

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Empathy is the understanding, sharing, and caring showed by someone to another about what they think and feel. Actually, without a relation between someone to another, empathy is nothing. S. Baron-Cohen (2015, p.32) stated that “empathy is the ability to recognize the thoughts of feelings of another person and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with the right emotion”. This is a feeling of responsibility for the difficulties that arise faced by others and make people encourage doing something for help.

But modern life caused the loss of meaning in life. The problem is about ethics and morality by individual to others. Empathy has an important role for the positive relationships, not only for individual but for large-group living. In Fredrik Backman’s novel entitled *A Man Called Ove* deliver the importance of social empathy in life.

The implementation of social empathy happened in the Fredrik Backman’s novel. He created the story in 2012, the author rose about the importance of empathy towards society in Helsingborg, Swedish. Empathy is essential for positive relationships, not only for individuals but for large-group living. Social empathy greatly impacts someone and can change someone to be a better person.

In *A Man Called Ove*, Fredrik Backman wrote about an old man who always got several problems that made him become sensitive, offended, and antisocial person. Therefore, in his novel, Backman wants to deliver to the readers that someone can change to be a better person with support of people around him; someone who is considered wicked by most of society is not necessarily true, and someone should not follow other’s opinion about judging people, as a human we should have our principles in life. It can work if we implement social empathy in our life.

Novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman from Sweden has 448 pages. The first print in 2016 was published by Noura Books. From this novel, Hannes Holm, the director, adapted this novel to become a movie. In this novel, Ove as the male main character, Ove is a quiet person. Ove lived with his dad and his dad’s railways life because his father worked there. In railways, Ove does not like Tom, a tall and noisy man

who accused Ove as a thief. Day after day passed, Ove saw his father hit by a train and die. Ove continued his father's work at the railways. After his father funeral, Ove got kicked out from his house because of the area zoning and unfortunately his house was burnt because of his neighbor. The next day, Ove left by train and met a woman named Sonja, who is a teacher. After they know each other, they decided to get married and Sonja pregnant. One day, they went by bus for holiday and the bus had an accident. Ove survived from the accident, but Sonja coma and miscarriage. Not long after that, Sonja died because of cancer. When Ove 59 years old, his boss fired him because Ove was too old and he hated the progress of digital technology, needed a long time to make Ove understand the digital tool. From several persistent problems, Ove became an antisocial person, he rarely interacted with people. Ove is a very disciplined person, he always checked the fence, picked up cigarettes butts, and people are forbidden to drive a car in a residential area. Ove visited Sonja's grave every day and told Sonja about his life every day in his life.

One day, Ove missed Sonja very much and he felt that he could not face his life anymore. Ove arranged and planned various suicide plans to catch up with his wife quickly. Unfortunately, all his plans failed, suddenly Ove saw a car stop beside his house, they were new neighbors from Iran. His neighbor was a couple namely Patrick and Parvaneh (she is pregnant) also two children. Ove stopped his suicide plan and approach them, Ove said that Patrick should move his car because car was forbidden in a residential area. But, Patrick cannot drive well, so Ove move Patrick's car while muttering. After that, Ove proceeded to suicide but canceled because too crowded. At night, Ove cannot sleep because Patrick and Parvaneh are too noisy because the new house welcome. The next day, Ove was ready to hang himself, but suddenly Patrick's children come to give him a Persian food. When Ove wants to enter his house, Patrick comes to borrow a ladder. Shortly after, Rune's wife comes to ask for help to fix the radiator, then Ove asked for a hose that has been borrowed. After that, Ove went to the garage, but Parvaneh who saw Ove bring a hose directly went to Ove's house and found a lunch box with a thank you note. On the other hand, Ove connected a hose to the car exhaust and spread the smoke inside the car while he locked himself. But Parvaneh knocked on the garage door loudly, Parvaneh asked Ove to take her with the children to

the hospital and tell Ove to take care of them. Ove canceled his plan again. When they arrived home, the children drew Ove and gave the paper to Ove, the children really liked Ove. The next day, Ove finds a cat and Parvaneh asks him to take care of the cat. At first, Ove refused, but because Parvaneh is pregnant and Jimmy is allergic, Ove takes care of the cat.

The next day, Parvaneh asks Ove to teach her to drive a car, they visit Sonja's favorite bakery and chitchat. Then, Parvaneh asked Ove to take care of her children. Their children really like Ove, after Patrick and Parvaneh returned home, their kitchen becomes very clean because Ove cleaned it. This chance, Ove prepared a gun for his suicide plan, but Mirsad (a gay man) asked Ove to help him stay at his house because his father knows he is gay. In the morning, Mirsad prepares breakfast for Ove and the cat, his presence makes his life colorful. After that, Ove accompanied by Mirsad, Jimmy, and the cat checked the housing area. Jimmy told Ove that Rune would take to a nursing home because he was stroke a long time. Ove took the initiative to appeal to the city council, but Parvaneh said that he could not do it alone, and then Ove asked for help from Lena (a reporter). Next morning, the consensus man comes then Lena brings evidence that he embezzled the consensus marginal profit into his account, finally the man left them. After that Ove and Rune comforted each other. Suddenly, Ove fainted and Parvaneh took Ove to the hospital, the doctor said that Ove suffered from heart problems. At the same time, Parvaneh gave birth too, at home Ove gave his unused baby box to Parvaneh. Ove was pleased because he had a new family. In the morning Parvaneh did not see Ove, she immediately went to Ove's house and found Ove died in his sleep. Parvaneh found a letter, Ove wanted his funeral held peacefully.

Several people responded about this novel, Rizky (2016) about his response in goodreads.com said that he did not expected anything about this novel. Moreover, he had yet to read the literature work from Swedish writer. However, after he read, he loved this novel. He said this is a simple novel but attractive. A touching and meaningful novel, he learned a lot from Ove's life story.

Pandey (2020) stated in The Riveting Review said that she feels delightful when she read the book. This book was hilarious and made her emotionally deep. This book

tells about rediscovery from sadness. It is also a story about how people show empathy to add colors to someone's life.

In fimela.com, a review named Vemale's Review wrote that this novel has a lesson about love, family, and sacrifice. At the end of the novel, the reviewer feels stifling and warm that was left by this novel.

Fredrik Backman created a modest novel with the main character an old man named Ove. The researcher will use the novel as the main object for the research. As the novel *A Man Called Ove* here, the researcher has another perspective about this novel. The researcher will study a social phenomenon in this novel published in 2014 in English.

Furthermore, the researcher wanted to make the readers realized that the attention from people can change someone's life and proved in the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman. Thus, the researcher will research The Importance of Social Empathy in Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove*.

## **B. Knowledge Gap & Problem Statement**

The researcher wants to prove the importance of social empathy in the novel by Fredrik Backman *A Man Called Ove*. Therefore, the conclusion of the research background above, the researcher arranged several problem statements:

1. What are the indicators of social empathy in the novel *A Man Called Ove*?
2. How is social empathy depicted in the novel *A Man Called Ove*?
3. Why did Fredrik Backman address social empathy in the novel *A Man Called Ove*?

## **C. Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the indicators of social empathy in the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman.
2. To describe how social empathy depicted in the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman.

3. To reveal Fredrik Backman's social empathy address in the novel *A Man Called Ove*.

#### **D. Significance of the Study**

The researcher divides the significance of this study into two, they are theoretical and practical significance. The researcher hopes that this research will give several benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

The study contributes to the body of knowledge, especially literary study on the importance of social empathy

2. Practical Significance

The study enriches the present researcher's understanding of the importance of social empathy.