

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of the analysis provides a comprehensive overview, starting with the research background that sets the context for the study. It includes a clear statement of the problems being addressed, outlining the issues that the research aims to solve. The chapter also details the research purposes, highlighting the objectives and goals of the study. Additionally, it explains the benefits of the study, emphasizing its significance and potential impact. Finally, key terms are defined to ensure a clear understanding of the concepts used throughout the analysis.

1.1 Research Background

A movie or film according to (Sapp, 1986) is a motion picture which is considered as a source of entertainment or as an art in form. It becomes an important form of art to learn various aspects through it. Movie as a work of art is born of the process of creativity that must have its charm. The result of this creativity comes from the author's imagination as the product of creativity that might originate from reality. A movie does not only present the results of the creative process of an author but also provides messages and motivates the audience to reflect on problems that occurred in society.

Character is one of the elements in a movie, novel, or short story. Holman (1960 p.90) stated that "Character refers to a person in a story. It is a brief descriptive sketch of a

personage who typifies some definite quality.” The people in a story are referred to as characters. Most people assess them on the basis of what the author tells us about them and on the basis of what they do and speak.

David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* stands out as a remarkable cinematic achievement, blending elements of fantasy, drama, and romance. Released in 2008, the film received widespread acclaim for its direction, performances, and visual effects. At the heart of the story is Benjamin Button, a mysterious character whose incredible life story captures the imagination of audiences worldwide.

Benjamin Button, he was born old and that was interesting. The unusual circumstances that he got make the researcher interested. How can he live his life despite being born different from anybody else? Even his parents abandoned him -his father to be exact. How could he bear to see everyone that he knows growing old and he’s growing ‘young’? Therefore, this movie is chosen to be analyzed in this study. There are some reasons why this movie is going to be analyzed.

The first reason is the popularity of this movie. This movie is one of the most popular movies directed by David Fincher which has a good review from the audience. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* was released in North America on December 25, 2008, to positive reviews from critics, who praised Fincher's directing, Pitt's performance, production values, and visual effects. One of the reviews is by Backbenchers TV he said “I don't know what to say about this astonishing, beautiful film! David Fincher at its best, although the idea or the short story writer. One thinks I've learned today, there is no limit of imagination for human beings. I love thinking of ideas & I am much more loving to think ideas again. Hats off!” (Backbenchers TV, 2020)

David Fincher's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" is a visually stunning and emotionally profound film that explores the life of a man who ages in reverse. Brad Pitt delivers a nuanced performance, capturing Benjamin Button's unique blend of wisdom and innocence. The film's impressive special effects and makeup convincingly depict this extraordinary journey. Though the narrative is leisurely paced, it offers a poignant meditation on time, love, and the human condition. Despite its length, the film's rich storytelling and philosophical depth make it a memorable and thought-provoking experience.

The movie also received thirteen Academy Award nominations, the most of the 81st Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director for Fincher, Best Actor for Pitt, and Best Supporting Actress for Taraji P. Henson, and won three, for Best Art Direction, Best Makeup, and Best Visual Effects. (BAFTA Awards, 2009)

The next reason is the attractive story of the movie. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* story starts In August 2005, Daisy Fuller is on her deathbed in a New Orleans hospital as Hurricane Katrina approaches. She tells her daughter Caroline about blind clockmaker Mr. Gateau, hired to make a clock for a train station in 1918. When it was unveiled, the public was surprised to see it running backwards. She reveals that Mr. Gateau made it as a memorial for those who lost their sons in World War I, including his own son. Daisy then asks Caroline to read aloud Benjamin Button's diary.

On the evening of November 11, 1918, a boy is born with the appearance and maladies of an elderly man. His mother, Caroline, dies soon after childbirth and his father, Thomas Button, abandons the infant on the porch of a nursing home. Caretaker Queenie and cook Mr. Tizzy Weathers find the baby, and she raises him as her own, naming him Benjamin. As

the years pass, Benjamin physically blends in with the elderly residents but has the mind and curiosities of a child. He eventually transitions from a wheelchair to crutches and learns to walk. He befriends visiting African Pygmy named Oti, who teaches him to look beyond the physical, and resident Mrs. Maple, who teaches him to play the piano. And from there the story begins.

The story takes place after World War I and follows Benjamin Button's life as he ages backward, experiencing a reverse life cycle. Benjamin is born looking like an elderly man, which raises deep questions about who he is, the meaning of life, and how time passes. Growing up in a nursing home in New Orleans under the care of a surrogate family, he faces the challenges of forming relationships and personal development while dealing with his unusual condition.

Benjamin Button's character is fascinating for psychological analysis because it offers insights into his personality traits, motivations, and inner struggles. His unique life journey challenges conventional ideas about aging, prompting us to rethink what it means to grow older. This narrative also encourages deeper reflection on the essence of being human. By exploring Benjamin's thoughts and feelings, researchers can delve into the complexities of human nature. Through his story, we gain a richer understanding of life itself and the varied experiences that shape it.

Before initiating this research, the researcher got inspiration from some researcher who is also a student who has studied novels and movies by using psychological analysis which have similar themes but with different objects. The researcher has also laid out some previous studies from several sources. The first one is from Latifatul Husna (2006) a student at the State Islamic University of Malang entitled *A Psychological Analysis of the Main*

Character of Sidney Sheldon's The Other Side of Midnight. This paper has similarities in topic but with a different object, which is psychological analysis, and she focused her analysis on the main character of this novel, Noelle page. The theory used is Abraham Maslow's motivation and personality; she explains about the main character personality and the hierarchy of needs on the main character such as Physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and the last self-actualization.

The second is from Ida Bagus Guntur Mahardika (2016) a student at Udayana University, south Kuta, Bali entitled *Psychological Analysis of Main Character and Secondary Character in Movie the Hangover*. This journal has similarities in the topic but with a different object, Ida focused not only on the main character but also the secondary character using Bernhardt's psychological theory.

The third is from Iin Raka Fathoni (2011) a student of Muhammadiyah University in Surakarta. entitled *Anxiety in David Fincher's The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008)*. This paper has similarities in the object but with a different topic, which uses a psychoanalytic approach to find the problem which is anxiety in the movie. The fourth is from Dianto Arif Martadi (2010) a student of Muhammadiyah University in Surakarta. entitled *The Struggle of Life in The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008)* This paper has similarities in topic and object, Dianto focused his analysis on the main character struggle of life using psychological approach.

In this research psychology is chosen to be the approach of this study. It is because psychology and literary works are connected since they have the same object, which is human life. Referring to Endraswara's explanation that "Literary works viewed as psychological phenomena, the psychological aspect will appear through the characters if the

text is like drama or prose” (2003, p.96), psychology will help this study to explore psychological concern and the personality of the character.

As human beings, personality is naturally owned and reflected. It will direct us to be what kind of person we are. In psychology, personality can be viewed from many perspectives; two of them are traits perspective and humanistic perspective. These perspectives will be used in this analysis.

In traits perspectives, psychologist Gordon Allport was interested in discovering just how many personality traits exist. He explained that the dynamic of personality organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought. He also identified that there are 17,953 trait names, from the dictionary. As personality study developed, currently, many psychologists believe in Big Five Personality theory introduced by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa. This theory is about human personality traits that have been simplified into five broads which are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. In this study, the personality traits of Benjamin Button will be identified by using this theory, so people can know the dominant personality traits of her.

The next is humanistic perspectives. In this perspective, psychological growth of people has become focused on. The well-known psychologist of humanistic psychology is Abraham Maslow with his theory Hierarchy of Needs. By using his theory, the personality of Benjamin Button will be described. In the end, people will know how the personality of Benjamin Button developed, supported by those theories.

Given the reasons mentioned above, this study will analyze the personality of Benjamin Button as portrayed in the movie. The approach which is going to be used is psychological, which is supported by the Big Five and Hierarchy of Needs theory. Therefore, the title of this study is The Psychological Analysis of the Main Character in David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background of the study there are two problems that is formulated into the following questions:

1. What is Benjamin Button's personality trait reflected in the movie by using the big five personality theory?
2. How is Benjamin Button's personality described based on hierarchy of needs theory?

1.3 Research Purposes

Considering the problems formulated, there are several aims that hopefully can be reached from this study.

1. This analysis is aimed to identify the personality traits of Benjamin Button, the main character in the movie by using the big five personality theory.
2. This analysis also aimed to describe the personality of Benjamin Button based on the Hierarchy of Needs theory by Abraham Maslow. So, researcher can know Benjamin Button's personality more deeply.

1.4 Research Significance

The benefit of this study is divided into two which are benefit for the researcher and benefit for the reader. For the researcher, this study is expected to enrich literary skills.

Besides, it is also expected to enhance psychological knowledge by doing library study on psychological theory. For the reader, hopefully this study can give new information and inspiration. Moreover, it can be one of the references for the students who will do a similar study in the future.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

1. Character

“Character refers to a person in a story. It is a brief descriptive sketch of a personage who typifies quality.” (Holman, 1960, p.90)

2. Personality

“Personality refers to our external and visible characteristics, those aspects of us that other people can see. Our personality would then be defined in terms of the impression we make on others—that is, what we appear to be.” (Schultz, 2009, p.8)

3. Psychology

“Psychology is the systematic study of behavior and experience.” (Kalat, 2008, p.3)

4. Film

“Film is a series of still photographs on film projected onto a screen using light in rapid succession, which creates the illusion of actual, smooth, and continuous movement due to the optical phenomenon known as persistence of vision” (Murphy, A. D. 2024)