

FAMILY SUPPORT ON ASSISTED SUICIDE PORTRAYED IN THEA SHARROCK'S *ME BEFORE YOU* (2016)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini merupakan kajian terhadap film *Me Before You* (2016). Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui indikator dukungan keluarga yang dimiliki oleh keluarga Will dan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana keluarga Will memberikan dukungannya pada bantuan bunuh diri. Untuk sumber data, peneliti menggunakan film *Me Before You* sebagai data primer dan jurnal, artikel, dan wawancara sebagai data sekunder dan menggunakan metode analisis dokumen. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis. Untuk analisis data, peneliti menggunakan metode analisis kualitatif. Hasil penelitian membagi tiga poin. Poin pertama, keluarga Will memiliki tiga indikator dukungan keluarga. Poin kedua, ada lima penggambaran dukungan keluarga pada bantuan bunuh diri yang digambarkan dalam film, dan poin terakhir adalah alasan Jojo Moyes sebagai penulis dan Thea Sharrock sebagai sutradara mengangkat masalah ini dalam novel dan film *Me Before You*.

Kata Kunci: bunuh diri dengan bantuan, dukungan keluarga, *me before you*

Abstract

This research is a study of Me Before You (2016) movie. The objectives of the research are to find out indicators of family support that had by Will's family and to explain how Will's family give their support on assisted suicide. For the data source, researcher use Me Before You film as primary data and journal, article, and interview as secondary data and used the document method analysis. This study used sociological approach. For data analysis, the researcher uses qualitative analysis method. The results of the study divide three point. The first point, Will's family have three indicators of family support. Second point, there are five depictions of family support on assisted suicide portrayed in film, and the last point is the reason Jojo Moyes as the writer and Thea Sharrock as the director raised this issue in the novel and film Me Before You.

Keywords: *assisted suicide, family support, me before you*

1. INTRODUCTION

Family support is a form of interaction in which there are acts of mutual assistance and acceptance of family members (Friedman, 1998). Family support is an action that needs to be done between family members so they can live together well. Family support can be in the form of attitudes, activities, and family acceptance of family members. The form of support provided by family members can be in the form of information, behavior, or materials that make these

family members feel cared for, cared for, and loved. The family's support in the development of a child is very important. The family does not only provide love and affection but also must ensure that the child lives in a comfortable environment and mentally prepares the child to face adult life in the future. Even after a child grows up, the support from the family, especially parents, will never be separated from the importance of their lives. The family's support has a significant influence on a child's life. The relationship between parents and children is very important for building trust in others. It can also help social, emotional, and cognitive development in children. Many children have difficulty moving on with their lives if their families don't do their part well.

Literature is a work of art created specifically to describe social phenomena that happen in the world. Readers can get the messages and moral values contained therein through literary work. One of the issues that can be made into a film is family support. The authors convey the family's support through their literary works so that people can understand how important it is in a child's life. This issue raised in *Me Before You* movie. *Me Before You* is a romantic film adapted from a novel with the same title. Even though this film mainly presents the romantic story between Will Traynor and Louisa Clark as the main characters in the film, researchers feel that the writer raises an interesting issue, namely Will's family's support for his decision on assisted suicide.

Me Before You tell the love story of Louisa, who works as Will's personal nurse, a man who is paralyzed because of a motorbike accident. Will was depressed following the accident and decided to commit assisted suicide since he believed there was no chance for his future. Then, Will met Louisa Clark, who is looking for a job to support her family's finances. She ends up working as Will's personal assistant. At first, Will is cold to Louisa until they finally feel comfortable with each other and fall in love. Louisa knew about Will's decision to end her life and tried to change that decision. Louisa shows sincere love for Will, so Will reverses his decision to commit suicide.

The author focuses on the love story of Louisa and Will and how Will decides his life to end his life because, according to him, when he ends his life, his suffering ends too. In this story, Will and Louisa's parents play an important role. Will family wants to preserve Will's life by trying to make their son happy through Louisa Clark, and Mrs. Traynor hopes that her son will not end his life, but his father wants to let go of his son's decision. His family always seeks the best for this child and accompanies Will until the last moment. Therefore, researchers want to examine this problem. Researcher have collected previous studies and showing relevant previous studies discussing the analysis of the novel *Me Before You* in research papers, journals, and

review articles. After being analyzed, previous studies focused on the main character and the character's love story. The researcher took a new study that has not been studied by raising the topic of family's support on life choices of the character in this novel. Researcher took the topic of family support as the main discussion and had not previously been studied and this research entitled **Family's Support on Assisted Suicide Portrayed in Thea Sharrock's *Me Before You***.

2. METHOD

The type of the study in this study is literary study. Literary study is the study of work written based on the author's imagination in the form of novels, films, dramas, or poetry. Literary study is a method that uses descriptive documents by analyzing information verbally, visually, or both. The object of this research is *the Me Before You* movie, which focuses on the family's support of assisted suicide and the moral message conveyed in the film about life's meaning. For the data source, researcher use *Me Before You* film as primary data and journal, article, and interview as secondary data. This study used the document analysis method. The steps included watching the *Me Before You* movie several times while doing note-taking on the part containing the family roles in Will's life choices, and the last step is listing and grouping the data. Besides primary data, secondary data is needed from previous research related to this research. Previous research can be searched on the internet or in journals. This study used a qualitative analysis method. This method is applied because it fits with this study, where the data were analyzed based on the film and analyze the relationship between the text and the context of the film.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher present research finding and discussion. In this chapter the researcher present the answer of problem statements that contained in the first chapter. In finding, the researcher described the process of presenting result of the data. Whereas, in the discussion section the researcher will analyze the finding.

FINDINGS

3.1 Indicators of Family Support

3.1.1 Searching of Nurse for Will

After Louisa lost her job, she went to the job center and found a job vacancy with the Traynor family. Syeed, an employee at the job center, told me the requirements needed.

Syeed : *“Care and companionship for a disabled man. Need someone to drive, feed and assist. Six months fixed term contract. Oh! And it's good money.*

It's actually excellent money. This is the fifth time they tried to recruit. They're desperate. And there's nothing on here about needing skills."

From the dialogue above, the Traynor family is looking for a nurse for Will regardless of skills or work experience, but they pay a large salary. They do this to support Will and to find a supportive nurse for Will. In the next scene, Mrs. Traynor interviewed Louisa before hiring her. From the dialogue below, it can be seen that Louisa's cheerful personality made Mrs. Traynor hire her despite having no work experience in caregiving.

Mrs. Traynor : *"Miss Clark, why should I employ you? Instead of say, the previous candidate?"*

Louisa : *"I'm a fast learner and I'm never ill, and I only live on the other side of the castle. And, and, I am stronger than I look."*

On the same day, Louisa was accepted as a nurse for Will. Before meeting Will, Mrs. Traynor instructed Louisa to get closer to Will and emotionally support Will as a friend rather than a nurse.

Mrs. Traynor : *"I would be nice if he could think of you as a friend rather than a paid professional."*

3.1.2 Attention of Mr. Traynor and Mrs. Traynor to Will's Condition

Even though Will's parents were busy at work, they still paid attention to Will's condition and ensured Will was okay with his nurse. Will's parent's attention can be categorized as appreciation support.



Picture 1. Attention of Mrs. Traynor to Will

Picture 1 shows the scene where Mrs. Traynor sees Will and Louisa walking in the yard. It's the first time Will has stepped out of his room since his accident two years ago. It made Mrs. Traynor happy with Will's good changes, and she continues to support Louisa to be with Will.

Mr. Traynor : *"Look, Camilla's had to go up to London. Are you*

going to be alright?”

Louisa : *“Of course.”*

Mr. Traynor : *“I’m on my mobile, if you need me.”*

The dialogue shows Will's father's concern for his son's condition. Even though he is busy and needs the help of Nathan, Will's nurse for two years, and Louisa, they checked on their son several times and took care of him.

3.1.3 Supporting Louisa’s Bucket List for Will

There is a scene where Louisa makes Will's wish list before Will commits suicide. Trina, Louisa's sister, suggests Louisa submit a proposal to Will's parents so they can support Louisa's effort for Will.

Mrs. Traynor : *“Will's barely left the house in two years. We have tried.”*

Mr. Traynor : *“Yes, but we haven't succeeded. If Louisa can come up with things that Will is able and prepared to do, then that's all for the good, surely. Sports, concerts. I'd love to see him do any of these things.”*

Mrs. Traynor : *“Okay. Okay. Louisa, if you can get me a schedule, I'll see if I can shift things around in my diary.”*

Mr. Traynor : *“No! Let him do it for himself. Will needs to be allowed to feel like a man.”*

The dialogue above is between Mr. Traynor and Mrs. Traynor after Louisa gives them a bucket list she made for Will so Will can enjoy his life and have fun before committing assisted suicide. Will's parents agreed with Louisa's idea because they thought Louisa's idea was a good idea for their son's happiness. They provide instrumental support because they give funds for Louisa to realize the entire bucket list and emotional support because they are also happy with Louisa's bucket list for Will.

3.2 Depiction of Family Support on Assisted Suicide

3.2.1 The Wealth of Traynor Family as Instrumental Support

The scene where Louisa goes to the Traynor family's house for the first time to apply for a job shows the Traynor family's luxurious house. From the setting of this film, the building used for Will's family home is Chenies Manor House

in Buckinghamshire, England. This building was built in 1460 and is known as the Chenies Palace. This building has a long history as a Tudor Grade I listed building. Although it was never the seat of royalty, it did host royal visitors.



Picture 2. Traynor Family's House

The depiction of the luxurious home and the wealth of the Traynor family shows that Will's family can provide material support. Besides that, the director also describes Will's family wealth through audio. When Louisa enters the Traynor family's house, the director adds classical music as the background.

3.2.2 Argument of Will's Parent about Will's Decision

Mrs. Traynor : *"Freedom? You call this freedom?"*

Mr. Traynor : *"We all agreed to it."*

Mrs. Traynor : *"Not the specifics. Jesus! If I hadn't noticed the Swiss postmark..."*

Mr. Traynor : *"We made an agreement with Will. Six months."*

Mrs. Traynor : *"No. I only agreed so that we had six months to change his mind. I cannot believe that you are willing to help our son end his life!"*

Mr. Traynor : *"I'd rather that than risk him trying again, alone. It wasn't a cry for help, Camilla, He meant it. You know that. Now, this way we can be with him, supporting him, loving him."*

Mrs. Traynor : *"He's my son!"*

Mr. Traynor : *"Yes, he's my son, too! It's his choice. This is what he wants. You know how much pain he's in."*

Mrs. Traynor : *"He gave me six months. We can still persuade him."*

The dialogue above shows Mr. Traynor and Mrs. Traynor became argue after

Mrs. Traynor finds a letter from Switzerland regarding Will's registration for assisted suicide. Mr. Traynor, with his choice to support his son's decision, while Mrs. Traynor disagrees with Will's decision and tries to think of a way to persuade his son to have life motivation.

3.2.3 Legality of Assisted Suicide



Picture 3. A letter from Dignitas, a Swiss suicide group to Will

Picture 4 shows a scene whereby Mrs. Traynor finds a letter from Switzerland regarding Will's registration for assisted suicide. The film shows Will registering in Dignitas, a Swiss suicide group. From the setting of place in this story, Will's family lives in England, more specifically at Pembroke Castle in Wales, United Kingdom.

According to s.2 of the Suicide Act 1961, as amended by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, assisting another person's suicide is prohibited and carries a prison sentence of up to 14 years. Therefore assisted suicide is illegal and can be prosecuted as murder in England. Because of that, in this film, it is depicted that Will is looking for another country that legalizes assisted suicide. Switzerland is his choice because Switzerland legalized assisted suicide since 1942. According to the Swiss Criminal Code 1942, individuals has allowed doing assisted suicide as long as the motives are not selfish.

According to the official Dignitas website, costs for suicide assistance between £ 6,500 to over £ 15,000 or Rp. 120.220.376 to over Rp. 277.431.637. The expensive cost can describe the financial support from Will's family to support Will's decision to commit suicide in Switzerland.

3.2.4 Will's Parent's Accompaniment until Will's Last Time

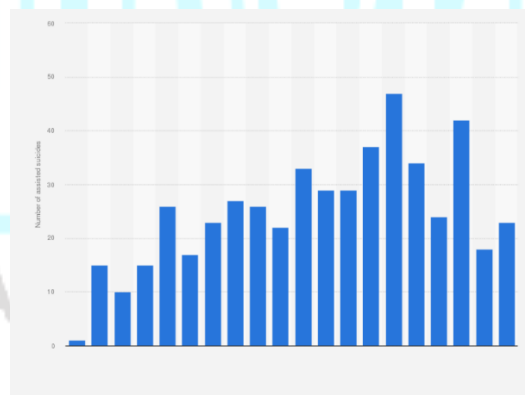


Picture 4. Will's Parent Accompanied Will in Swiss

This scene shows the emotional support when Will's parents accept Will's decision to commit assisted suicide to end his suffering. They took Will to Switzerland and accompanied him until Will's last time. They also let Louisa accompany Will knowing she is a precious girl for their son.

3.2.5 British Dignitas Suicide Data

According to statista.com, the annual number of Dignitas suicides in Switzerland from the British has been recorded from 2002-2021.



Picture 5. Data table of British people who went to Switzerland for assisted suicide

The number of British who went to Switzerland for assisted suicide has increased since 2002. The novel *Me Before You* was written in 2012; in reality, there were 32 cases recorded in the same year. In 2016, the film *Me Before You* was made, and assisted suicide cases recorded 47 cases, becoming the highest number in the last 14 years. The data shows the reality of society in England on assisted suicide which is depicted through this novel and film. Based on this data, this is the reason the director made the novel *Me Before You* (2012) into a film in 2016 because the highest number of assisted suicide cases committed by British people in Switzerland occurred in 2016.

3.3 Reason Why Director Address Family Support on Assisted Suicide

3.3.1 Director's Point of View

Question

So how did you come to this project and when was the first time that you heard about it and what was interesting about it for you?

Answers

"I read the story and I completely fell in love with the love story I think essentially that's what it was for me. I love the characters I could imagine them straight away. I love tone of the film and I felt that is felt like quite a rare. So I loved the quality and I loved the fact that it was brave enough also to take some very serious subject that have to be dealt with very carefully and I loved the bravery of that. So it was the combination of all of these things."

The dialogue was taken from an interview with Thea Sharrock, film director of *Me Before You* (2016) film with Movie'n'co UK. In the interview above, Thea explained why she joined this project and made *Me Before You* her film debut as a director. She explained how she really liked this film's love story and serious subject. Besides that, based on this data from statista.com, the highest number of assisted suicide cases committed by British people in Switzerland occurred in 2016. That was why the director made the novel into a film in the same year.

3.3.2 Author's Point of View

Question

How did you come up the story of Lou and Will?

Answer

"It came from real life story. It was about a young man who became an athlete who has left a paralyzed from the neck down after an accident. Several times later, he had persuaded his parent to take him to Dignitas, the Swiss clinic to assisted suicide. I was really shock and couldn't understand as a parent, I couldn't understand what made that decision. And I supposed to write a book of make to convey and I want to understand, I want to know would you do to that place. Why you ever agree to if you're parent and maybe what would you do if you trying to change somebody's mind."

The dialogue was taken from Jojo Moyes' interview as the author of the novel

Me Before You (2012) with Pathé Nederland. Jojo explained why he wrote this story and his purpose for writing this story. The novel *Me Before You* was written because Jojo wanted him to understand, and the readers also understood that the issue portrayed in this novel and film was not as clear-cut as people would have liked to believe.

DISCUSSION

This section presents the discussion based on the findings of the study. The researcher finds four indicators of family support portrayed on *Me Before You* film. First, Mrs. Traynor was cautious and had many considerations about hiring nurses for his son. She is not looking for a nurse with professional work experience because, for her, Will's mental welfare is as important to them as his physical welfare. Second, even though they are busy, Will's parents are concerned about their son's condition. Last, Will's parents agreed with Louisa's idea to make a good memory for their son and give financing support. After the analyzes the film, the researcher finds a way of family support on assisted suicide portrayed in *Me Before You* film. In the beginning, it is shown the argument between Mr. Traynor, who supports Will's decision because he thinks Will's decision is freedom, with Mrs. Traynor, who doesn't support him because he doesn't want to lose his son. But at the end of the film, Will's parents support Will's decision to end his life by assisted suicide. Will's parents accompany Will to Switzerland because they legalize assisted suicide there. The researcher is also looking for reasons why the writer wrote this story and why the director turned this novel into a film. After finding out, Jojo Moyes wrote *Me Before You* (2012) because it was based on a true story where she did not understand the issue and wanted to understand how Will's character felt and as a parent of Will. Jojo also wanted to show it to the readers. Meanwhile, from Thea Sharrock's point of view, she was very interested in the story written by Jojo. She felt that *Me Before You* (2012) was not an ordinary love story, and she felt the serious issues in the story needed to be shown to people.

The researcher analyzes the findings from the study findings connecting with Sociological Approach. According to Wellek and Warren (1948), the sociology of literature is divided into three classifications: the sociology of the author, the sociology of literary work, and the sociology of readers. After analyzing this film, the researcher found that this film can be associated with these three classifications. Sociology of the author as an expression of Jojo Moyes, wants to describe the true story experienced by a young athlete through her work. In the beginning, Jojo Moyes did not believe that parents would allow their children to commit suicide. However, what happened to a young athlete that Jojo met and what happened to Will Traynor in this film is considered fatalistic suicide according to Emile Durkheim's theory because his

condition is increasingly difficult to continue living like other people and becomes the consideration of parents to allow committed assisted suicide. Sociology of literary work as a reflection on the reality of British society. Based on this data from statista.com, this is the reason the director made the novel *Me Before You* (2012) into a film in 2016 because the highest number of assisted suicide cases committed by British people in Switzerland occurred in 2016. The last classification is the sociology of readers as a reception readers of the work. Based on the IMDb website, the film *Me Before You* has a rating of 7.4/10. Although there are pros and cons to the issues raised in the novel and film *Me Before You*, this work is accepted in society and got many awards.

This research can add information to previous research. Research that has been conducted by Rifdah (2021) discusses Louisa's struggle to support Will's life choice. As additional information, this study adds research results from Will's family support besides Louisa's support. There is research by Hanifah (2019) that discusses the depiction of death as a meaningful choice in the film and research by Lestari (2020) about the depiction of assisted suicide as a life choice made by Will. This study adds research results of information about dignity in Switzerland, a place of assisted suicide for several British people, including Will.

4. CLOSING

This chapter will include a conclusion based on the analysis and discussion of the research presented in the previous chapter. This research aims to analyze family support on assisted suicide portrayed in *Me Before You* (2016) movie. The following are the findings of the analysis:

- 4.1 There are three indicators of family support by Will's parents shown in the *Me Before You* movie. First informational support where Will's parents find a nurse to care for Will. Second, the emotional support Will's parents gave Will in the form of attention and affection. Last is instrumental support, which provides financial support for Will's care and committed assisted suicide.
- 4.2 The depiction of family support on assisted suicide in this film shows Will's family's wealth as financial support, from the depiction of the Tryanor family's house and the cost of Dignitas in Switzerland. Emotional support is also depicted in this film. In the beginning, Will's parents argued, but in the end, they supported Will to commit suicide. Assisted suicide is also portrayed in this film.
- 4.3 The writer wrote *Me Before You* (2012) novel because it comes from a true story where Jojo Moyes wants to understand the issue and make it into a work. Meanwhile, Thea Sharrock as director, fell in love with the story in the novel and decided to join the project as her debut.

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