrast to its actual meaning, the desert in *The Little Prince* represents the most

beautiful yet depressing region. According to Jean Chevalier, the Desert is included in Nature Symbols and represents loneliness. The third symbol is the rose. Roses are flowering plants with a wide variety of colors and pleasant aromas and can also be used as perfumes. In *The Little Prince*, the rose symbolizes the lover who falls in love with the Little Prince. According to Jean Chevalier, roses are included in Nature Symbols and represent love. The fourth symbol in the story is the baobab. The baobab is a desert tree whose enormous size allows it to survive for hundreds of years in harsh terrain, potentially offering survival for people living in deserts. In *The Little Prince*, the baobab tree becomes a problem because it is too large for the Little Prince's planet. According to Jean Chevalier, the baobab is included in Nature Symbols and baobab trees represent growth, generative power, and constancy. The final symbol is the stars. Stars are part of the celestial bodies of the universe, and they can burn up, shine, and eventually disappear. In *The Little Prince*, the star symbolizes the home of a purer soul. According to Jean Chevalier, stars are included in Nature Symbols and represent guidance and enlightenment.

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ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN JOHN KEATS' POEM *ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE*

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Abstract

Ode to a Nightingale, composed in the spring of 1819, is widely regarded as one of John Keats' most profound poetic achievements. Inspired by the spontaneous experience of hearing a nightingale's song, the poem presents a speaker who, while immersed in an imagined forest, engages in deep reflection on the themes of beauty, mortality, temporality, nature, and human suffering. The nightingale functions not merely as a bird, but as a symbol of transcendent beauty and imaginative escape from the harsh realities of life. This study examines the Romantic elements embedded in the poem—namely Nature, Supernaturalism, Contemplation, Beauty, and Love—by employing an intrinsic literary approach as formulated by Wellek and Warren. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method, as outlined by Creswell, this research focuses on textual analysis to uncover how these Romantic features are interwoven into the fabric of the poem. The findings underscore how *Ode to a Nightingale* not only exemplifies Romantic ideals but also reflects broader social and existential concerns, affirming literature's role as a mirror of human experience.

Keywords: *beauty; contemplation; love; nature; romanticism; supernaturalism*

1. Introduction

This research focuses on the poem *Ode to a Nightingale* by John Keats. Composed in the spring of 1819, it was subsequently published in July of the same year in an issue of *Annals of the Fine Arts*. The poem's origin is particularly interesting, as recounted by Keats' friend Charles Armitage Brown. According to Brown, Keats wrote this ode beneath a plum tree in the garden of Wentworth Place in Hampstead. Brown described how Keats spontaneously composed the poem after being moved by the song of a nightingale.

"In the spring of 1819 a nightingale built her nest near my house," the same house he shared with Keats that spring. John Keats was born in Moorgate, London, on October 31, 1795. He stands as one of the principal figures of the second generation of Romantic poets, alongside Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, despite his works being published for only four years before his untimely death. Although his poetry was not widely acclaimed by critics during his lifetime, his reputation flourished posthumously. By the end of the 19th century, he had become one of the most cherished of all English poets. Keats' poetry is notably characterized by its sensual imagery,

particularly evident in his series of odes. Today, his poems and letters remain among the most popular and extensively analyzed in English literature (Janiswara, 2012).

The poem serves as an expression of Keats' profound feelings evoked by the nightingale's melodious chirping. The bird's song penetrates the poet's heart, creating a sensation akin to the heartache and numbness induced by drinking hemlock. In Keats' perception, the nightingale inhabits a realm of beauty. Upon hearing its song, he was captivated by its sweetness, and his joy intensified to such an extent that it transformed into a pleasurable sorrow. He was overcome with a desire to escape the burdens of the world into the realm of imagination. Furthermore, Keats introduces several key concepts within the poem, including life, death, disappointment, failure, sadness, grief, time, nature, animals, landscape, trees, flowers, and music (Ali, 2015).

In this study, the researchers employ the intrinsic approach to literary works, as outlined by Wellek and Warren (2014), focusing on observing and analyzing the inherent elements within the text. These elements encompass visual aspects such as typography and stanza structure, as well as auditory elements like rhythm and rhyme. Additionally, the analysis considers diction, themes, and imagery, including figurative language such as metaphors, similes, personification, and symbols. These poetic elements are interconnected, forming a cohesive unity that contributes to the overall meaning of the poem.

Romanticism emerged as a significant literary movement in the late 18th century and persisted until around the mid-19th century, though its influence continues to resonate today. Key characteristics of Romanticism include a focus on the individual (emphasizing a person's unique perspective often driven by irrational and emotional impulses), a profound respect for nature in its entirety, and an exaltation of the common person. Romanticism arose as a response to the significant societal shifts of the era, including the widespread revolutions in countries like France and the United States, which ushered in significant experiments in democracy (Jena, 2022).

The poem portrays a speaker situated in an imagined forest, captivated by the nightingale's beautiful song. This experience initiates a deep and wandering meditation by the speaker on themes of time, death, beauty, nature, and human suffering. At times, the speaker finds solace in the nightingale's melody, and at one point even envisions poetry as a means to metaphorically draw closer to the bird. By the poem's conclusion, the speaker is left in isolation as the nightingale departs, leaving the speaker uncertain whether the entire experience was merely a dream. The central theme of the poem revolves around the human realization that life is characterized by both highs and lows, and that all challenges must be confronted. Conversely, many individuals choose escapism when faced with conflict, presenting a significant moral lesson within the poem.

Ode to a Nightingale offers itself to analysis from various perspectives. A primary concern within the ode is Keats' exploration of the conflicted nature of human existence, the intricate interplay between pain and joy, the intensity of feeling juxtaposed with numbness, the dichotomy of life and death, the mortal and the immortal, the real and the ideal, and the tension between separation and connection. Composed in the spring of 1819, the poem draws its inspiration from the song of a nightingale nesting near the residence of a friend of Keats. The bird's song transports Keats into a state of tranquil pleasure, akin to a trance. Building upon this brief overview of the poem and John Keats' renowned status as a Romantic poet, this research

delves into the Romantic elements present within the ode: nature, supernaturalism, contemplation, love, and beauty.

2. Literature Review

The Romantic period in English Literature is widely regarded as a revolutionary era. It ushered in artistic, intellectual, literary, and musical movements across Europe. Many renowned poets, novelists, dramatists, and writers emerged during this time, contributing their masterpieces to English literature. However, the Romantic period is particularly noted for its poetry, often referred to as the "Age of Poetry." During this period, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron made significant contributions that continue to shape English Literature in modern times. A central tenet shared by poets of this era was a belief in individualism and the importance of personal experience, which they vividly expressed in their literary works (Canli, 2019).

Romanticism profoundly impacted the arts and culture in general. Its primary characteristic was a reaction against the prevailing sentiments of the eighteenth century and the Age of Reason. Indeed, "Romanticism," or the "Romantic Movement," arose as a counter-movement to the rationalism of the eighteenth century, the increasing dominance of science in understanding the physical world, the influence of Locke's theories on the mental world, and the neoclassicism of the Enlightenment. The Romantic period witnessed significant changes across various fields, including philosophy, politics, religion, literature, painting, and music. These transformations were represented, articulated, and symbolized by the English Romantic poets (Tang, 2023).

Key authors of the Romantic era include William Wordsworth (1770-1850), often considered the father of the Romantic Movement; Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), another significant poet of the era; John Keats (1795-1821), a prominent figure of the second generation of English Romantic poets; Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), an English poet and friend of Keats who also contributed significantly to English Romanticism; and William Blake (1757-1827), a highly influential figure in the history of the Romantic era, whose poetry was often accompanied by fantastical imagery (Eldridge, 2014).

John Keats, despite his tragically short life and career, stands as a quintessential figure of the Romantic era in English literature. His poetic contributions, though limited in quantity, are profoundly rich in the very elements that define Romanticism. "Ode to a Nightingale," composed in the spring of 1819, serves as a powerful testament to the core tenets of this revolutionary literary movement, showcasing Keats' deep engagement with themes of emotion, nature, imagination, the ideal, and a poignant awareness of mortality.

A central characteristic of Keats' Romanticism is his intense focus on emotion and the power of sensory experience. Unlike the preceding Age of Reason, which privileged intellect and logic, the Romantic era embraced the subjective realm of feeling as a primary source of truth and inspiration. Keats masterfully employs vivid and evocative language to appeal directly to the senses. In "Ode to a Nightingale," the reader is immersed in a world of rich sensations: the "blushful Hippocrene" hinting at the intoxicating power of poetic inspiration, the "viewless wings of poesy" suggesting the boundless reach of imagination, and the detailed descriptions of the natural world, laden with the scent of wild flowers. This emphasis on sensory detail is not merely decorative;

it is integral to the poem's exploration of beauty, joy, and the fleeting nature of human existence.

Furthermore, Keats, like many of his romantic contemporaries, held a profound reverence for nature. In "Ode to a Nightingale," the natural setting of the forest and the captivating song of the nightingale are not simply a backdrop but become central symbols. Nature, in Romantic thought, was often seen as a source of sublime beauty, spiritual insight, and a refuge from the artificiality and turmoil of human society. The nightingale, dwelling in this natural idyll and singing its timeless song, embodies a realm of beauty and permanence that contrasts sharply with the transience and suffering of human life. This juxtaposition highlights the Romantic fascination with the natural world as both an inspiration and a source of solace.

The Romantic emphasis on individualism and the power of imagination is also vividly present in Keats' ode. The poem unfolds as a deeply personal and introspective journey, guided by the speaker's imaginative response to the nightingale's song. The desire to transcend the limitations of the physical world and escape into the realm of imagination is a recurring motif in Romantic literature. In this ode, the speaker longs to "fade away into the forest dim," to join the nightingale in its timeless realm of song. This yearning for imaginative flight underscores the Romantic belief in the creative power of the individual mind to access higher truths and escape the constraints of reality.

Keats' Romantic sensibility also manifests in his exploration of the ideal and the transcendent. Romantic poets often sought to capture a sense of something beyond the mundane, a realm of perfect beauty and eternal truth. The nightingale's song, in its seemingly immortal quality, represents such an ideal for Keats. It is a beauty that persists through generations, untouched by the decay and suffering that plague human existence. The contrast between the eternal beauty of the nightingale's song and the ephemeral nature of human life is a central tension in the poem, reflecting the Romantic quest for something lasting and perfect in a world of change and impermanence.

A pervasive element of Romanticism in Keats' work, particularly evident in "Ode to a Nightingale," is a melancholic awareness of mortality. Despite the poem's celebration of beauty and the desire for transcendence, there is an underlying current of sadness and a keen consciousness of human suffering and the inevitability of death. Keats himself faced declining health, which likely contributed to this preoccupation. The speaker's longing to escape the pain of the world and the recognition that human joy is often fleeting are characteristic of the Romantic sensibility, which often grappled with the limitations and sorrows of the human condition with an intensity of feeling.

John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" stands as a remarkable embodiment of the key tenets of Romanticism. Through its rich sensory language, profound engagement with nature, exploration of imagination, yearning for the ideal and poignant awareness of mortality, the poem encapsulates the spirit of a literary era that valued emotion, the individual, and the transformative power of art and nature. Keats, in this single ode, offers a profound meditation on the enduring themes of beauty and transience that continue to resonate with readers today, solidifying his place as a central figure in the Romantic Movement.

2.1 The Elements of Romanticism

The term 'Romantic,' originating from English, gained prominence in the mid-17th century during a period of romantic triumphs. Beyond its association with old

romance, 'romantic' also described something unreal and difficult to attain in reality, often due to adventures far removed from ordinary life. While romance stories were entertaining and sometimes based on fact, by the 18th century, romanticism had come to encompass notions of the fictitious or exaggerated. Additionally, the term was used in the context of romance novels or poems that depicted a pleasant atmosphere. Furthermore, as Eldridge (2014) notes, romance also refers to emotion; in its later development, the term romanticism commonly signified the resurgence of progressive thought and emotion, aspects that were never fully emphasized by the rationalism of the 18th century.

Moreover, individuals of the Romantic era generally exhibited a preference for beauty and a certain kind of sadness rooted in nature. This inclination fostered a closer connection between humans and the natural world. A crucial characteristic of romanticism is the belief in the inherent goodness of humanity, suggesting that humans will naturally act well in the absence of external corrupting influences. According to this view, when humans err, their desires should be tempered by reason. Conversely, virtuous actions are believed to stem from natural emotions guiding individuals toward what is right. Furthermore, romanticism encouraged romantic individualism, emphasizing the belief that the emotions inherent in a person contribute to their unique identity.

Significant elements of romanticism (Wati, 2020; Trivedi, 2022; Hossain & Mosharaf, 2024) include:

2.1.1 Nature

Romantic poets believed that nature was the origin of all things. They deeply adored and enjoyed nature in its diverse aspects. These poets focused on the awe-inspiring elements of nature in their art and language, and they emphasized observing dignity through a connection with the natural world. Keats stands out as one of the most devoted admirers and lovers of nature. He eloquently expressed the beauty of both the real and artistic forms of nature.

2.1.2 Supernaturalism

In general, supernaturalism refers to anything that transcends the natural world and reasoning, something that cannot be explained by logical principles. Beliefs in the supernatural have existed across numerous cultures and traditions throughout human history. Supernaturalism, as a belief in an otherworldly realm or reality, is commonly associated with various forms of religion. It stands as a significant element of Romanticism, frequently explored through allusions presented by Romantic authors in their works.

2.1.3. Contemplation

The term "poetic contemplation" signifies the gaze of the mind, which results in the production of poetry. It is another term for the act of literary composition, and it is used here to emphasize that this act of composition is a type of contemplation, that it is a simple gaze which gives emotional expression to thought.

2.1.4. Beauty

For Keats, beauty is Deity, synonymous with truth. A thing of beauty is for him a joy for ever. Beauty is his religion. It is in this pursuit of beauty that he completely forgets himself and the world around him.

2.1.5. Love

The most significant romantic theme is love. The poet describes the character of his love for his beloved. According to the poet, this love is perfect and therefore unattainable. This love is divine but sometimes hopeless too.

3. Research Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, as proposed by Creswell (2014), to explore the elements of Romanticism within John Keats' poem, "Ode to a Nightingale." This approach is suitable because the study aims to reveal these elements, which are also considered to be reflections of social reality, aligning with the idea that literary works often represent aspects of human life. The descriptive method allows for a systematic, factual, and accurate portrayal of the current status of a phenomenon. The research design involves a specific procedure for data collection, analysis, and report writing, utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research, in this context, is understood as an inquiry process aimed at understanding a social or human problem through distinct methodological traditions. The process includes defining the scope of the study, gathering information through unstructured or semi-structured observations, documents (specifically the poem), and visual materials (if any related to its context). Data collection specifically involves identifying relevant data within the poem related to the research questions, collecting instances that align with the elements of Romanticism, and then organizing this data for analysis based on the identified problems. Data analysis, following collection, utilizes the descriptive method. This involves re-examining the Romantic elements in "Ode to a Nightingale," analyzing these elements in relation to the research questions, and finally, summarizing all the identified Romantic elements within the poem.

4. Discussion

Nature is a prominent theme in Romantic poetry; in this poem, Keats presents a stark contrast between the immortal realm of beauty, peace, and love, and his own worldly state and the nature of mortal life. The contrast between the allure of imagination and the demands of real life is also a major theme of Romantic poetry, and this conflict is clearly evident in Keats's work. The bird amidst the leaves has never known the miseries of human existence and enjoys immortality. Keats transitions from contemplating the bird's life to reflecting on his own, the underlying theme of this contrasting description being his deep and intense desire to escape the physical world. Keats's fundamental issue with the physical world is the impermanence of everything, particularly love, beauty, and fame. The nightingale's mythical associations with the melancholic feelings of love underscore another major Romantic theme: love. Furthermore, Keats emphasizes the power of poetry and imagination, suggesting that poetry is more potent than wine and that only imagination can access truth. The bird is presented as a symbol of freedom, pure joy, imagination, love, and the ideal beauty of nature.

4.1 The Elements of Romanticism

4.1.1 Nature

Romantic poets held a fundamental belief that nature was the wellspring of all existence, the source of joy, pleasure, love, and beauty. They deeply revered nature and found delight in its myriad forms. A key focus for these poets was capturing the sublime

and often mysterious aspects of nature in their art and language, emphasizing the observation of inherent dignity through a profound connection with the natural world. John Keats stands as a prime example of a poet deeply enamored with nature, expressing its beauty in both its tangible reality and its artistic representations. This characteristic is considered a defining feature of Romantic poetry.

A primary element of this is the central focus on nature. In "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats directs his attention to the nightingale itself, weaving in numerous images that evoke the beauty and essence of the natural world.

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees (Keats, 1993). Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene (Keats, 1993). Leave the world unseen, and with thee fade away into the forest dim. (Keats, 1993).

Here, Keats describes the nightingale as a "light-winged Dryad of the trees," linking it to a mythical nature spirit. Later in the poem, he expresses his longing to drink from the "blushful Hippocrene," the sacred fountain of the Muses on Mount Helicon, wishing to "leave the world unseen, and with thee fade away into the forest dim," signifying a desire to escape the human realm and immerse himself in the natural world.

Of for a draught of vintage! that hath been Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth (Keats, 1993).

In these lines, Keats evokes an image of a place rich with greenery and flourishing plant life. This idealized natural space contrasts with the encroaching urbanization, factories, and houses of his era, reflecting a romantic longing for a world untainted by industrialization. The speaker desires a drink of aged wine, metaphorically drawn from the earth, which Keats presents as a vast, natural cellar.

Tasting of Flora and the country green, Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth! (Keats, 1993).

Extending the wine metaphor, Keats suggests that this earthly vintage carries the essence of flowers ("Flora") and verdant landscapes ("country green"), further associating it with the vibrancy and joy of nature, symbolized by "dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth."

Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays; But here there is no light, Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways (Keats, 1993)

The poet envisions flying to the nightingale on the "invisible wings of poetic imagination," finding himself in its presence. The imagery of the moon surrounded by "starry Fays" creates a mystical natural scene.

White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine (Keats, 1993).

In his romantic imagination, the poet finds himself in the beautiful darkness of the forest beside the nightingale. Although the darkness obscures the sight of various flowers, he can still perceive their fragrance, experiencing the beauty of nature in stark contrast to the human world. The sounds and sensations of the natural world are palpable throughout these lines, reinforcing the Romantic focus on nature as a source of profound experience and inspiration. All the preceding illustrations, allusions, and

imageries serve as vivid representations of nature's central role in the poem and in Keats' Romantic vision.

4.1.2 Supernaturalism

Supernaturalism, broadly defined, encompasses anything that exists beyond the realm of nature and logical reasoning, phenomena unexplained by natural laws. Beliefs in the supernatural have been integral to numerous cultures and traditions throughout human history. Supernaturalism, as a conviction in an otherworldly realm or reality, is commonly associated with various forms of religion. In his poem "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats incorporates elements of the supernatural when he writes:

O for a beaker full of the warm South, Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene (Keats, 1993).

Here, Keats refers to his imagined glass of red wine as a "blushful Hippocrene." The Hippocrene is, in Greek mythology, the spring of the Muses on Mount Helicon; drinking its water was believed to inspire great musical talent. Thus, Keats envisions the wine as his own source of inspiration, enabling him to sing with the effortless ease of a nightingale. In essence, the wine glass he imagines acts like a magical potion, allowing him to swiftly "leave the invisible world." The Hippocrene is known as the "fountain of the Muses," the nine goddesses in Greek mythology who inspire the arts and sciences, including poetry. This fountain was said to have sprung from the earth where Pegasus, the winged horse, struck the ground with his hoof. Keats desires to drink something that will not only intoxicate him but also imbue him with poetic greatness. The liquid from the Hippocrene is described as "blushful" because of its reddish hue, reminiscent of both wine and a blush. All these allusions are drawn from mythology, a domain where supernaturalism is prominently expressed.

In other lines, Keats further employs supernaturalism:

Away! away! for I will fly to thee, Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, But on the viewless wings of Poesy, (Keats, 1993).

The poet yearns to journey to the nightingale's world, "not charioted by Bacchus (the god of wine) and his pards (leopards)," but rather "on the viewless wings of Poesy (the goddess of Poetry)." He rejects the notion of finding inspiration through wine, instead seeking the intangible assistance of poetic imagination. And indeed, he achieves this, feeling his existence merge with the nightingale and the natural world under the presence of the moon and stars. Essentially, upon hearing the bird's song, the poet, aided by his Romantic imagination, endeavors to enter the nightingale's realm. Bacchus himself is a mythological figure, implicitly a supernatural entity.

4.1.3 Contemplation

The term "poetic contemplation" describes the focused attention of the mind that results in the creation of poetry. It is another way of referring to the act of literary composition, emphasizing that this process is a form of contemplation—a sustained gaze that gives emotional expression to thought. This emotional expression must be felt, at least internally.

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, But being too happy in thine happiness. (Keats, 1993).

In this line, Keats suggests that his feeling is not one of envy towards the bird, but rather an overwhelming empathy with its joy, hinting at a contemplative desire to share in that happiness.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves
hast never known, (Keats, 1993).

The poet expresses a profound longing to escape the sorrows and sufferings of the human world, a deep contemplation on the nature of human existence that leads to this desire for oblivion.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my
sole self! (Keats, 1993).

The word 'forlorn' in the subsequent stanza abruptly reminds the poet of his own miseries and desolate state, pulling him back to reality as the imagined connection with the nightingale fades. This marks another instance of contemplation, this time on his own isolated existence.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over
the still stream, Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next¹
valley-glades: (Keats, 1993).

4.1.4 Beauty

For Keats, beauty is a deity synonymous with Truth; a thing of beauty is, for him, a joy forever. Beauty is his religion, and in its pursuit, he completely loses himself and the world around him. In the lines,

I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in
many a musèd rhyme, To take into the air my quiet breath;
(Keats, 1993).

Keats suggests the allure of a peaceful death, almost as if life's beauty leads to a gentle yearning for release. He seems to imply that life, like the beautiful song of the nightingale carried away by a radiant goddess bringing color and joy, eventually returns to its source, encompassing both sadness and happiness.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs
upon the boughs, (Keats, 1993).

Although Keats cannot see the specific flowers around him in the darkness, he identifies them through their rich scents. This stanza is replete with olfactory imagery: "soft incense, embalmed darkness, the grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild, pastoral eglantine, violets, musk-rose, dewy wine, and murmurs haunt of flies." These lines are intensely sweet and fragrant due to the detailed description of various blossoms. The stanza appeals strongly to the senses of sight (implied through darkness), smell, touch (soft incense), and hearing (murmurs). The phrase "embalmed darkness" subtly hints at death. The imagery of the "fast-fading violet" symbolically reveals the transient nature of beauty. The intense fragrance of the flowers overwhelms the reader's senses. The darkness creates a sense of being one with the nightingale, a darkness that reflects the pessimism of worldly life, preventing the poet from fully enjoying the beauty of the flowers except through the power of poetry and imagination.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! No hungry generations tread thee down; The voice I hear this passing night was heard (Keats, 1993).

4.1.5 Love

Love stands as a paramount theme within the poem. The poet articulates the nature of his love, portraying it as perfect and consequently unattainable. This love possesses a divine quality, yet for that very reason, it is also hopeless. The thematic concerns of Keats' poetry are inherently romantic, with a significant portion of his work dedicated to the pursuit of beauty, love, chivalry, adventure, and pathos.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains My sense,
as though of hemlock I had drunk, (Keats, 1993).

As the poet listens to the nightingale's song, he experiences an intense sensation of pain born from an excess of joy—a profound and perhaps unseen, unattainable love. His senses become dulled, and he imagines the nightingale, like a wood-nymph, perched in a tree, singing spontaneously in celebration of summer's delights. Here, love is expressed through this overwhelming joy, with the imagery of love being implicitly conveyed.

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim, And purple-stained mouth;
(Keats, 1993).

The poet yearns for complete immersion in the bird's song, seeking inspiration from wine that has been long-cooled and stored beneath the earth. The thought of drinking this wine evokes romantic associations with the countryside of its origin. He envisions a cup brimming with wine that will stain his lips a deep purple upon drinking. All the references to this drink serve as metaphorical images representing the intoxicating and consuming nature of love.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to identify and analyze the Romantic elements present in John Keats' poem "Ode to a Nightingale." The analysis reveals a strong presence of core Romantic characteristics interwoven throughout the stanzas, specifically encompassing elements of nature, supernaturalism, contemplation, beauty, and love. "Ode to a Nightingale" stands as a remarkable poem, showcasing imaginative conception, a profound sensitivity to beauty, a mood of despondent contemplation on life, passionate expression, and an overall noble and masterful execution. In this way, the poem strongly affirms the inherent value of the ideal. It is widely regarded not only as a significant work by Keats but also as a pinnacle of Romantic poetry, substantiating Keats' notion of beauty as something to be revered for its own sake, rather than for any didactic or philosophical purpose. The emotive and figurative language employed, the very structure of the poem, and even the nightingale with its song, all serve to symbolize a pure and artistic beauty—a fundamental concept in Keats' poetry. Our analysis has demonstrated that nature, supernaturalism, contemplation, beauty, and love function as the significant and interconnected elements that define the Romantic essence of this enduring work.

The pervasive presence of these Romantic elements within "Ode to a Nightingale" not only firmly situates it within the Romantic literary tradition but also

significantly contributes to its enduring power and appeal. Keats' masterful integration of nature, not merely as a backdrop but as a vital source of imagery and emotion, resonates with the Romantic ideal of nature as a profound spiritual and aesthetic force. The subtle yet significant incursions of the supernatural, drawn from classical mythology, add layers of symbolic meaning and connect the poem to timeless human narratives of inspiration and transcendence. The pervasive mood of contemplation, marked by the speaker's introspective journey and his grappling with mortality and the ideal, reflects the Romantic emphasis on individual experience and the inner life. Above all, the poem's unwavering focus on beauty, both sensory and artistic, as an intrinsic value, encapsulates a central tenet of Romantic aesthetics. Finally, the exploration of love, in its idealized and sometimes melancholic form, further cements the poem's Romantic sensibility. The intricate interplay of these elements: nature's inspiration, the allure of the supernatural, the depth of contemplation, the pursuit of beauty, and the complexities of love—creates a rich tapestry that continues to captivate readers and solidify "Ode to a Nightingale" as a timeless masterpiece of the Romantic age, demonstrating the lasting power of its core ideals.

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THE IMPACTS OF FAKE MARRIAGE IN TESS WAKEFIELD'S NOVEL *PURPLE HEARTS*

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Abstract

Fake marriages, though often portrayed as harmless arrangements in fictional narratives, can lead to complex and far-reaching consequences in the lives of the characters involved. This study aims to explore the negative impacts of a fake marriage on the protagonist's life in Tess Wakefield's novel *Purple Hearts*. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study uses M.H. Abrams' theory of literary analysis as its primary analytical framework. Additional relevant theories are incorporated to support the interpretation of the data. The analysis reveals that the fake marriage in the novel results in several negative consequences, including legal, financial, and emotional repercussions. The protagonist engages in the marriage to resolve personal financial difficulties. Despite these challenges, the characters—Cassie and Luke—eventually develop genuine affection, suggesting a transformative journey shaped by their experiences. The study highlights how a fake marriage, initially entered into for practical reasons, can evolve into a meaningful relationship, albeit through significant personal and relational struggles. These findings underscore the complex emotional and ethical dimensions of such arrangements in contemporary fiction.

Keywords: *emotional consequence; fake marriage; financial consequence; legal consequence; protagonist*

1. Introduction

Tess Wakefield's *Purple Hearts* offers a contemporary exploration of love, survival, and moral ambiguity through the lens of a contract marriage. The novel follows two central characters—Luke Morrow, a soldier burdened with debt, and Cassie Salazar, a struggling musician battling diabetes—who agree to a fake marriage to access military health benefits. Although their union begins as a mutually beneficial arrangement, it gradually unfolds into a complex emotional journey marked by tension, deception, and evolving intimacy. This narrative premise is not only compelling but also socially relevant, reflecting issues of economic hardship, ethical boundaries, and emotional vulnerability in modern relationships.

The depiction of fake marriage in *Purple Hearts* raises critical questions about the psychological and social consequences of relational deception. According to Weninger and Williams (2022) in Pardi et al. (2024), such arrangements can be viewed

as relational transgressions—behaviors that damage or violate trust and social norms in personal or communal relationships. These transgressions often involve power imbalances and emotional strain, making them important subjects for literary and sociocultural inquiry.

In particular, the concept of fake or "fatuous" love, as described by Sternberg (1986), is highly relevant to this study. Sternberg characterizes fatuous love as a relationship driven by passion and commitment but lacking intimacy—often resulting in instability. This theoretical perspective provides a useful framework for understanding the evolving dynamics between Luke and Cassie as they navigate the consequences of their fabricated relationship.

Given these considerations, *Purple Hearts* is a significant literary work for examining the personal and interpersonal impacts of fake marriage. While the novel is popular for its romantic storyline, this study focuses specifically on its darker thematic undertones—especially the negative consequences the protagonists experience as a result of their deception.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the impacts of fake marriage on the protagonists' lives in Tess Wakefield's *Purple Hearts*, emphasizing the legal, financial, and emotional consequences as depicted in the narrative. The analysis is situated within the broader context of literary socialization and relational ethics.

2. Literature Review

In fiction, characters are often portrayed as representations of real human beings. Through their behavior, traits, and the way they are described, authors create figures who are relatable—evoking empathy, admiration, and at times, even our support. Among these, the central figure in a story is commonly referred to as the protagonist, while the opposing force is known as the antagonist. As Subhan (2003) notes, the protagonist typically plays a crucial role in shaping the course of the narrative and is often positioned as the hero. Nurgiyantoro (2010) further explains that protagonists usually reflect values and characteristics that resonate with readers. They face challenges that mirror our own and respond to them in ways that feel familiar and believable. While these characters are, in essence, products of the author's imagination, they hold an essential place in the development of the story's plot.

Themes of marriage often emerge in novels, reflecting its importance in both personal and societal life. At its core, marriage is a formal commitment made between two individuals, typically carried out in accordance with religious, legal, and social norms. Wedding ceremonies vary widely across cultures, shaped by traditions based on ethnicity, religion, and social status. Some are deeply rooted in specific religious practices or legal frameworks. In most cases, a marriage becomes legally binding when the parties sign an official document, while the ceremonial aspects offer an opportunity for cultural expression and celebration with family and friends. The individuals involved are called brides and grooms during the ceremony and become husband and wife afterward. In essence, marriage represents a sacred agreement between a man and a woman to build a joyful and meaningful family life, anchored in mutual promises made before God Almighty.

However, not all marriages are rooted in such ideals. The phenomenon of fake or contract marriages reflects a more modern and materialistic societal structure, where economic interests often overshadow emotional or spiritual considerations. As Kartono (2006) observes, in such arrangements, financial motives can significantly influence the

decision to marry, turning the institution into a form of business transaction that yields material gain. Contract marriages, also known as fake marriages, are typically preceded by a mutual agreement between the parties—often including predetermined terms such as the duration of the marriage, financial compensation, and the respective rights and responsibilities of each party. Al-Musayyar (2008) defines such marriages as religiously valid, provided that they fulfill the essential conditions and pillars of marriage. In this framework, both the husband and wife are still required to uphold their obligations to each other as stipulated in the contract.

Susanto (2007) mentions several reasons regarding contract marriages, there are several things that underlie the contract marriages, including:

a. Economic Difficulties

This reason is the most basic reason for women or brides to want to carry out contract marriages, with the compensation from contract marriages they think they will get money and be able to improve their economic level and fulfil the needs of daily life.

b. Avoiding Adultery

As explained in the history of contract marriages, some Arabs carry out contract marriages with the aim of fulfilling their biological needs without having to commit adultery, namely through legal marriage according to religious law.

c. Cultural and Environmental Factors

The culture of contract marriage nowadays has considered normal and has become a business community, especially in certain areas that have large industrial areas or advanced tourisms and are also supported by the surrounding communities for their aims to improve welfare.

Fake marriage creates some impacts for those who commit it. In addition, fake marriage is a serious crime in some countries in the world. Meanwhile for the family, this kind of marriage is also considered a betrayal to the family for in the name of love. Besides, fake marriage also might give a psychological damage for those who commit as they feel uneasy for telling a lie to everyone and the possibility of being scolded by relatives when their fake marriage revealed out, it might lead to stress and depressions as well.

According Abrams (2012), there are some impact of fake marriage: legal, financial, and emotional consequences.

a. Legal Consequences

Marriage fraud or fake marriage is a federal crime in most countries in the world especially in the United States. Faking a marriage is considered a federal offense punishable by law. If caught, individuals involved in marriage fraud can face criminal charges and deportation (for immigrant). In addition, fake marriages can be annulled, which means that the marriage is declared null and void, and the parties are treated as if they were never married.

b. Financial Consequences

Fake marriage can have financial Consequences for both parties involved. For example, if one party is using the marriage to obtain some benefits, the other party may be financially exploited. In addition, if the marriage is annulled, the parties may have to divide their assets and debts as if they were never married.

c. Emotional Consequences

Fake marriage can have emotional consequences for both parties involved. For example, if one party is using the marriage to obtain immigration benefits, the other party may feel betrayed and hurt. When the marriage is annulled, there will be a chance that both the parties experience emotional distress due to the breakdown of the relationship.

3. Research Method

This study employs a **qualitative descriptive** approach to explore the portrayal and implications of fake marriage in Tess Wakefield's novel *Purple Hearts*. As defined by Moleong (in Siregar, Nasution, & Pardi, 2022), qualitative research aims to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observable phenomena, emphasizing meaning, experience, and interpretation rather than numerical data. In line with Pratiwy et al. (2023), this study focuses on capturing and describing the phenomena found in the literary text, particularly how fake marriage is constructed and its effects on the characters.

The primary object of analysis is the novel *Purple Hearts* by Tess Wakefield, which serves as the main source of data. The data collection technique involves close reading and textual analysis, particularly using quoting and noting strategies as outlined by Sutopo (2005) and Sugiyono (2009), though the use of Sugiyono here is limited to the practical aspect of data management. The researcher systematically identifies, selects, and extracts textual evidence relevant to the research questions, including quotes, dialogues, and narrative descriptions.

To guide the analysis, this study applies Abrams' mimetic theory, which views literature as a reflection or imitation of human life and social reality. Abrams (1953) positions the mimetic approach as one that emphasizes the relationship between literary works and the external world, focusing on how texts mirror the experiences, behaviors, and values of real human beings. In this study, mimetic theory helps illuminate how the fictional representation of fake marriage in *Purple Hearts* corresponds to societal perceptions and lived realities.

The data analysis process follows the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Creswell (2013). This includes:

1. Data reduction, in which raw textual data are organized and selected based on relevance to the research focus (in this case, the types and consequences of fake marriage in the novel);
2. Data display, which involves categorizing the selected data into meaningful patterns;
3. Interpretation, in which the researcher reflects on the patterns and constructs conclusions in response to the research question.

To ensure the validity of findings, the study employs triangulation, comparing the textual analysis with insights from relevant scholarly literature and social commentary on marriage norms and practices (Suhadi et al., 2023). Supporting references from articles, books, and previous studies help contextualize and validate the interpretation of the novel's content.

4. Discussion

A fake marriage, also known as a sham marriage, refers to a union entered into by persons for ulterior motives, typically without the intention of establishing a genuine marital relationship. This practice is often associated with attempts to gain immigration

advantages or other legal benefits for both involved. The fake marriage between Cassie and Luke affects their personal lives in various ways. The impact of this fake marriage on their lives is significant, as it leads to a series of events that affect their relationship and future. Some of the impacts of the fake marriage on the protagonists' lives are as follow.

4.1.1 Emotional Complications

The term emotional complication is not widely defined as a standalone concept in psychological literature. However, it is often discussed in relation to emotional distress, emotional disorders, and challenges in emotion regulation. Emotional complexity refers to the capacity to experience a broad range of emotions that are well differentiated. People with high emotional complexity can identify and distinguish between various emotional states, which is associated with better psychological adaptability.

In Tess Wakefield's novel *Purple Hearts*, as they spend more time together, Cassie and Luke's fake marriage becomes complicated when real feelings soon blossom between them. They start to develop genuine feelings for each other, which causes emotional complications.

"It wasn't about just keeping up the lie anymore. I was worried about Luke. He wasn't the same. And it shouldn't have bothered me, but it did. I didn't want to create a bigger gap between us than there already was. Luke and I had to get through this together. Or we at least had to try." (Wakefield, 2017: 117)

It seems that Cassie is experiencing a range of emotions and is trying to navigate a complicated emotional situation. Here are some possible emotions and themes that can be inferred from the quotation:

Worry: Cassie is worried about Luke and how he is doing. This shows that Cassie cares about Luke and is invested in his well-being.

Guilt: Cassie feels guilty about keeping up a lie and creating a gap between them. It indicates that Cassie may have done something wrong and is struggling with the consequences of their actions.

Desire for connection: Cassie wants to get through this with Luke and not create a bigger gap between them. This implied that Cassie values her relationship with Luke and wants to maintain a connection with him. (Wakefield, 2017: 201)

The quotation above suggests that Cassie is experiencing a range of emotions and is trying to navigate a complicated emotional situation with Luke. Cassie cares about Luke and wants to maintain a connection with him, but is struggling with feelings of guilt and worry. The emotional complication in this quote also adds to the suspense and drama of the novel. This quote is a powerful example of how Tess Wakefields uses emotional complication to create a more engaging and emotionally resonant story.

This quotation also illustrates the emotional complications that arise from Luke's impending jail sentence. Cassie is feeling a range of emotions, including sadness, fear, and anger. She is also feeling guilty, because she feels like she is somehow responsible for Luke's situation. These emotions are all compounded by the fact that Cassie is trying to maintain a positive attitude in front of her bandmates.

The emotional complication in this quote is significant because it shows how Cassie's feelings are affecting her ability to function. She is unable to focus on the good news about the record deal, and she is starting to shake. This shows that she is overwhelmed by her emotions, and that she is struggling to cope with the situation.

4.1.2 Financial Benefit

Financial benefit encompasses various advantages related to monetary gains, cost savings, or economic improvements. Experts across different fields have explored this concept in contexts such as personal finance, employee satisfaction, and health economics. In the novel, Cassie enters into the fake marriage with Luke to gain financial benefits. The fake marriage also leads to an increase in Luke's paycheck, which they split. Cassie enters into the fake marriage with Luke to gain access to better medical insurance to cover her medication for Diabetes. The marriage allows her to access better medical insurance, which helps her to pay off her medical bills and other expenses.

"I need to get married," I said. "I need better medical insurance."

"Why?" Luke asked. "You're young and healthy. "

"I have diabetes," I said. "And the medication is really expensive."

"Oh," Luke said. "I didn't know. "

"Yeah," I said. "It's not something I talk about a lot. "

"Well, I'm glad you told me," Luke said. "I'd be happy to marry you. "

"Really?" I asked.

"Yeah," Luke said. "It's not a big deal. And it will help you out. "

"Thank you," I said. "I really appreciate it." (Wakefield, 2017: 105)

The conversation above shows that Cassie's primary motivation for entering into a fake marriage is to gain access to better medical insurance. She has diabetes, and the medication is very expensive. She knows that if she is married to Luke, he will be able to provide her with better medical insurance. This will help her to pay off her medical bills and other expenses. Cassie is not expecting anything from Luke in terms of a romantic relationship. She knows that their marriage will be purely for financial reasons. She is willing to go through with it because she knows that it will help her out.

The fake marriage also leads to an increase in Luke's paycheck, which they split. This means that Cassie also benefits financially from the marriage. She is able to use this money to pay off her medical bills and other expenses.

4.1.3 Legal Consequences

Legal consequences refer to the outcomes or sanctions that result from a person's actions or behavior in relation to the law. These consequences can arise when someone violates legal rules or obligations, and they vary depending on the nature and severity of the act. The fake marriage also has legal consequences. When their fake marriage is discovered, Luke is charged with fraud and detained by the military. Cassie faces no charges, but the legal proceedings add to her stress and anxiety.

"I'm being charged with fraud," Luke said. "They're saying that I married you for money."

"What?" I asked. "That's not true."

"I know," Luke said. "But they're saying that I lied on my military paperwork."

"But you didn't," I said. "We're not really married."

"I know," Luke said. "But they don't believe us."
(Wakefield, 2017: 220)

This quote shows that Luke is being charged with fraud because he married Cassie for money. The military is saying that he lied on his military paperwork when he said that he was married. Luke knows that this is not true, but he is still being charged with fraud.

"Come on, Cass. That would be Luke's trial, not yours," Toby said.

"Right?"

"We're married. It's going to be my trial eventually, T."

Toby shook his head with a confident smile. "He's worse, though. His dealer? I mean, that's some shady shit. You could probably even spin it so he manipulated you." (Wakefield, 2017: 231)

These quotation shows how Cassie is struggling to cope with the news that Luke is going to jail. She is unable to focus on the good news that Toby is telling her about the record deal, because she is too focused on what jail will mean for Luke. She starts to think about the punishment, loneliness, and isolation that Luke will face in jail. She also thinks about how his agony will reach out to her, even though he is physically separated from her.

This quote illustrates the emotional complications that arise from Luke's impending jail sentence. Cassie is feeling a range of emotions, including sadness, fear, and anger. She is also feeling guilty, because she feels like she is somehow responsible for Luke's situation. These emotions are all compounded by the fact that Cassie is trying to maintain a positive attitude in front of her bandmates.

The emotional complication in this quote is significant because it shows how Cassie's feelings are affecting her ability to function. She is unable to focus on the good news about the record deal, and she is starting to shake. This shows that she is overwhelmed by her emotions, and that she is struggling to cope with the situation.

The emotional complication in this quote also adds to the suspense and drama of the novel. Readers are left wondering how Cassie will cope with Luke's jail sentence, and whether their relationship will be able to survive. This quote is a powerful example of how Tess Wakefields uses emotional complication to create a more engaging and emotionally resonant story.

The impact of fake marriage to the protagonists' life in Tess Wakefields' novel *Purple Hearts* can be as follows.

1. Cassie and Luke enter into a fake marriage to solve their financial problems, but their fraudulent marriage is a crime in the eyes of the U.S. military, and they face the risk of being caught. Luke is a marine who needs to pay off an old drug dealer, and he agrees to marry Cassie for the benefits.
2. Protagonist enters into the fake marriage because of financial problem. Cassie married with Luke to gain access to better medical insurance to cover her medication. The marriage allows her to access better medical insurance, which helps her to pay off her medical bills and other expenses.
3. Cassie and Luke are committing fraud on the government by pretending to be in a real marriage. When the fake marriage is discovered, They faces legal consequences which make Luke got arrested that add to Cassie's stress and anxiety.

4. Cassie and Luke both have personal struggles that they must set aside to maintain the facade of a genuine relationship. In the end, they maintained to gain transformation and growth during the novel, both also involved their feeling and change the fake marriage became a true love.

5. Conclusion

In *Purple Hearts* by Tess Wakefield, the fake marriage between Cassie and Luke begins as a calculated arrangement to address their respective personal struggles—Cassie's need for affordable medical insurance and Luke's financial debt. However, this seemingly simple contract spirals into a deeply complex emotional and legal entanglement. The marriage, while providing short-term financial relief, leads to significant emotional complications, particularly as genuine feelings begin to emerge between the two protagonists. Cassie's emotional vulnerability and Luke's inner conflict gradually shift the nature of their relationship from pretense to authenticity. Moreover, the legal consequences of their deceit underscore the gravity of their decision. Luke faces charges of fraud, and the repercussions extend beyond his military career to affect both his and Cassie's emotional stability. The narrative explores how the burden of maintaining a fabricated relationship—under the scrutiny of law and the pressure of personal hardship—tests their resilience and sense of self. Despite the initial dishonesty, the journey they undertake together becomes one of transformation and growth. The fake marriage, rather than being a purely self-serving act, evolves into a catalyst for emotional healing and mutual understanding. Cassie and Luke are ultimately forced to confront not only the external consequences of their actions but also their own internal emotional truths. Wakefield effectively uses the trope of a sham marriage not just as a plot device, but as a lens through which themes of survival, love, morality, and identity are explored. In the end, what begins as deception leads to authenticity, illustrating that even relationships founded on falsehood can yield real emotional depth, provided there is willingness to face the consequences and grow from them.

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DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH READING MATERIALS TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION FOR GRADE ELEVEN STUDENTS AT SMAN 2 RANTAU SELATAN

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop effective English reading materials to enhance the reading comprehension skills of Grade XI students at SMAN 2 Rantau Selatan. Using the ADDIE model—comprising the stages of Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—the research employed classroom observation, interviews, expert validation, and pretest-posttest evaluations. Findings from the initial analysis indicated that students struggled to understand reading texts due to the lack of contextual relevance, unattractive content, and materials that did not match their interests or proficiency levels. The newly developed materials, focused on narrative texts and enriched with visual and culturally relevant elements, underwent validation by subject matter and media experts, resulting in validity scores of 90% and 85%, respectively. Effectiveness testing revealed a substantial improvement in student performance, with the average score rising from 58 (pretest) to 84 (posttest), and 93% of students achieving mastery. These results suggest that the developed materials are both valid and effective for use in senior high school English instruction.

Keywords: *ADDIE; Narrative text; Reading material development; RnD*

1. Introduction

English is widely recognized as a global language used for international communication across various fields such as education, business, science, and diplomacy. According to Crystal (2000), English serves as a global language because it is spoken and understood by people from different nations to interact globally. As such, English plays a vital role in supporting academic development and cross-cultural understanding, especially in non-native contexts such as Indonesia.

Among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—**reading** holds a central place in language learning, particularly in academic settings. Reading is a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to derive meaning. It is not limited to recognizing individual words or sentence structures but also encompasses higher-level interpretation, inference, and analysis of textual content. Haryadi (2010) stated that reading is an interaction between the reader and the writer, where effective communication occurs only if the reader can decode and understand the intended message conveyed through the text. Similarly, Arina (2020) emphasized that readers

need to reconstruct the meaning presented by the author based on their prior knowledge and conceptual understanding.

However, based on classroom observations at SMAN 2 Rantau Selatan, it was identified that many students encounter difficulties in comprehending English texts, particularly narrative texts. This issue is partly attributed to the use of non-contextual and unengaging teaching materials that do not align with students' linguistic proficiency, interests, or local experiences. The lack of illustrations, relatable content, and structured skill development further demotivates learners and hampers their reading performance.

In addition, the existing materials do not sufficiently support the gradual development of reading comprehension skills. They often fail to consider students' backgrounds, local culture, or daily experiences, resulting in lower engagement and limited understanding of the texts. As Grabe (2009) notes, effective reading instruction must be grounded in materials that support active cognitive processing, scaffolded learning, and contextual relevance.

To address this gap, there is a pressing need to design and develop reading materials that are contextually appropriate, engaging, and systematically structured. This study focuses on the development of English narrative reading materials for Grade XI students, aligned with their cognitive level and cultural context. The development process follows the ADDIE model, which consists of five phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. This model has been widely adopted in instructional design due to its systematic, flexible, and learner-centered approach (Branch, 2016).

Through the application of the ADDIE framework, the reading materials are expected to not only meet curricular standards but also foster student motivation, engagement, and comprehension skills. The aim of this study is to create valid, effective, and relevant English reading materials that enhance the reading performance of senior high school students in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Nature of Reading

Reading is a complex cognitive process that involves the interpretation and construction of meaning from written symbols. Kintsch (2012) emphasized that reading comprehension involves more than just recognizing words; it requires the reader to actively integrate the information in the text with prior knowledge and to make logical inferences. He outlined three levels of mental representation that reflect a reader's depth of understanding: the surface code, the text base, and the situation model, which reflects the reader's integrated mental representation of the text.

Reading activities play a critical role in shaping a learner's language ability. As Haryadi (2010) explains, reading is an interactive process between the writer and the reader, wherein readers must interpret messages encoded in the text based on their own conceptual frameworks. Without adequate reading skills, learners struggle to construct meaning, hampering communication and learning.

2.2 Types of Reading Strategies

According to Rizki Perdiana (2022), there are several types of reading strategies commonly employed in language learning:

1. **Skimming:** A rapid reading technique used to understand the main idea or general theme of a text by focusing on titles, headings, and topic sentences.
2. **Scanning:** Used to find specific information such as numbers, names, or key terms without reading the entire text.
3. **Extensive Reading:** Involves reading longer texts such as novels or articles for overall understanding and enjoyment. It promotes fluency and vocabulary acquisition (Day & Bamford, 1998).
4. **Intensive Reading:** A detailed reading method that emphasizes analysis of language structure, grammar, and content, often used in academic contexts.
5. **Literal Reading:** Focuses on understanding directly stated information in the text.
6. **Inferential Reading:** Requires the reader to make logical connections and interpret meaning beyond the explicit content.
7. **Critical Reading:** Involves evaluating a text's arguments, logic, and evidence, allowing readers to assess the credibility and effectiveness of the author's message.

These strategies are essential for building robust reading comprehension, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms.

2.3 Reading Comprehension

Pang et al. (2015) define reading comprehension as an active, complex process that involves constructing meaning by interacting with text. Comprehension extends beyond decoding to include skills such as inferring, summarizing, and connecting new ideas to existing knowledge. According to Hariyanti and Damanik (2024), reading comprehension is influenced by multiple factors including the reader's motivation, background knowledge, the difficulty of the text, and the reading strategies employed. Therefore, improving reading comprehension requires not only the use of appropriate materials but also instruction in effective strategies such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing. Teachers must help students apply these strategies in various contexts to strengthen their reading skills.

2.4 Materials Development

Materials development refers to the design, creation, evaluation, and adaptation of instructional content to facilitate language learning. Ahmad (2015) notes that effective materials should be relevant, engaging, and tailored to learners' needs. Tomlinson (2011) further argues that materials should provide meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences and should consider learners' cultural and cognitive backgrounds. Materials development can take different forms, including:

1. **Original Development:** Creating materials from scratch based on learners' needs.
2. **Adaptation:** Modifying existing materials to better fit a local context.
3. **Selection:** Choosing appropriate content from available sources (Rombot, Boeriswati, & Suparman, 2020).

In this study, reading materials were developed using all three approaches, tailored specifically to the needs of Grade XI students.

2.5 ADDIE Instructional Design Model

The ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) is a systematic instructional design framework widely used in curriculum

and materials development. Branch (2016) describes ADDIE as flexible and iterative, allowing designers to continuously revise materials based on feedback and outcomes. The ADDIE model guides the developer from needs analysis to final evaluation, ensuring that each stage contributes to the overall quality of the instructional product. Its application in language education promotes the alignment of learning goals, instructional methods, and assessment tools.

2.6 Scientific Approach in Language Learning

The scientific approach in language learning encourages students to construct knowledge through inquiry, observation, analysis, and reflection—mimicking the process used by scientists (Puspita, Wardani, & Rabbani, 2023). This approach is aligned with the current Indonesian curriculum and emphasizes student-centered learning. It requires learners to observe phenomena, ask questions, collect data, and present their findings—thereby cultivating critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design using the ADDIE model, which stands for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The ADDIE model provides a structured, iterative process for creating instructional materials based on learners' needs. According to Sugiyono (2019), the model is suitable for developing educational tools because it ensures a logical sequence of actions from need analysis to effectiveness evaluation. Tegeh et al. (2014) also emphasize that ADDIE is grounded in sound instructional design theory and allows for ongoing refinement throughout the development cycle.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in March 2025 at SMAN 2 Rantau Selatan, located on Jl. Kancil Sigambal, Rantauprapat, North Sumatra. The participants included Grade XI students enrolled in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. A total of 30 students (10 males and 20 females) participated in the study. An English teacher and a media expert were also involved as validators in the development and validation phases.

3.3 Procedure

The development process followed the five stages of the ADDIE model:

a. Analysis

The researcher conducted classroom observations, interviews with the English teacher and students, and document reviews. These steps aimed to identify gaps in the existing reading materials. It was observed that most students lacked access to textbooks and the available texts were not aligned with their needs. The materials were text-heavy, lacked illustrations, and did not include supportive learning activities. This indicated the necessity for supplemental materials that were both engaging and contextually relevant.

b. Design

At this stage, learning objectives were established based on the Grade XI curriculum and syllabus. A gap was identified in the existing textbook, which included an exposition text in Unit 4, whereas the syllabus specified narrative text for that unit. Accordingly, a narrative module titled *Folktales* was designed to align with the

curriculum while incorporating images, vocabulary support, and comprehension exercises.

c. Development

Two experts participated in the validation process: a material and language expert (an English teacher from the same school) and a media expert (a graduate in Visual Communication Design). The reading materials were developed using authentic and culturally relevant texts adapted to students' reading levels. Initial drafts were revised based on feedback from both experts. Content was enhanced with visual elements and exercises targeting comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

d. Implementation

The developed materials were implemented in the classroom over a series of sessions. The scientific approach was used to guide instruction. Activities included:

- Observing visual prompts
- Participating in question-and-answer sessions
- Searching for related information
- Analyzing sentence structures
- Presenting summaries
- Composing original folktales

Students completed a pretest before implementation and a posttest after the instructional cycle to measure improvement in reading comprehension.

e. Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Students' feedback was collected regarding the relevance, clarity, and engagement of the materials. Additionally, test scores from the pretest and posttest were analyzed to assess learning gains.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through:

- Observation: Classroom behaviors and material use
- Interviews: Feedback from students and the English teacher
- Expert validation: Structured assessment using scoring rubrics
- Pretest and posttest: Student scores before and after implementation.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and expert validation percentages. Quantitative data from the pretest and posttest were analyzed to calculate the mean improvement in reading scores. The following formula was used to calculate validity:

$$\text{Percentage Validity} = \left(\frac{\text{Total Score Obtained}}{\text{Maximum Possible Score}} \right) \times 100$$

Validation was conducted separately for content (by a subject matter expert) and media (by a design expert). Qualitative feedback was analyzed thematically to support the quantitative results.

4. Discussion

The development of English reading materials in this study was guided by the ADDIE instructional design model, which facilitated the structured creation of relevant and effective content for Grade XI students. The following discussion outlines the outcomes at each stage of the ADDIE process and their implications for instructional practice.

4.1 Analysis Phase

Findings from classroom observations and teacher interviews highlighted several critical issues in the existing instructional context. Most students lacked personal access to English textbooks, and the materials provided were not aligned with learners' needs or the prescribed curriculum. The available texts were not contextualized to the students' experiences, lacked visual engagement, and did not provide guided comprehension activities. These limitations reduced student motivation and hindered reading comprehension. These findings are consistent with the views of Arina (2020) and Pang et al. (2015), who emphasize the importance of aligning instructional materials with students' backgrounds and learning goals to promote meaningful engagement.

4.2 Design Phase

In response to these issues, instructional objectives were designed based on the official Grade XI syllabus. The design emphasized the inclusion of narrative texts that reflect students' cultural context, promote vocabulary development, and stimulate engagement through the use of illustrations and interactive comprehension exercises. The new content, titled *Folktales*, was tailored specifically to fill the curricular gap found in Unit 4 of the school's English textbook, which originally focused on exposition texts rather than the required narrative genre.



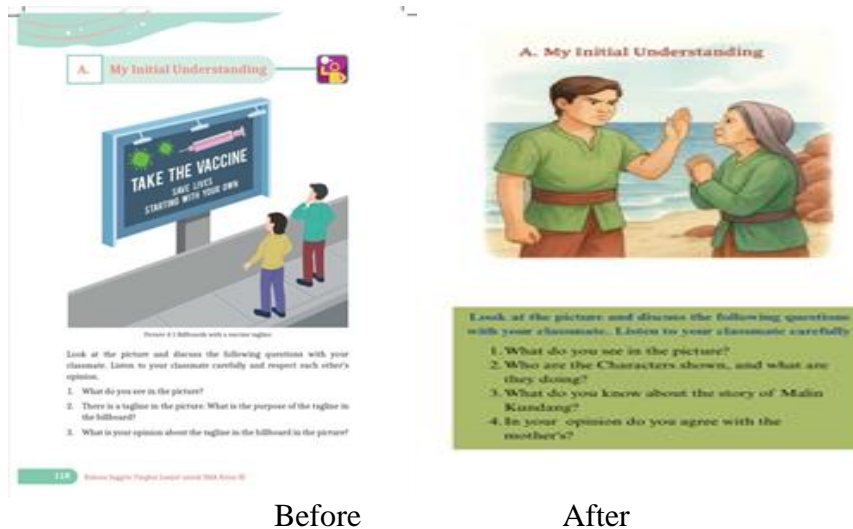
Before

After

3. Development Phase

The reading materials were developed in accordance with the design specifications and validated by two experts. The subject matter expert focused on the relevance, structure, and clarity of the materials, while the media expert evaluated layout, visual design, and integration between text and illustration. The validation results were highly favorable, with the subject matter expert assigning a 90% validity score and the media expert assigning 85%. These results indicate a high level of acceptability and readiness for classroom implementation.

Materials were further improved based on the validators' feedback. Texts were adapted for language level and cultural relevance, and visual elements were enhanced to support comprehension. This aligns with recommendations from Tomlinson (2011) and Rombot et al. (2020), who advocate for authentic, visually supported texts to improve engagement and comprehension.



4. Implementation Phase

The instructional materials were implemented in a real classroom setting with 30 Grade XI students. The scientific approach, as suggested by Puspita et al. (2023), guided the teaching strategy. Students were involved in observing visual prompts, analyzing language structures, conducting peer discussions, and creating original stories. This learner-centered methodology encouraged critical thinking and contextual understanding.

A pretest was administered before the intervention and a posttest after the implementation. The pretest average was 58, while the posttest average increased to 84, indicating a 26-point improvement. Additionally, 93% of students achieved mastery, further demonstrating the materials' effectiveness.

No	Date	Learning Materials
1	Monday, 10 March 2025	Observasi and interview with teacher, student, and document.
2	Wednesday, 12 March 2025	Perform pre-test
3	Saturday, 15 March 2025	Narrative text types and purpose, and read the text of Malin Kundang.
4	Monday, 17 March 2025	Perform post-test
5	Wednesday, 23 April 2025	Evaluation

Table 1: The Trial Schedule

5. Evaluation Phase

The evaluation phase focused on three critical components: student feedback, material validity, and instructional effectiveness. Each aspect was assessed through structured data collection and analysis.

5.1 Student Feedback

Qualitative feedback was obtained from students following the implementation of the developed reading materials. Their responses were categorized into five key areas:

1. **Engagement:** Students reported that the texts were more enjoyable and relatable than previously used materials, which increased their motivation to read.
2. **Clarity:** Vocabulary and sentence structures were deemed easier to understand, which improved comprehension and reduced reading anxiety.
3. **Visual Design:** The inclusion of relevant illustrations helped students visualize content, aiding retention and understanding.
4. **Relevance:** Topics were aligned with students' daily lives and local cultural experiences, making the material more meaningful.
5. **Comprehension Support:** Comprehension questions and exercises placed at the end of each passage were helpful in reinforcing key ideas and checking understanding.

These insights affirm that the materials enhanced both the cognitive (comprehension) and affective (engagement) dimensions of reading. These results are in line with Grabe's (2009) assertion that contextualized and scaffolded materials significantly improve second-language reading comprehension.

5.2 Validity of Materials

The validity of the developed English reading materials was assessed by two experts: a subject matter expert (SME) and a media design expert. Each used a 4-point rubric to evaluate five criteria. The results are shown below.

No.	Aspect	Maximum Score	Score Obtained
1	Consistency of content with basic competencies	4	4
2	Determination of the structure of the reading text	4	3
3	Relevance of the material to the student context	4	4
4	Correctness of English language use	4	3
5	Clarity of instructions	4	4
	Total	20	18

$$\text{Percentage Validity} = (18 \div 20) \times 100 = 90\%$$

Table 2: Validation Results from Subject Matter Expert

No.	Aspect	Maximum Score	Score Obtained
1	Layout and visual design	4	4
2	Consistency of format and aesthetics	4	3
3	Readability (font, color)	4	4
4	Compatibility of illustrations with reading content	4	3
5	Integration between text and images	4	3
	Total	20	17

$$\text{Percentage Validity} = (17 \div 20) \times 100 = 85\%$$

Table 3: Validation Results from Media Expert

5.3 Instructional Effectiveness

To evaluate learning gains, a pretest and posttest were administered to 30 students. The results are presented below.

No	Nama siswa	Pree-test	Post test	Description
1	student 1	58	82	Increased
2	Student 2	58	84	Increased
3	Student 3	58	84	Increased
4	Student 4	58	84	Increased
5	Student 5	60	84	Increased
6	Student 6	57	84	Increased
7	Student 7	58	84	Increased
8	Student 8	58	84	Increased
9	Student 9	58	84	Increased
10	Student 10	61	85	Increased
11	Student 11	62	74	Increased
12	Student 12	58	84	Increased
13	Student 13	58	84	Increased
14	Student 14	58	84	Increased
15	Student 15	56	83	Increased
16	Student 16	58	84	Increased
17	Student 17	59	69	Increased
18	Student 18	55	84	Increased
19	Student 19	58	84	Increased
20	Student 20	58	84	Increased
21	Student 21	58	84	Increased
22	Student 22	58	84	Increased
23	Student 23	58	77	Increased
24	Student 24	58	84	Increased
25	Student 25	53	84	Increased
26	Student 26	58	84	Increased

27	Student 27	58	80	Increased
28	Student 28	58	84	Increased
29	Student 29	58	84	Increased
30	Student 30	54	84	Increased

Table 4: Pretest and Posttest Scores of Participating Students

Test Type	Average Score	Improvement
Pretest	58	
Posttest	84	+26

Table 5: Average Pretest and Posttest Scores

Category	Student Count	Percentage
Completed	28	93%
Not Completed	2	7%

Table 6: Student Learning Completion Rates

The results indicate that 93% of students achieved mastery, based on the school's minimum completion standards. This high rate of success confirms that the developed reading materials were effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to develop effective English reading materials to improve the reading comprehension skills of Grade XI students at SMAN 2 Rantau Selatan. The research followed the ADDIE development model, encompassing five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Each phase was carefully executed to ensure that the materials addressed learners' needs, curricular alignment, and instructional effectiveness. The developed materials—focused on narrative texts contextualized to students' lives—were validated by both content and media experts. The validation results indicated high levels of acceptability, with scores of 90% from the subject matter expert and 85% from the media expert. These results confirmed that the reading materials were pedagogically sound, visually engaging, and aligned with educational standards. Effectiveness testing through a pretest-posttest design demonstrated a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension. The average score increased from 58 (pretest) to 84 (posttest), and 93% of students met the minimum mastery criteria. Qualitative feedback from students also revealed that the materials were perceived as engaging, clear, relevant, and supportive of comprehension. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the reading materials developed using the ADDIE model are valid, practical, and effective for use in English language instruction at the senior high school level. The integration of culturally relevant content, illustrations, and targeted comprehension activities contributed to both the cognitive and affective development of learners. For future research, it is recommended that similar materials be developed for other genres or language skills (e.g., listening, writing), comparative studies be conducted using control and experimental groups to strengthen

generalizability, larger samples and diverse school settings be included to test the scalability and adaptability of the materials, and digital or interactive versions of the materials be explored to support blended and remote learning environments. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on instructional material development and highlight the importance of contextual, student-centered resources in enhancing language learning outcomes.

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