

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter was conducted intentionally in serving the introduction of research which determined in the following content from research background, research question, research objective, research significances, and the definition of key terms.

#### 1.1 Research Background

The discourse on the meaning of human life cannot be separated from everyday life and its relationship with the environment and other humans. Apart from living as individuals, human beings also live as citizens of certain times. In living his life, the meaning of life would also change along with the way humans meets his needs as it changes from one way to another according to the times (Frazier, 2004). Since ancient times human beings have made ends meet by exchanging needs with others. Until the creation of exchange rates and currencies to facilitate meeting these needs. Human beings have discovered a system that will affect their lives for several generations afterwards, namely by trading using the exchange rate of a particular item or object.

As modernity begins, there was a shift in the mode of thought, from being only obedient to the hegemony of religious rules to a rational way of thinking since ancient Greek thought was rediscovered. With this shift in the mode of thought, there was a reinterpretation of the meaning of human life as well as the development of science and technology which was marked by the Enlightenment era (Powell, 2015). Moreover, this event is preceded by industrial revolution with the change in the structure of human life from an agricultural to an industrial. Along with the occurrence of mass industrial processes in urban areas, people from villages have flocked to leave their old lives to work industry in urban areas.

Human beings have been focused on the mass production of the necessities of life, rather than focus on humans such as individual and social relations. So that the

hierarchical structure of society changed to capitalistic with the owner of capital and the means of production control the course of life for the next several centuries. The view of spiritual aspects and romantic has replaced with development of a very mechanistic and materialistic world view. Since there are dualism between the owners of capital and the workers, there is a clear difference with mode of thought of the two group (Fremstedal, 2011). But there are similarities in the mindset of the two groups, namely the attitudes and mindset that are surrounded by the ease of fulfilling their daily needs. Especially for the workers, they are required to produce as much income as possible which is also supported by continuous production to maintain production rates and increase company profits.

With the vivid continuous development of technology, especially in the field of communication and information. Production processes are progressing rapidly without recognizing the boundaries of certain regions and groups. Humans look the same and universal in the face of the late capitalist economic system. In living their daily lives, humans seem to have been controlled by this perspective as if there is no other way but to replace all social relations with formal exchange rates, be it material or non-material. In carrying out its objectives, the corporation or company will form a meaning which is represented only by certain markers when most activities were supported by technology construction such as TV, Radio, Internet, etc. Examples of such things as easy to see as advertisements that can be found every day. After the sign was disseminated, the public assumed that it was all the real reality. Humans have reacted to life only with simulations that are deliberately formed by institutions or corporations (Firat & Kutucuo, n.d.).

The workers work itself with only demands from the company for profit and survives the prevailing system. The workers here will respond to work not wholeheartedly and in its fullest sense. Rather, it is just an obligation that must be fulfilled for the sake of an empty social stage that causes a tremendous feeling of emptiness for the worker. Even in their other activities, they have been crammed with

simulated markers. They can no longer distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary.

The company's has no longer has difficulty in producing goods for society because corporations are given the freedom to run their business. Meanwhile, the number of workers were reduced because the production process does not really need human labor, but with machines and digitalization that have replaced them. Then, as the amount of stock of production goods has been abundant and the number of workers has been reduced as little as possible. The next corporate goal is to create as many consumers as possible as the growth of information and communication technology plays a very important role in helping this process. The process namely by creating advertisements that are always present in every aspect of society's lives.

In this consumer society, according Baudrillard (2012) problems regarding the economy and inequality have gone unnoticed. Because in an "advanced" democratic country, economic growth can be said to experience growth only by general calculations according to the equality principle of an egalitarian society. So that the concern has shifted to abstract things such as social status resulting from the consumption of the value of a good or service. So that social status is no longer seen from production and real economic terms but from the point of view of consumption of goods that have a certain sign value.

The individual human beings, they have reduced all forms of life to the value of an object. Even in deeply hidden things like emotions, fear, will, and ego, personality has become an inseparable part of the exchange value of an object. The search for identity which could be manifested by experiencing certain experiences, establishing real social relationships, contemplating the meaning of life, or by creating personal principles as a provision to live life has been replaced by the consumption of "signs" of an object. Individuals, in this case, no longer think about real life and are introspective through the inner meaning of life. They have replaced it only with objects of particular value which are sometimes seems 'magical' only to themselves (Powell, 2015).

These circumstances give rise to nil thinking and an empty state in the human soul. This occurs because there is no value or principle in the individual other than the object of consumption seen and the sign received. Furthermore, a situation like this causes a feeling of never having enough and symptoms of personality disorders or such physical or mental issues which results from the pursuit of social status through the consumption of objects and turns into an endless competition (Baudrillard & Baudrillard, 2012).

The individual must be fully aware of what is going on and realize his own free will to experience self-emancipation. Self-emancipation in human beings would come from the search for identity in the self-consciousness of each individual. Even though each individual already has the awareness and ego or identity. In himself, there is a desire to know more about what he is and what is not. Human self-awareness in the process of looking for "*the self*" identity does not only see and feel what is happening within oneself but also involves whatever is "not" oneself. This process always requires external things such as environmental, social, and prevailing realities. When this individual's consciousness knows "himself" and what he is not he will immediately realize his position with the others and the world (Fremstedal, 2012).

When he began to realize that he was an object of control in the external world. He will try to find his own uniqueness and strength to fight for emancipation. Likewise with the consciousness which realizes that it can control the external world, He will realize that he is separate from his natural identity so that he will let go of his social identity and feel changes to achieve unity and high values. Furthermore, the self-emancipation human beings arrived at the counterculture concept intended in this research. Counterculture is an individual and individual effort collectively in realizing their unique identity according to what they believe. With the intention of not following the dominant external aspect, they want to challenge its validity, namely the mainstream life paradigm, which in this case, a reality that happening with its toxication by consumerism from capitalism and hyperreality that occurs (Desmond et al., 2000).

In the latter part of the 20th century, a seismic shift occurred in societal values, marked by the ascendance of consumerism as a defining force in shaping individual identities and collective norms. Against this backdrop, Palahniuk's "*Fight Club*" emerges as a powerful literary vehicle through which the researcher aims to dissect the intricacies and consequences of a consumer-driven ethos. Central to the investigation is the manifestation of counter-cultural sentiments within the narrative, as exemplified by the formation of an underground fight club as a resistance to conformity and materialism. Employing narrative analysis, the study delves into Palahniuk's storytelling techniques, including the use of unreliable narration and symbolism, to discern deeper layers of meaning.

Beyond a surface-level critique of consumerism, the research probes the psychological and societal implications inherent in the characters' struggles with identity and alienation. In doing so, it contributes to broader academic discussions within the realms of literature, cultural studies, and sociology. The research also aspires to shed light on the enduring cultural impact of "*Fight Club*" by investigating critical reception and its influence on contemporary discourse surrounding consumerism, identity formation, and the emergence of counter-cultural narratives in the modern era. Through this multifaceted exploration, the study seeks to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dimensions embedded in Palahniuk's seminal work.

Published in 1996, '*Fight Club*' is a seminal literary work by Chuck Palahniuk that has garnered substantial acclaim and subsequently underwent cinematic adaptation in 1999 under the direction of David Fincher, featuring Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, and Helena Bonham Carter. Within the context of a rapidly evolving consumer society, the narrative unfolds around an unnamed protagonist commonly identified as 'the Narrator,' whose character is defined by a palpable dissatisfaction with his contemporary, consumer-centric lifestyle.

*Fight Club* has garnered both critical acclaim and controversy, attributed to its vivid portrayal of violence and its incisive examination of contemporary cultural dynamics, particularly the discontents arising from the unrestrained pursuit of consumerism. The work has achieved cult status, underscoring Chuck Palahniuk's

distinctive writing style marked by dark humor, satirical reflections, and a fearless exploration of unconventional and provocative themes. It is noteworthy that while the novel is undeniably compelling and intellectually stimulating, certain readers may perceive its content as intense or disconcerting. Furthermore, the interpretative nature of the themes and messages within the narrative not only invites but necessitates discussions that delve into its profound meanings and societal commentaries, offering a lens through which to analyze and critique the dynamics of the consumer-driven culture portrayed in *'Fight Club.'*

Based on the background of the research above the researcher intends to conduct research entitled "The Consumer Society and The Urge of Counterculture Narrative in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*" regarding to the phenomenon of consumptive culture and its effect on emancipation and counterculture movements on the characters of the *Fight Club* novel

In supporting the design of this study, the researcher has analyzed several previous studies that are similar and in the same context. Either it is the same in the object of research, namely the *Fight Club* Novel or the same theme, namely the culture of consumerism and human resistance to it.

The first research that the authors analyzed was a journal article entitled "" ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE ": THE CRITIQUE OF CONSUMER SOCIETY IN AMERICAN PSYCHO AND FIGHT CLUB" compiled by Coskun Liktör from Hacettepe University. In this article, the researcher devotes his research to analyzing the cultural criticism of the consumer society in the United States which is contained in two films, namely American Psycho and Fight Club.

In the analysis, the researcher found that the two main characters in the two films lived life amidst severe consumerisms. When the condition of the United States of America in the 90s with the capitalist system, it was finally at its peak. The people represented by the main characters in the two films only interpret their lives based on the objects they use and consume. Individuals living in it have been dehumanized to become objects of their desire to consume certain objects. The conditions of social life

have been reduced to competition, greed, and empty formality. Besides, individuals also feel fragmentation or dualism in personality which negates the uniqueness of everyone, because individual personalities have become objects of existing systems and conditions that occur. This then makes the individual feel the void of meaning and substance of their own uniqueness which then leads to personality and behavior disorders.

The second research that the writer has analyzed is the thesis entitled "EXISTENTIALISM IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S NOVEL FIGHT CLUB" which was compiled by Agus Salim from the University of North Sumatra. In this thesis, the researcher focuses his research on the condition of the narrator as an individual who experiences an existential crisis while living in a consumerist culture. Researchers also analyzed how Chuck Palahniuk used his unique writing techniques to highlight the theme of human existence.

In his analysis, the researcher found that the culture of consumerism has caused the main character to experience a vacuum and an existential crisis. Then the character Tyler Durden as the alter-ego of the main character has moved him to emancipate and fight. The form of emancipation found is narratives that emphasize individual freedom, rights, and responsibilities that the individual is capable of. Tyler Durden as the narrator's alter-ego has rejected the big narratives that dictate such as capitalism, religion, social to realize the individual human meaning with its uniqueness. Researchers also found that the character of Tyler has emphasized the meaning of life made by him by fighting and being brave towards things external to reality. The conclusion is that this novel has a high atheist existentialism theme as the main character of this work in the context of post-modern life.

The third study that the author has analyzed is a journal article entitled "COUNTERCULTURE AND CONSUMER SOCIETY" compiled by John Desmond et al from St. Andrews University. In this article, the researcher focuses his research on understanding and adjusting the definition of 'Counterculture' in the era of

capitalism and consumerism culture. By using the concept of master and slave dualism from Hegel.

In this study, the researcher found that the development of times with the capitalist system and "Americanization" no longer had a comparable comparison. There have been many movements that have separated themselves from this dominant system. In this case, the researcher found that there were two types of counterculture movements, namely revolutionary and aesthetic movements. The revolutionary counterculture movement is an idea, culture, view of life that aims to change the prevailing dominant system into a more "rational" system according to them by way of revolution or change. Meanwhile, the aesthetic counterculture movement is an idea, a culture, a way of life that emphasizes the values of human identity deeply, namely by realizing creativity, reflection, and re-meaning of true human life in the midst of a dominant system that only poison humans.

This study is different from previous research that the authors listed above. In this research, the writer intends to analyze more deeply the culture of consumerism with the addition of a post-modern point of view, namely hyperreality. Then we will analyze human emancipation from a individual as well as collective point of view using the concept of "counter-culture".

The presence of these commercial coffee brands has led coffee enthusiasts to lose the history and stories behind each cup they savor independently. This is because the community is not given the opportunity to understand the coffee beans they enjoy or to be involved in the coffee-making process. This research aims to explore the covert resistance of *Pasukan Berani Ngopi* against coffee capitalism. It seeks to uncover the reality behind the emergence of the coffee industry (sachet/instant) and modern coffee shops. Utilizing qualitative research methods and drawing on counterculture and one-dimensional man theories, the study will be approached from a critical paradigm. Nine informants have been successfully contacted, comprising six members of *Pasukan Berani Ngopi* and three non-members who are coffee enthusiasts.



Following this construction of research background, this research aimed the research to conduct the title of research into The Consumer Society and The Urge Of Counterculture Narrative In Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. By doing so, the subject and the context is contrast is referring the discussion about narrative analysis with the work to delve about consumer society and the urge upon counterculture narrative in the object namely the novel of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

With the many problems that occur in modern society which has become a consumer society, many people want to get out of the world of consumerism but there is no way to get out of this world hegemony. Therefore, the researcher took a narrative analysis of the novel Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* to find out how the consumerist society occurred and what the narrative of do the counterculture narrative is.

Based on this problem, this research is formulated into the following questions:

1. What narrative of the consumer society is there in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*?
2. How do the counterculture narrative constructed in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*?

## **1.3 Purposes of Research**

Moreover, as regarded the research interest which form in the research question. It is automatically that this research aimed the objective goals as displayed in the down below:

1. To provide the identification about the narrative of consumer society in the Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*.
2. To provide the examination about the counterculture narrative that constructed in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*.

#### 1.4 Significances of Research

This research is expected to be useful for others. The benefits expected from this research, both theoretically and practically, are as follows:

1. Theoretically

This research has automatically as the investigation in the medium of academic contain the significance contribution that can be understand as such novelty and impact. From a theoretical standpoint, the investigation into "The Consumer Society and the Urge of Counterculture Narrative in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*" constitutes a noteworthy contribution by providing a nuanced cultural critique and literary analysis. It functions as an in-depth theoretical exploration into the intricacies embedded within the novel, offering insights into the potency of literature as a robust instrument for social commentary. Through meticulous examination of the components comprising a counter-cultural narrative in *Fight Club*, the research contributes meaningfully to the broader discourse surrounding counterculture, elucidating how literature possesses the capacity to question and undermine prevailing cultural norms.

2. Practically

This research is expected to be useful in practical terms. This research is expected to contribute to further research, Moreover, the exploration of the novel's narrative complexities may have practical implications for creators in various artistic fields, such as filmmakers, writers, and artists, encouraging them to experiment with unconventional storytelling methods that stimulate contemplation and challenge societal norms. In essence, the practical significance of this research lies in its capacity to guide and stimulate discussions, educational practices, and creative pursuits addressing the challenges and consequences inherent in a society driven by consumerism.

The research bears significance by offering tangible applications and implications for the real world. It furnishes a critical framework for comprehending and navigating the intricacies inherent in contemporary

consumer societies. The pragmatic insights derived from the study hold value for individuals, educators, and cultural analysts endeavoring to understand the repercussions of consumerism on identity and social dynamic. Additionally, the research can inform discussions regarding the role of literature in cultivating critical thinking and fostering a deeper exploration of societal values. The findings possess practical relevance in educational settings, potentially inspiring the development of curricula that incorporates literary works like *Fight Club* to instigate reflective discourse on consumer culture.

**a. Academic Readers**

The study engages with psychoanalytic perspectives, delving into the psychological facets of the characters, thereby enhancing our theoretical comprehension of how narratives mirror and critique societal expectations imposed on an individual's psyche. Furthermore, the scrutiny of narrative complexity, particularly the employment of an unreliable narrator, enriches narrative theory by providing valuable insights into storytelling techniques that defy conventional norms and engage readers on a profound level.

**b. Public Readers**

Beside current development and popularity of the novel, the researcher wishes the research could give the encouragement addition for everyone interested in this study and it also can be the alternative reference or the supporting complement of the research that has been done.

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

To provide the vivid trend of the words in this research. The definition of key terms is necessary to signify the contrast of basic understanding. The following key terms can be followed down below:

a. Narrative Analysis

This word is referred to the job that involves a systematic examination of the structural, substantive, and constitutive elements intrinsic to a narrative presented in a literary composition.

b. Consumer Society

Consumer society refers to a socio-economic construct wherein the predominant focus of individuals and societal structures is on the consumption of goods and services.

c. Counterculture

This word refers to a sociocultural phenomenon characterized by the rejection or opposition to dominant cultural norms, values, and practices prevalent in a society.

