

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Me Before You tells us about a man who is desperate about his life after he got a serious accident which make him paralyzed. Portrayal of desperation on how he lived his life after he was diagnosed *quadriplegic* due to motorcycle accident could be the basic issue of this study. His desperation can be illustrated by his thinking and attitude which begins to be rude and plans to end his life through Dignitas, an organization which manages assisted suicide. Thus, the feeling that you have when you are in such a bad situation that you are willing to take risks in order to change it (Cambridge Dictionary). It can happen because of the trauma which has happened to a person in his past, thus making him feel hopeless and sad in sustainable. Those who feel desperate may lead to think for hurting themselves, to do bad things, and the most severe of desperation can cause depression.

The term desperation is the act of despairing or the state of being desperate (Collins English Dictionary), or it can be defined as a human state of being despair or hopeless. Despair feeling affects on how human thinking and doing, because it distracted by stress condition. People may stress because of their failure or mistake that they have done in the past or it could be due to a protracted feeling of regret. From that condition, people may give up their hope and goals for their future if they cannot solve their own stress. It would be more dangerous in such a serious condition, if they cannot handle themselves for doing bad things such as separating themselves from the crowd, isolating from social life, even it can cause depression. In the most serious condition, it can lead desire to commit

suicide. So, every human life has to build their self-confidence and look for their own strength in order to avoid desperation.

Desperation itself have found in social psychologists can be correlated with other psychological variables within individuals. In sports, desperation plays as important factor for the athletes in performing their game or match. Their desperation could be because of their failure in a match which they have done before. It makes them feel despair and decreases their motivation to achieve more than their previous achievements. In these circumstances, they could just be lazy to practice and even degrade the quality of their game performance in the next game. Even in some cases, in order to stay fit in the game, even though their body is not very good because they are practice for the match rarely, some use doping to support their performance in the game.

In others side such as education, studies which focus on education found that many students easily get despair because of their less achievement. As in some Asian countries which implement very strict educational system, they emphasis more on academic value than non-academic. Students will be competing even start from the new school year to get high ranking and grades in school. At the end of the school year, they also have to compete to get the best university they want too. Because of this heavy pressure, many students are willing to end their live through suicide because their desperation which cannot achieve what they want.

Related to the phenomena above, desperation is a psychological aspect. In the eight stages of psychosocial development according to Erik Erikson (Berk, 2003), he mentions despair in the last stage of the course of human life: Stage VIII: Ego Integrity versus Despair (final adulthood, 65 years and above), at this stage, the last is the stage of the elderly, they can feel and remember the past, see the meaning, tranquility of life and integrity, they also begin to reflect on their past with peace and integrate their life goals, if a person pass this stage easily, they will feel satisfy with themselves and what they has achieved in the past. In the other side, if they

feel that they fail to pass through this stage, they will feel despair and regret what they have done in the past.

Desperation is one of many topic which can be put as the issue in a novel. One of the novel is *Me Before You* (2012) by Jojo Moyes. *Me Before You* (2012) novel was inspired by the author's true story, Jojo Moyes. She was inspired by a couple of her own family members who needed a full 24-hour care. In addition, she also get inspired stories from a news radio story reported a young sportsman who had been left *quadriplegic* and decided to commit suicide by Dignitas. Then, she made these two things as basic ideas for making *Me Before You*. She said that she wanted to write a story about how a man who does not know compromise and make decisions that will not be approved by others around him, and put her in the position of those around the man who want to change his decision.

This novel tells the readers how desperation of this story could be an issue in this research seen from how main character, Will Traynor, surrendered to his life after the accident that caused him to be paralyzed. He did not change his decision to enroll in Dignitas, even after pledging to stall his suicide schedule for six months in favor of Louisa, the nurse. He shows his unfriendly behaviors as a sign that he is desperate. He is also a stubborn person with his stance.

Me Before You (2012) is a romantic novel of Jojo Moyes which tells about a wealthy and successful man, Will Traynor, whose life changed since he was diagnosed with paralysis, *quadriplegic*, by a doctor because of an accident he suffered. He lost control of his body. Then he became an irritable and grumpy man. One day, a girl who became his nurse 2 years later, changed his life became brighter and regenerate his spirit. She is a 26-year-old girl named Louisa Clark who lives with her family. She has lost her job in a cafe. She felt he had little expertise. She is always overshadowed by his sister, Treena, a single mother who is quite shrewd and passionate. Finally, Louisa went to the Job Center and was offered a job to care for the disabled man.

Then, Louisa knows the fact that Will plans to end his life by enrolling himself into a suicide organization in Switzerland. She and Will's ex-girlfriend, Alicia, tried to prevent Will's suicide plan. Louisa tried many ways to encourage Will again. He took Will out to many place, even invited him to her birthday party, and even Louisa broke up with Patrick, his lover, who had been in relationship with her in the last few years. Will also encouraged Louisa to be passionate and ambitious for her life. However, Will remains to commite his suicide. His decision to end his life by suicide is based on desperation of his life.

The novel gets much positive responses from the readers. In www.amazon.com, Navy Wife M comments on June 12, 2017, said that the novel is such masterpieces which force the readers to feel what the characters of the novel feel. She suggests that everyone should read the novel so they could explore about what they would do if they get backed into an impossible corner. Another positive response of the novel comes from MyHumbleOpinion comments on July 1, 2016, who said that *Me Before You* is kind of good and satisfying summer read book.

But, on the other hand, this novel also gets some critique too. From www.amazon.com, b1ue_bird comments on December 3, 2014, that he hated the novel because of Clark's characterization and it has painfully predictable story. This novel also get critics and sparks controversy over the message about disability in June 6th, 2016 by www.popcrush.com.

If we come to the market of this novel, *Me Before You* is one of novel which has incredible market. *Me Before You* novel is first printed in 2012 in the UK and has now sold over 12 million copies worldwide, even USA Today and the New York Times praised this novel. The novel also received the award as New York Times Best Seller. Then, Jojo Moyes took out the sequel entitled *After You* and released on September 29, 2015. The novel has also been translated into various languages. It also adapted into a movie directed by Thea Sharrock and produced by Karen Rosenfelt and Alison Owen, with starring Sam Claflin as Will Traynor and Emilia Clarke as

Louisa Clark, Steve Peacocke, Jenna Coleman, Janet McTeer, Charles Dance and Matthew Lewis, which has released in United States in 2016 and becoming a movie box office.

So, the researcher decided to conduct this novel because this novel is an incredible novel especially for the youth. It contains much moral lesson about life and self-actualization. Since this novel tells us about the meaning of life when something bad happens to us, it implicitly contain much good quotation. There are several reasons why the researcher is interested to analyze this novel. Firstly, the characters and characterization of *Me Before You* novel. The writer describes two very different main characters. Louisa is a cheerful girl but has no ambition for her life, whereas Will is a passionate person who loves all aspects of his life until he gives up on his life because of an accident that makes him always do the whole of his life on a wheelchair.

Secondly, the plot of the story is interesting which can make the reader feel the feelings of the characters in the story. It would be very interesting if we follow the story line and feel how to care for our closest people who surrendered his life because he was limited for doing interesting things in his life.

Then the third reason, *Me Before You* is a best-seller romantic-drama novel which was written by Jojo Moyes in 2012. It can be seen that this novel has translated into many languages such as Indonesian. It also had been adapted into the movie with the same name as the novel, *Me Before You*, which premiered on June 3rd, 2016 in United States.

From those reason above, the researcher decided to use existentialism for analyzing this novel, because it is suitable with the issue which will be discussed in this study. The novel shows the portrayal of desperation showed by the main character, Will Traynor. So, the researcher conducted this study entitled **PORTRAYAL OF DESPERATION REFLECTED IN JOJO MOYES' ME BEFORE YOU NOVEL (2012): AN EXISTENTIALIST STUDY.**

B. Problem Statement

In this study, the researcher formulate some problem statement, there are follows:

- a. How Will's desperation characteristic is portrayed in *Me Before You* novel?
- b. What are the indicators of desperation based on *Me Before You* novel?
- c. Why can desperation be the basic issue in *Me Before You* novel?

C. Objectives of the Study

Based on the background of the study and the problem statement, the researcher determines the objectives of the study below:

- a. To describe Will's desperation characteristic portrayed in *Me Before You* novel.
- b. To identify the indicators of desperation based on the major character of *Me Before You* novel.
- c. To know the reason why desperation can be the basic issue on the major character of *Me Before You* novel.

D. Limitation of the Study

As mentioned throughout this study, there is limitation to this study. This study focused in portrayal of desperation which is reflected in Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You* novel (2012) by using Existentialism.

E. Significance of the Study

This study is expected giving some special practical and theoretical study benefits.

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is purposed to give a contribution to the large body of knowledge, particularly in existentialism perspective in literary work.

2. Practical Benefit

The result of the study is expected to broaden the researcher's knowledge and experience in literary work practical in understanding of this novel. This study is also can be used for references for others researcher who interest to conduct a research about this novel or desperation issue.