

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Identity is a characteristic or sign attached to someone or something useful to distinguish one from another. According to Feist (2010: 305), identity means a clear self-image including several clear goals to be achieved, values, and beliefs that the individual chooses. These commitments have increased over time and have been made because of the goals, values, and beliefs one seeks to achieve and the importance of giving direction, purpose, and meaning to life.

In their development, humans often experience shifts and conflicts with other humans. As a result, they often experience crises in their lives, one of which is an identity crisis. Everyone can experience an identity crisis, regardless of gender, age, race, culture, profession, or social status. The term identity crisis was first coined by Erik Erikson, a German psychologist, and psychoanalyst. He theorizes that psychological challenges like this can be experienced not only by teenagers but also by middle-aged or adults. This means that identity is something that continues to grow throughout life as a person faces new challenges and overcomes various problems.

Erikson (1993) states that an identity crisis is a time to analyze and explore in seeing oneself from a different way, in which during this exploration period a person sees a perspective other than his or her point of view. So, an identity crisis is a condition when a person often questions various things related to his/her identity, such as beliefs, life values, life goals, experiences, and feelings.

Identity crisis can be analyzed through sociological aspects and identified more deeply through character. In this case, the writer chooses Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air* as the object of research because it contains the identity crisis experienced by the protagonist.

When Breath Becomes Air is a non-fiction autobiographical book written by American neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi. Paul Kalanithi was born on April 01, 1977 and died on March 09, 2015. This novel was published by Random House on January 12, 2016. *When Breath Becomes Air* (2016) tells the story of the journey of Kalanithi, an English literature scholar who later continued his studies in the medical field. The reason he chose medicine, apart from wanting a stable career, he wanted to dedicate his life to something more meaningful. At the age of thirty-six, at the end of his ten-year training as a neurosurgeon, Paul is diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. This disease evaporates all the dreams and ideas he had. This condition also makes things change instantly, one day he is a doctor who treats people who are dying, and the next day, he is a patient trying to survive (Lit chart, 2019).

There are several reasons why the writer chooses and discusses the identity crisis experienced by the protagonist. They are:

1. The writer chooses Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* because of his interest in one of the characters in this novel, Kalanithi. The characters in this story are not fictional, but real characters, namely the author himself. It is a memoir of Kalanithi's life and illness.
2. The identity crisis experienced by Paul Kalanithi. The protagonist experiences a crisis when he is diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. In an instant, he must change his identity from doctor to patient.

3. Contains moral lessons. A good novel is a novel that contains moral lessons and provides benefits for the reader. So, by reading the novel, the reader can reflect and learn from the novel. Some of the moral messages from this novel are, (a) in this life we must always find ways to be useful to others, (b) there are always things in life that are worth fighting for, even in the darkest places, (c) do not give up easily even if you have little hope.

So, the writer chooses this topic with the title Protagonist's Identity Crisis in Paul Kalanithi's Novel *When Breath Becomes Air*. Thus, he hopes that this research can contribute and provide input to problems related to identity crisis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the writer formulates two questions as follows:

1. What are the types of identity crisis faced by protagonist in Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air*?
2. How are the types of identity crisis affected the protagonist in Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem, there are two objectives to be achieved, namely as follows.

1. To identify the types of identity crisis faced by protagonist in Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air*.
2. To explain the types of identity crisis that affected the protagonist in Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

There are points of scope in this research to keep the discussion focused on the study's objective. The scope is Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* and the limitation is the protagonist's identity crisis. This research uses a theory of Identity Crisis proposed by Erik Erikson (1993) and assisted by the explanations of the Identity Crisis proposed by Baumeister, et.al (1985). However, in Chapter IV the writer focuses on the type of identity crisis, namely motivation crisis which is divided into three points i.e, the cause, subjective experience, and behavior.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research has two significances, they are theoretical significance and practical significance.

a. Theoretical Significance

The result is expected to give more understanding of the identity crisis of the protagonist in Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air*. The researcher also hopes that this research can be a reference for further research.

b. Practical Significance

For researchers, this study provides new knowledge, especially the discussion of crisis identity. Also, this research is useful as a requirement to graduate as a *Sarjana Sastra* in the English Literature Department, at Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara. For readers, the results of this study can be useful as reading material and educating readers about identity crises.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sociology of Literature

Literature in his work is always open. It is willing to accept anything and with any understanding to interpret it. According to Suhariyadi (2014: 26), literature is multidisciplinary, which means that literary theory can be used as a basis for understanding in any field. For example, when sociology gives its portion to explaining social aspects in literary works, then sociology of literature emerges. Other aspects that also provide a basis for thinking from their point of view are psychological, politics, communication, economics, linguistics, philosophy, journalism, to the theory of religious interpretation.

According to Manugeran (2018: 1), literature deals with human interest and is characterized by permanence, imagination, and artistic embellishment. He also adds that literature expresses thoughts, feelings, emotions, and attitudes toward life which are permanent and universal and do not change with time and place. Sumardjo & Saini (1997: 3-4) state that literature is a personal human expression in the form of experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, passions, and beliefs in the form of a concrete picture that evokes charm with language tools as individuals and groups, about the environment.

The object of literature is human life that has been abstracted in literary works (Darma, 1990: 338). In other words, humans are objects most often represented in literary works. Literary writers represent human life based on their ideology, perception, objection, and judgment. Likewise, the literary work *When*

Breath Becomes Air can be said to reflect Paul Kalanithi's feelings and thoughts on society's lives.

Swingewood in Faruk (1999), explains that sociology is a scientific and objective study of humans in society, the study of social institutions and processes. Damono (2013: 3), states that an approach to literature that considers social aspects is called the sociology of literature by using text analysis to find out its structure, and then used to understand more deeply social phenomena outside of literature. Wellek and Warren (1989: 111) suggest three types of approaches. They are:

1. Sociology of the author who takes issue with social status, social ideology, and others concerning the author as a producer of literary works.
2. Sociology of literary works which questions the literary work itself.
3. Sociology of literature that questions the reader and the influence of sociology of literature on society.

Pradopo (2001: 34) states that the purpose of sociological studies in the literature is to obtain a complete picture of the relationship between authors, literary works, and society. In line with this statement, the identity crisis in Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air* can be analyzed using a sociology of literature approach. Paul's identity crisis is part of research on humans and their social problems. Throughout the novel, it is believed that Paul cannot adjust himself to a social environment. As a result, (a) Paul always questioned who he was which resulted in aspects of life's (career, family, partner) problems, and (b) experiencing inner conflicts.

So, with some understanding above, it can be said that there is a very strong correlation between literature and sociology because both share the same problems. Like sociology, literature also discusses people in society and the way they adapt.

2.2 Protagonist

A literary work must have elements that build it, both intrinsically and extrinsically. One of those elements is characterization. In literary works, characterization is classified as an intrinsic element.

According to Lutters (2006: 81), characters are generally divided into three, namely the protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist. An antagonist is the opposite of the role of the protagonist. This role is a role that should represent the negative things in the needs of the story. A tritagonist is the role of a companion, both the role of the protagonist and antagonist. The protagonist is a role that should represent positive things in the needs of the story. This role is likely to be the most hurt, either, and suffering that will cause sympathy for the audience. The role of the protagonist is usually the central figure, the figure that determines the motion scenes.

Fowler (1987), states that the protagonist is the main character in the story, novel, drama, or other literary work, the character that the reader or audience emphasizes. Abrams (1999: 224) says that the protagonist is the head of the character in a plot, who is the center of our attention. It is also a type of character that usually becomes the center of the story plot. Altenbernd & Lewis (1966: 59), a protagonist character is commonly the one that faces a conflict in a story. The characters also represent the readers. These characters usually represent the same interest, hopes, and ideas as the reader.

Based on the explanation above, it can conclude that the protagonist is a character who becomes the center of attention in a story because it represents the thoughts and expectations of the reader. This character also determines a story and is usually the one who faces conflict.

2.3 The Symptoms of Identity Crisis

According to Silitonga and Ambarita (2020: 31), an identity crisis contains the following characteristics, they are:

a. Role Confusion

This stage may occur throughout adolescence. However, people in adulthood may experience similar feelings based on their own experiences. People are left wondering who they are and what they can be as a result of role uncertainty. People will feel insecure about their lives as a result of the query. People have many personal struggles as they try to figure out who they are and their place in society.

b. Feel Isolated

In this stage, when people are going through an identity crisis, they are terrified of rejection such as being turned down for jobs or having the end of their relationship. They are used to suffering, and for some of us, rejection is so terrible that our egos can no longer endure it.

c. Doubtful

At this point, people will be asking for themselves due to an identity crisis. Is it possible for me to make a difference in my life? That question will cause people to doubt themselves, and as a result, they will be unable to live a comfortable existence both inside and outside of their homes. People search for more meaning, reason, or passion in their life

2.4 The Concepts of Identity Crisis

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, identity is defined as “a person's special characteristics or circumstances. Alo Liliweri (2007: 67) describes that etymologically the word identity means: 1) conditions or facts about the same thing,

similar to each other; 2) conditions or facts about something that is the same between two people or two things; 3) conditions or facts that describe something that is the same between two people (individuality) or two groups or objects; 4) shows about a habit to understand identity with the word "identical".

Erickson in Hjelle and Ziegler (1981: 127), states that when a person is failed to develop his identity, because of unfortunate childhood experiences or present social circumstances. Erikson (1993: 12-18) also states in his theory of Psychological Development, that an identity crisis occurs in the individual who is in the stage of identity and role confusion. In this stage, the main task for the individual is to develop a personal identity. He also adds that an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself.

Erickson believed that every human being goes through a certain number of stages to reach his or her full development. He felt the course of development is determined by the interaction of the body (genetic biological programming), mind (psychological), and cultural (ethos) influences. Erikson's psychological stages are characterized by a different conflict that must be resolved by the individual. when the environment makes new demands on people, conflict arises. If a person is unable to resolve a conflict at a particular stage, they will confront and struggle with it later in life. Each stage is thought to be accompanied by a "psychosocial crisis," which demands a resolution of some kind before the next stage is confronted.

2.4.1 The Types of Identity Crisis

In their journal article, Baumeister et. All (1985), states that Identity crisis can be divided into two types. They are:

2.4.1.1 Legitimation Crisis

It refers “to the multiply defined self whose multiple definitions are incompatible” it means that person who experiences this crisis has multiple identities. Consequently, he needs a commitment to choosing what his identity is. There might be a possibility that he may betray the other identity which he has (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 199).

a. The Causes

1. When two components have been always compatible but suddenly begin to make conflicting prescriptions for action.
2. Circumstances or choices dictate the acquisition of a new identity component that is soon found to conflict with long-standing components (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 412).

b. Subjective Experiences

1. A person with identity conflict will experience the impossibility to act without betraying oneself and one’s loyalty to the other person, an ideology, or an institution. A person must feel some guilt over being a ‘traitor.’”
2. Experiences emotional paralysis, because the person resents being forced to act but also not enough to abandon passivity and resist this force (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

c. Behavior

1. The hallmark of identity conflict is the subjective experience of being torn between incompatible commitments, which does not logically entail any particular behaviors.

2. The only behavior characteristic of identity conflict may be the attempts to affiliate with role models who have successfully managed to resolve such conflict (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

2.4.1.2 Motivation Crisis

It refers to “to in adequacy defined self, characterized by lack of commitment to goals and values. A person who experiences this crisis is not consistent in his decision. Therefore, he might seek sources of value, meaning even he questioned himself (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 199).

a. The Causes

1. The cognitive advance that facilitates the increased self-consciousness of early adolescents, enabling adolescents to take great control over their identity.
2. The situation that demands choices can also be the cause of identity deficit.
3. The situational demands for choice. The adolescent often must face the incompatibility of various future identities. The reluctance to let go of any of one’s potentialities could constitute a reluctance to commit oneself. Such reluctance, coupled with a sincere desire for commitment, maybe the hallmark of the crisis (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 410).

b. Subjective Experiences

The reluctant themes that motivation crisis people experience seem to include, “vacillating commitment and confusion about values,” regulars of vagueness, emptiness, preoccupation with great, seemingly unresolvable questions, with the result of disinterest in the mundane concerns of everyday life, self-

consciousness, including rumination about implications of one's actions, leading to an 'overexamined life,' anxiety, tensions, and feelings of confusion, bewilderment, and occasional discouragement (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

c. Behavior

People with motivation might dramatically plunge into a new activity which can be seen in some instances of the mid-life (identity deficit) crisis as well as adolescents (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

2.4.2 The Causes of Identity Crisis

There are many explanations for why identity crisis exists, according to Erik Erikson in Silitonga and Ambarita (2020: 32), including:

1. Individual psychology determines whether they are imperfect creatures and of no value in the universe.
2. Identity crisis occurs during adolescence because it is the time for people to become aware of themselves in the present and their status or place in social life at the time or in the future.
3. People's perceptions of how their family handles them are influenced by parental values. If their families mistreat them, they will have less confidence and carelessness and wonder what they should do with their lives, affecting their minds, spirit, and social characteristics.
4. Life's unfortunate events. People's identities and questions about themselves may be influenced by a traumatic event or something that makes them scared of the past. Whether or not they are worthy of the universe. Divorce, the transition from adolescence to adulthood, being alone due to an accident, how society handled them, and so on are all examples of negative experiences.

2.4.3 The Impacts of Identity Crisis

The following are some of the impacts of the quest for the self-identity crisis, according to Erik Erikson in Silitonga and Ambarita (2020: 32).

1. They still believe that they are worthless in this universe and do not deserve any opportunities.
2. They have less faith in themselves and are unsure about what to do next in life, which causes them to be confused.
3. Losing self-confidence in doing or starting a new thing or even the hobbies that they like.
4. They have become isolated due to being mistreated by society or by the people around them, including their families.