

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter presented about the general description of the paper. It consists of research background, research problem, research purposes, research significances and definition of key terms.

#### 1.1 Research Background

The setting of the urban slum environment in the film *Fish Tank (2009)* plays an important role in shaped the atmosphere in the story. The film *Fish Tank (2009)* is set in the suburbs of Essex, England which depicted social class differences with high-end luxury housing shown as rundown social housing, full of disrepair, cramped, unkempt and full of worn out furniture which showed the difficult living conditions experienced by low-income families, limited resources and affects the quality of daily life including privacy, comfort and safety. Mia often spend time in confined and rough public spaces including streets and vacant lots littered with graffiti, rubbish interpreting the lack of decent public facilities and suggested marginalized communities trapped in intractable poverty, lower class living conditions, whereas well-maintained neighborhoods symbolize the upper class as well as lack of access to opportunities including quality education, decent jobs and decent public facilities. This showed that poverty can lead to social alienation, whether physical (isolated neighborhoods) or emotional (feeling not understood) and reflects a critique of society ignored or alienated individuals lived in poverty.

The socio-economic conditions depicted in the film *Fish Tank (2009)* reflected the economic limitations experienced by Mia's family created tension at home and lack of opportunities to achieved dreams and aspirations that are financially constrained. Limited resources illustrated the impact of poverty on life including limited public facilities and financial limitations as a symbol represented limitations in social mobility made it difficult to improve social or economic status and exacerbated a sense of hopelessness and being taken for granted by economically stable families. The film *Fish Tank (2009)* refers to the main character struggled with economic realities amidst a lack of access to

decent work, access to education, trained and opportunities that can helped escape poverty. This illustrated the stigma or judgment that limits individuals based on their economic background and affected the way they are treated and the opportunities that poor families face. In addition, poverty is not only a backdrop to the story but also an element that shaped the characters and drove the plot as well as influenced Mia's life, shaped her personality and drove the development of the story.

Social problems that occur in the urban slums of Essex, England used visual and narrative symbols in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) show deprived living conditions in the slums that affect every aspect of Mia's life, there are gaps in opportunities, education and living standards that affected expectations and reinforce the cycle of poverty, reflect and criticize the real social conditions of poverty through in-depth depictions of Mia's life and living environment, created an environment of stress and conflict that lacks emotional support and stability from the family and Mia feels neglected and unloved, confronts gender stereotypes that limit opportunities and influence how others treat women and thus limit choices, opportunities and ways of seeing oneself and the future and criticizes social, economic, policy and justice systems as well as inequalities that fail the lower classes who are ignored by the government and highlights the failure of social policies to provide adequate and effective assistance to the poor.

Mia Williams in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) is the main character played by Katie Jarvis who lived with her mother, Joanne who has a complex nature that changed depending on the situation, hard, hates Mia, has a gentle nature, exerted influence on Mia and her younger sister, Tyler with a difficult nature to understand, hard, often fights with Mia and is loved by Mia in a rundown suburban area in Essex, England. Characteristics Mia is a 15-year-old teenager who is in search of identity and freedom through dance which is considered unfair by her mother and the environment so that she experiences emotional instability, becomes rebellious, stubborn, impulsive, involved in conflicts with peers and difficulty in communication. Mia and her family's lives changed when her mother dates Connor, a man who worked as a member of the security team

at a store with a fatherly attitude that attracted Mia and Tyler who have never felt a father's love. But over time Mia's admiration turns into love between a woman and a man.

The close relationship between Mia and Connor made Mia jealous when Connor slept with her mother. But Connor also paid more attention to Mia until one night when her mother was drunk in the room, Mia and Connor had intercourse. In the morning, Mia heard that Connor had broken up with her mother, so she went to Connor's house and found out that Connor was married and had a daughter named Keira. Feeling depressed and heartbroken Mia took Keira away and almost harms her, then Mia returned Keira to Connor and at the end Mia changed and learns a lesson.

Independence, adaptability and Hope reflected human or individual characteristics of survival in the face of problems. Self-reliance is a striking and consistent characteristic because Mia as a teenage character demonstrated strong independence by making her own decisions in the face of challenging life situations including finding ways to support herself and pursue her interests in dance without the help of family. In addition, Mia must also adapt to the many changes and challenges she faces including complicated relationships with her mother and Connor, financial and emotional difficulties and dancing gave Mia hope despite feeling depressed about her living conditions, helped her to focus on the future and giving her a reason to keep fighting when things seem bleak. Although filled with conflict, Mia began to learn to develop a mature attitude in interacting with others. In addition, Mia has hope from making mistakes and facing obstacles and her interactions with others.

The film *Fish Tank* (2009) used interactions between characters and social issues that occur to depict the reality of life in urban slums. Through social interactions such as conflicted family relationships and verbal abuse between Mia and her mother, it interpreted the emotional and psychological distress that accompanied poverty and that poverty not only affects physical conditions but also mental well-being, resulting in a lack of emotional support that Mia needs. This is because the environment is filled with negative influences including friends who engage in illegal activities that complicate the chances

of achieving a better life and Mia often engaged in risky behaviors and conflicts that reflected the social impact of poverty as well as an interpretation of a form of protest against social marginalization that encouraged acting against societal norms. In addition, the storyline of the main character experienced exploitation, discrimination reflected social injustice and the struggle against oppression, the attempt to achieve justice or rebellion is a symbol and metaphor that reflected the social dynamics and dissatisfaction of the lower class against the social class.

In the film *Fish Tank* (2009), social problems influence the characteristics of the main character to survive in the midst of social problems in Essex England in the late 2000s by providing an in-depth and realistic depiction of life in slums and housing challenges in Essex England trapped in a cycle of poverty and social injustice with a social background, economics (low income levels, unmet needs), struggles (maintaining the values of honesty, loyalty and caring) and aspirations (desiring to find oneself, seeking freedom) that affected the behavior and daily life of individuals and communities and interactions that reinforce the social problems faced in the slum environment. By analyzing the film *Fish Tank* (2009) the researcher found out how the film reflected social problems including poverty, class disparity, dysfunctional family dynamics and gender stereotypes and how the characteristics of the main character survived including independence, adaptability and hope.

The film *Fish Tank* (2009) deeply explored various social issues through strong narratives and in-depth characterization with Mia's life story and her interactions with people around her including problems being part of social life that require resolution to be used as lessons. This is because in everyday life individuals will never be separated from problems. Because as social creatures who constantly interact, they created realities that are different from the ideals in society that threaten the interests of individuals or groups (Sari, 2018). Social problems are formed from injustice, inequality, problems in interpersonal relationships that affected the quality of life and form a context where Mia tried to face social problems and challenged and pursue dreams that result in poverty,

social class disparities, dysfunctional family dynamics and gender stereotypes in the film *Fish Tank* (2009).

The film *Fish Tank* (2009) provided a powerful and emotional portrayal of poverty that served as a backdrop and affected every aspect of an individual's life. Poverty in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) is a phenomenon of a person not being able to adjust to the standard of living, adjust to the environment and not have adequate access to personal needs (Soerjono, 2009). With access to education, employment, food, housing, health, and social and legal justice, Andrea Arnold succeeds in creating a realistic and touching narrative. Poverty impacted on living conditions (health, education, welfare, crime and violence), family and interactions, limited aspirations, rebellion and low self-esteem as well as mental and emotional health. Through Mia's character, *Fish Tank* (2009) invited us to reflect on the wider impact of poverty, economic injustice and the importance of social support, equal opportunities for all and the impact on social class disparities.

The film *Fish Tank* (2009) explored the themes of social class disparity in an in-depth and realistic way depicting the economic and social differences affected Mia's life in the background with high and low class divisions, as indicated by (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Social class where environmental conditions in the working class are slum and economically less prosperous, creating limited opportunities in a less supportive environment, resulted in social class disparities including in aspects of housing, economic, digital, employment, education and lifestyle and affecting the family because in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) there are dysfunctional family dynamics that are less noticed. In the film *Fish Tank* (2009) social class disparity is portrayed as a significant barrier to dreams and life goals but also highlights the resilience and determination of individuals to overcome these limitations and impacted on life including social instability, decreased welfare, limited social access, public health and education.

The family structure in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) has 3 members, namely Mia, Joanne (her mother) and Tyler (her younger brother) and does not have a father figure who is an important component because the family is the smallest

unit of society consisting of the head of the family and other members who live in the same place and are mutually dependent on each other (Andriyani, 2016). Family dynamics is an interaction between individuals with family members and know their conditions in the surrounding environment. However, interactions can be incompatible, created dysfunctional family dynamics that pose a threat to the development of a family with low levels of health, safety, well-being and other positive factors (Diane & R. D, 2008). Through Mia's character and situation, parental indifference, tension in family relationships, internal and external conflicts and economic instability created an unsupportive and stressful environment. The impact of dysfunctional family dynamics include emotional and psychological problems, relationship difficulties, academic and work problems, substance abuse and criminal behavior and the resulting gender stereotypes.

Traditional gender roles that occur in the film *Fish Tank (2009)* referred to the roles of female characters and male characters who are different, as indicated by Azisah (2016) that gender is a difference between men and women that is built through social and cultural factors. Meanwhile, according to Matsumoto, stereotyping is a reasoning that forms conclusions about a person's character or behavior (Liliwari, 2005). Gender stereotypes that have been generalized include Connor as a man: strong, leader, aggressive, sporty and Joanne and Mia as women: emotional, weak, nurturer, housewife, feminine. Gender stereotypes can influence individual perceptions and treatment of the sexes, sexual exploitation and limit one's choices and opportunities and result in gender discrimination in society (Connor's emotionality and masculinity). This can happen because in social life, a problem is created that will have an impacted on behavior so that the resilience characteristics of each individual are different.

Resilience characteristics are clearly visible in Mia's life which referred to the ability to face, adapted and bounce back from various challenged and difficulties faced as shown in Notoatmodjo (2012) that characteristics are a differentiator that affected individual behavior by being divided into demographic characteristics (age), social structure (education, employment)

and economic status. In addition, characteristics in the context of film are shown in various elements and aspects including character identification (physical, psychological, social), plot, setting, cinematography and other elements that form characteristics. This is what made characteristics influenced by social problems so as to create characteristics of society or individuals to survived in the face of problems called resilience. In the film *Fish Tank* (2009), the characteristics of resilience are clearly seen through Mia's life full of challenges, dysfunctional family environment, economic limitations and interpersonal problems, Mia shows the ability to adapted, struggle and continue life shown through resilience theory is an approach that focused on an individual's ability to adapted, survived and rise from trauma or life difficulties (Istantiani, 2020). Mia's ability to overcome difficulties, taked initiative, adapted to an unsupportive environment, seek support from others is a clear example of resilience. There are several important elements including independence, adaptability and hope.

Independence is a central theme that manifests through Mia's life and refers to an individual's ability to rely on themselves in facing challenges and making decisions without relying on others (Risfi, 2019). In resilience theory, independence includes several important aspects that contribute to how individuals overcome problems and achieve goals including decision maked based on personal judgment without being influenced by others, self-management skills (regulating emotions, time), resilience (the ability to bounce back from failure or difficulty), initiative (the ability to take proactive action and find solutions without waiting for direction from others), and determination to pursue dreams. Mia's independence is a reflection of her struggle to achieved life goals and protect herself in the midst of uncertainty and problems and through adaptability.

Adaptability is seen in Mia as the main character who faces and adapted to various challenged and changed in her life as shown in Setyawan (2020), adaptability is the ability to adjust to changed, new situations or challenged by including the ability to changed or adjust attitudes, strategies or behaviors to suit certain conditions. In addition, in literature adaptability referred to the

ability of characters, stories or narrative elements to adapted or changed to changing conditions or situations and responses to interpersonal relationships. This can be interpreted through several factors including Mia's adaptive character (adjusting to difficult environmental changes to achieved goals), overcoming emotional difficulties, adapting to social and cultural, story development (referred to the plot or storyline and adapted to character development or situations), how themes or writing styles adapted to narrative needs and become the key to facing challenged and achieved personal aspirations or hopes.

The theme of hope is an important element that driven the main character, Mia and gave meaning to her struggles and is appropriated regarding hope being a belief or desire that something positive or desirable will happen in the future with aspected of life including relationships, career, health and others (Siswadi, 2022). Hope can be described as the central theme or motivated that motivated the actions of the main character Mia, directs the storyline and referred to optimistic expectations about the desired outcome, confidence that the efforts and actions taken will achieved the achievement, acceptance and improvement in family dynamics are important aspected of the narrative of the film *Fish Tank* (2009). Although Mia faces various difficulties there are several important elements of hope including hope is related to the perception of the future and the belief that the future can be better, provides energy and motivation to keep trying when facing challenged, involves confidence in one's ability to achieve goals, improves her living conditions which is a source of strength, is associated with an optimistic attitude and a positive outlook on life and helps in managed negative emotions including anxiety and hopelessness, gives Mia meaning and purpose in life and illustrates the importance of having goals.

This research was inspired by several previous studies, including Laksamana Tatas Prasetya (L.T, 2022) entitled *Representasi Kelas Sosial Dalam Film Gundala (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes)*. In this study Prasetya categorised social classes, such as the lower social class described by education, the upper social class by fashion, wealth and position, the conflict



between classes described by the conflict between workers-factory owners and finally the gap between classes by residence (L.T, 2022).

The second is Tuti Alawiyah, Alia, Dwira Safitri (Alawiyah, T. & Safitri, D, 2023) entitled *Permasalahan Sosial Dalam Film Pertaruhan Sutradara Sidharta Tata dan Relevansinya Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia* In this study they categorized social problems that occur in society in the film *Pertaruhan* including poverty, crime and family disorganization and relevance in Indonesian Language learning, namely learning about various social problems in society and how social problems affected individual and family life. This study uses literary sociology research to analyzed the social problems displayed in the film *Pertaruhan* and the importance of social awareness and how literary works become a medium for discussion and learning about social problems that occur.

The third is Michelle Angela, Septia Winduwati (Angela, M & Winduwati, S, 2019) entitled *Representasi Kemiskinan dalam Film Korea Selatan (Analisis Semiotika Model Saussure pada Film Parasite)* In this study they represented poverty in the film *Parasite* that film as a mass communication medium with the rapidly growing South Korean film industry and received support from the government, especially internet infrastructure. The film *Parasite* depicts the social and economic reality in South Korea regarded poverty and social inequality by featuring the Kim family who are poor and trying to survived. This research used Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic analyzed with visual and narrative signs to represented poverty.

The fourth is Julia Ayu Gracia, Daniel Budiana & Megawati Wahjudianata (2021) entitled *Representasi Disfungsi Keluarga dalam Film Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* In this studied they described that a family drama film is a film that raises the theme of the reality of everyday life and sometimes displays conflicts in family relationships. The film *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* is based on the best-selling book by Marchella FP which contains short messages that reflected the experience of life in simplicity and a family drama film that raised the theme of family dysfunction by told the secrets of the family's past.

Family dysfunction is a situation in which there are conflicts or disputed between family members that affected the integrity of the family.

The fifth is Enjang Saputri majoring in Islamic Guidance and Counseling (Enjang, 2023) thesis entitled *Resiliensi dalam Menghadapi Masalah Keluarga melalui Tokoh Utama dalam Film Birthday* in this studied Enjang analyzed the main character in the *Birthday* film used resilience theory. There are several analyzed including the definition of resilience is an individual who faces problems and adapted and recovered from difficulties, analyzed of the main character with resilience theory includes character changed, decisions made and actions taken to overcome challenged with factors supporting resilience including social support, self-confidence and strategied used, how the findings of this studied can be applied in real life and reflections on the importance of resilience in dealing with family problems.

The sixth is Etnadea Silvia, Wisma Kurniawati (Silvia, 2023) entitled *Representasi Kemandirian Tokoh Rocca Dalam Film Jerman Rocca Verändert Die Welt* In this studied they discuss films not only as a mean of entertainment but as a cultural product that reflected the social reality of society used the concepted of *mise-en-scène* explained by Bordwell, Thompson and Smith included visual elements in the film including setting, costumes, lighting and staging that created visual representations that supported narrative and characterization. By using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory that focused on signs in the film, it has denotative and connotative meanings that expand the understood of representation in the film. Teenage independence becomes the main theme in the film *Rocca verändert die Welt* which involved aspected of independence and autonomy by described the journey of the main character Rocca in facing challenged and problems that shape her character into an independent teenager and identifying the values of independence built by German society.

The last is Lisa Firnanda (Firnanda, L. L., 2023) entitled *"Unsur Kebudayaan Dalam Novel "Hati Suhita" Karya Khilma Anis Dengan Pendekatan Mimetik"* In this studied Lisa describes that the mimetic approach is an approach that views literary works as imitations of nature with depictions

of the world and life as the main criteria and is related to cultural elements called universal culture. Plato's theory of mimesis stated that everything in the world is actually just an imitation of reality. In addition, culture is a way of life that is passed down through generations by the learned process and can be analyzed with a mimetic approach including religious systems, art and language. This research analyzed the cultural elements in the novel "*Hati Suhita*" by Khilma Anis that contain religious values, tawadhu santri and Javanese cultural preservation with a mimetic approach.

The researcher wanted to know how the characteristics of the main character survived in the midst of social problems that hit in relation to the mimetic theory in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) because the characteristics of the main character, Mia, are a character with a developmental age who is becoming an identity in an urban slum family environment so that social problems arise when the desire for freedom conflicts with social norms and seeks meaning in a challenging life as a response to inequality and injustice in society. Thus, to find the characteristics of the main character's survival in the face of social problems and issues such as poverty, social class disparity, dysfunctional family dynamics and gender stereotypes in the film *Fish Tank* (2009), the researcher used mimetic theory because the theory is appropriate to use based on the research problem.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Based on the background that has been described, the researcher tried to represented social problems and the characteristics of the main character survived in the midst of social problems in the film *Fish Tank* (2009) with the scenes found. Therefore, the researcher took the following questions:

1. What are the social problems in the film *Fish Tank* (2009)?
2. How do the characteristics of the main character survive in the midst of social problems in England Essex in 2008-2009 in the film *Fish Tank* (2009)?

## 1.3 Research Purposes

Based on these research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find the social problems in the film *Fish Tank (2009)*.
2. To describe the characteristics of the main character surviving amidst social problems in 2008-2009 Essex England in the film *Fish Tank (2009)*.

#### **1.4 Research Significances**

Theoretically, the purpose of this study is to provide valuable contributions and can expand knowledge about social problems depicted there are poverty, social class disparities, dysfunctional family dynamics, gender stereotypes and the characteristics of the main character to survive amidst social problems in 2008-2009 Essex England including independence, adaptability and hope.

Practically, this research added information and insight for readers and future researchers who want to examine more fundamentally social problems and the characteristics of the main character to survive amidst social problems in 2008-2009 Essex England in the film *Fish Tank (2009)*.

#### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

##### **1. Film**

A film is a work of art that combines moving images, sound and stories conveyed through visual and audio media. Film can be used for entertainment, education, information and artistic expression and include various genres including drama, horror, documentary action and comedy.

##### **2. Cinematography Theory**

Cinematography theory is a study of the techniques and aesthetics of shooting in filmmaking including elements such as lighting, camera movement, composition, visual perspective and lens choice. Cinematography theory refers to how these elements are used to create atmosphere, support the narrative and influence the audience.

### **3. Social Problems**

Social problems are issues that affect society and require attention and resolution because they affect the welfare of society. Social problems arise from social, economic, political or environmental injustice or conflict.

### **4. Characteristics**

The characteristics of human survival in the face of problems are found in resilience theory. Resilience theory is the ability to bounce back from adversity and adapt well despite stress or trauma. In the context of literature or film, resilience can be seen in how characters overcome obstacles and difficulties and how characters develop from these experiences.

