

## ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROBLEM IN A *GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND* BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR

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### Abstract

This study aims to describe the problems of social problems contained in the short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor. This research applied descriptive qualitative. The data source is the short story which title is "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor. The results of this study are: (1) Family disorganization, due to lack of communication and lack of social relations within the Bailey family, (2) Crime, the Misfit who came out of the prisoner all members of the Bailey family, (3) Social status, the grandmother who is selfish and does everything she can to maintain social status and people's views on her. On the basis of the results, it has been concluded and by using the sociological aspect that the social problem events in the story can be a lesson and improve understanding and interpretation in communicating and socializing in life. This study is hopefully more useful for readers of literary books, especially the work of Flannery O'Connor and writers.

**Keywords:** "A Good Man Is Hard to Find", Flannery O'Connor, social problem, crime, social status, disorganization family.

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### Introduction

This paper will identify the variety of social problems that appears in this short story by using the sociological and psychological approaches. This is because the story of the grandmother's family life and the villain's misfit. The story is full of irregularities or things that should not be done in community life. However, before going any further, it would better to understand the definition and some of the elements used in a short story. The short story is fictional prose with a fairly short story because it only tells one main conflict faced by the characters in the story. The short story also has several elements. The following are elements that are used in a short story such as theme, characterization, plot, setting, conflict, and point of view. A literary work in the form of short stories in which there is a conflict of stories that imply social problems that occur. It makes the writer interested in conducting this study.

Mural Esten (1978: 9) gives the opinion that literature can be used as a

source of artistic and imaginative expression as a form of manifestation of human life (and social) through language as a medium that has a positive impact on human life. Then in a short story, there must be a social aspect that is usually expressed in stories in the form of conflicts that occur between each character story.

If we try to understand further, Wellek and Warren (Semi 1989:178) said that sociology and literature are two elements that are interconnected with each other. Namely the existence of a mandate or social message that is captured in the literary works of the author who wants to be conveyed. Furthermore, Lucien Goldmann (1967:494) explained that in identifying social problems in a story not only can be expressed from the behavior of the characters in the story. It may also be taken from the point of view of other subjects in the story (the behavior of animals or views of other objects) that can be used as material in solving problems that is.

Besides using a sociological approach, the writer will also use other elements contained in a short story, namely psychological approaches. According to Wellek and Warren (1989:41), psychology and literature have a connection between each other because an author must turn on each character in the story through the action or personality (psychology) of each character that is the characteristic of each character in the story. Therefore the personality or psychology of each character can be used as a reference in researching a literary work such as a short story.

The purpose of study is to identify social problems in the short story entitled *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* by Flannery O'Connor. This story tells a family that has problems in it. There are two characters that have a big role in this story, namely the grandmother as a "good person" and the villain misfit. Here the grandmother who is the meaning of "good person" is not the real meaning, but a person who has a bad person who tries to look like a perfect person. "The grandmother stood up and waved both arms dramatically to attract their attention" (page 7). This indicates that the grandmother was behaving that she was seriously injured to cover up her mistake that she had forgotten and did not mention that the house was in Tennessee, this is the initial trigger of the main conflict in this story. The Misfit: "Jesus has shown everything off balance" (page 11). The villain's misfit in the story is described as an evil and sadistic act in action but in terms of personality (psychological) he also questions the religious problem where usually other criminals don't think about it.

The quote above is the proof or data that can be a reference in this analysis that has included the social and psychological aspects in it. This study is

expected to be able to increase the knowledge of the readers in order to be able to identify the social and psychological issues contained in this short story.

## Literature Review

The definition of sociology according to Max Weber, namely sociology is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order, it is a causal explanation of its course and effects (Weber, 1964: 88). Based on the opinion of Weber, sociology is knowledge in interpreting an action in the social sphere that has an impact in the future. Referring to a literary work, sociology can be a reference from the reader in tracing social elements in literature, such as deviations from norms in life.

Through a literary work such as a short story, the author can tell a polemic or conflict about life in society. A short story work presents the problem of life issues which basically contains an intention behind it, which is expected to the reader to be able to take the value of social values in it. Hence, the sociology aspect can be one of the main factors of a literary work, including in the short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find". So, literary works in the form of short stories are basically fictional, but social facts can be a dominating element in literary making (Fananie, 2002:133).

Based on some experts' views on sociological aspects in literature, in this study using the views of Wellek and Warren (semi, 1989: 53) states that sociology is divided into three classifications, including: (1) author's sociology, (2) sociology in literary works, and (3) literary sociology. Therefore, this paper focuses more on the second classification, namely sociology in literary works.

An action which ultimately becomes the trigger of every social

problem in life certainly has a starting point for that cause to arise. Namely the psychological aspect. According to Shaw and Ostanzo (1970: 3), that psychology is science that studies behavior patterns of individuals as a function of social stimuli. The forms of psychological interpretation vary, such as anger, selfishness, a sense of help, and socialization. In examining the study of social problems in a short story we need to find the starting point for the problem to come.

So that the two elements in this literary work (sociology and psychology) become interconnected with each other. Hauser (1985:119), said that aspects of the psychological aspect can be useful in sociology in a literary work if it has a relationship with morality as a whole. In other words, psychological aspects are useful in the analysis of social aspects in literature.

As can be seen from this study a social problem can be examined by considering the sociological aspects and psychological aspects are very important in characterization because it is complicated to explain how participants, in relation to others, manipulate language and actions to pursue their specific goals. The relationship between sociology and literature has been the motivation of researchers to conduct similar studies to explore how the impact of social problems in the environment in general and specifically can help in the interpretation of literature.

### **Methodology**

This study discusses about the social problems in the conversations of the story *A good man is hard to find*. In this study, the author used qualitative methods by collecting evidence of data in the form of utterances, excerpts of text, clarifying data, then analyzing the data chronologically based on the pages

where they were made, then made conclusion.

It was used to analyze social messages and problems in short stories, especially works that consist mostly of conversations and sentences like good men are hard to find. The conversational analysis was also applied to understand and interpret the messages conveyed by the main characters. In addition, it was used to strengthen the analysis of social problems.

### **Discussion**

#### **Disorganization Family**

We should know that the family is the first and most important organization in a social community. So that it can be said that a family has several members who are in it such as grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and child so that it becomes a single entity. In a family, it is possible for a dispute or problem that results in a loss of communication and the inner bond between family members. When the emergence of problems in the family that cannot be resolved the relationship within the family also comes broken too. If the relationship between family members has been damaged it cannot be denied that the loss of the function of family relations and communication skills among family members can be said to be family disorganization (Sreekumar, 2017:20).

Family organization in the short story *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* is experienced by all members of the Baily family, such as grandma, Baily and his wife, and Bailey's kids are June Star and John Wesley. In the family of Bailey, family disorganization can be found in every family member, they seem to lack the sense of mutual respect and attention caused by various things. The grandmother who has selfishness, the father or Bailey who is not indifferent to his family and his wife,

and the children of Bailey who lack manners may be a reason by the emergence of family organization.

At the beginning of the story, the author Flannery O'Connor began the results of his short story with the story of the Bailey family who wants to go on vacation. The grandmother selfishly refused to go on vacation to Florida, she wanted to visit some of her colleagues in East Tennessee. The grandmother argued that the area around Florida was dangerous because a criminal had escaped from a prison named The Misfit even though she was also worried about her family. The grandmother told to her son Bailey:

“Now look here, Bailey,” she said, “see here, read this,” and she stood with one hand on her thin hip and the other rattling the newspaper at his bald head. “Here this fellow that calls himself The Misfit is a loose from the Federal Pen and headed toward Florida and you read here what it says he did to these people. Just you read it. I wouldn’t take my children in any direction with a criminal like that a loose in it. I couldn’t answer to my conscience if I did.” (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:1).

However, her son Bailey still did not respond in any form to his mother and instead continued to read sports news. The grandmother tried to persuade her daughter-in-law to help her, but the results failed because Bailey’s wife did not respond to her. “Bailey didn’t look up from his reading so she wheeled around then faced the children’s mother....’ And ‘The children mother didn’t seem to hear her....” (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:1). From here, we can examine the lack of communication and attention functions in this family that is a symptom of family disorganization (Sreekumar, 2017:20).

In this story, the grandmother is the main character and plays an

important role and has a big influence on the course of the story. Therefore, he always showed his selfishness which led to disharmony within the Bailey family. We can see when in the morning on vacation, the grandmother brings her pet cat; Pitty Sing ignores that her son doesn't like cats. Therefore, it can be ascertained that the grandmother is more concerned with her own affairs without regard to other family members, even though in fact she also cares about her son and grandchildren. “She didn’t intend for the cat to be left alone in the house for three days because he would miss her too much and she was afraid he might brush against one of the gas burners and accidentally asphyxiate himself. Her son, Bailey, didn’t like to arrive at a motel with a cat” (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:2). When on the way, the grandmother also told stories by giving a picture of children in ancient times with now. This was clearly seen as a family organization, where children were more polite than they were at her time. The old lady tells: “In my time,” said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, “children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh look at the cute little pickaniny!” (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:2).

When on the way, the Bailey family had an accident. the car driven by the bailey fell into a short ravine, but only injured and caused no casualties. This is where the uniqueness lies, John Wesley and June Star are even excited about the accident without worrying about themselves and even their father and mother. "We've had an ACCIDENT!" the children screamed in a frenzy of delight. "But nobody's killed," June Star said with disappointment as the grandmother limped out of the car (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:6). The children

were happy that they had been in a car accident and there was a feeling of disappointment that no one had died. It seems really enthusiastic that one of the children hopes that family members have died. Children do not feel worried about themselves even to their families, which seems unusual to a family. When relationship within family ties diminish and even disappear, it can lead to disharmony in a family that a result in family disorganization.

### Crime

Crime is a form of action deviation or social violation in a community environment. there are various forms of crime that can be committed by a criminal in the form of murder, theft, robbery, fraud, rape, and so on (Ross L. Matsueda :6). Based on the theory put forward by M. Lemert (1912: 12), that the cause of someone being a perpetrator of social deviation is due to the labeling process is given by the citizen to him, so that he is seen as negative which in the end the criminal will continue to commit the crime.

According to the short story *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, that the perpetrator of the crime was played by The Misfit. At the beginning of the story was introduced the figure of the misfit with status as a criminal who had escaped from prison and was on his way to the area around Florida. But unfortunately, the misfit instead met with the Bailey family who was on vacation in East Tennessee. The misfit and two of his colleagues had guns in the form of pistols, as we know, that a civilian was not permitted to possess firearms except law enforcement, but here we can know from his appearance that they are criminals. "What you got that gun for?" John Wesley asked. "Whatcha gonna do with that gun?" (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:8).

The Misfit gave orders to his colleague to take the Bailey family one by one to the forest that lay near the edge of the cliff and let the grandmother stay with him, but not long ago there was a gunshot from the direction of the forest. Not long after, Misfit's two comrades returned while Bailey and his family were not with them indicating that they had been killed with a gun. "There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another. Then silence, The old lady's head jerked around." (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:10). But in the end, the mother of the Bailey was killed by the Misfit in a tragic way, shot in the chest, so the journey of the story from the Bailey family ended in ill-fated.

In addition to killing all members of the Bailey family, Misfit also killed his own father but he denied the case and argued that his father's death was due to epidemic flu.

The Misfit sneered slightly. "Nobody had nothing I wanted," he said. "It was a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I had done was kill my daddy but I known that for a lie. My daddy died in nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu and I never had a thing to do with it. He was buried in the mount Hopewell Baptist churchyard and you can go there and see for yourself." (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:10).

Along with the passage of time making people's attitudes and behavior change, which is due to various factors that cause it to occur. In the story by Flannery, it is said that nowadays good people are rarely found, which means that they have increased the growth of criminal acts in the community that can cause serious threats. Red Sammy provides a comparison: "A good man is hard to find," Red Sammy said. "Everything is getting terrible. I remember the day you could go off and leave your screen door unlatched. Not no more" (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*,

1953:5). Here it is clearly seen that there has been a lot of crime as a form of social problems that occur in the present era, in contrast to the age of the grandmother and Red Sammy who did not need to worry about a crime that would happen, even leaving the house with the door open.

### Social Status

The emergence of sociology makes human understanding of social and social sciences a basic subject in socializing and adjusting conditions when socializing. Karl Mark (Antonio 2016:61), this social situation makes every human being has his own status or class in life, social status in sociology is based on the form of the method of producing, rather than the type of form produced or the source. It can be said, that someone who tends to want to improve his social status will pay more attention to the steps that must be taken in getting it.

Social status has become a part of life for every human, as well as in this short story. The grandmother's character always looks perfect, ranging from dressing to the attitude he wants to be considered perfectionist by others. The author of this story makes the grandmother's character as the main character he tells, so that the grandmother is a priority in the character who always maintains social status.

When the Bailey family will leave for vacation, the grandmother swiftly enters the car first by dressing in a very striking manner. It is already known that the grandmother who was dressed very neatly and beautifully to be seen by people as a noble and elegant woman even though she had an accident. "... but the grandmother had on navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuff were white

organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady." (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:2).

Based on this declaration, his statement that the grandmother chose to look different than the daughter-in-law who is also a woman to look more elegant and luxurious than the Bailey' wife. Here, the grandmother was thought that with her appearance she felt a higher degree than anyone else.

The grandmother told her grandchildren in the car while traveling, that she would have been happy if she married a rich man from Georgia. 'The grandmother said she would have done well to marry Mr. Teagarden because he was a gentleman and had a bought Coca-cola stock when it first came out and that he had died only a few years ago, a very wealthy man.' (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:3). In the story, my grandmother still showed her class. That he does not want to be a partner of a poor person who feels more remorseful because he cannot marry a rich person who he thinks is more appropriate for him based on his class.

Until when they had an accident, we could find out that the grandmother felt that she was guilty of the accident. therefore, he covered it up by acting as if he was badly injured, hoping that Bailey would not know it and feel angry. therefore, the grandmother must maintain her status and reputation here so as not to be blamed for the accident, this sounds pretty selfish enough. "The grandmother was curled up under the dashboard, hoping she was injured so that Bailey's wrath would not come down on her all at once." (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1953:6).

## Conclusion

This paper has explained and demonstrated the social problems that occur in a short story entitled "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor by observing the sociological aspects of each event. Based on the discussion and results of data analysis, conclusions can be taken as follows. First, there are three main social problems taken by the researcher, namely: 1) Family disorganization, due to lack of communication and lack of social relations within the Bailey family, 2) Crime, the Misfit who came out of prison killed all members of the Bailey family, 3) Social status, the grandmother who is selfish and does everything she can to maintain social status and people's views on her. In this short story, social problems that occur and are experienced by each character that can be a separate lesson for each reader in the relationship of communication and outreach to others.

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