

A STUDY OF RULING CLASS EXPLOITATION AND WORKING CLASS RESISTANCE IN SUZANNE COLLINS'S THE HUNGER GAMES: A MARXIST ANALYSIS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana perlawanan muncul sebagai balasan terhadap eksploitasi kelas pekerja yang dilakukan kelas penguasa dari perspektif Marxis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan data yang dikumpulkan melalui pembacaan secara cermat novel *The Hunger Games* 2008 karya Suzanne Collins, diikuti dengan mengidentifikasi dan mengkategorikan bukti tertulis yang relevan, yang kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teori Marxis. Temuan yang telah ditemukan menunjukkan bagaimana kelas penguasa yang diwakili oleh Capitol mengeksploitasi kelas pekerja yang diwakili oleh District, dan bagaimana perlawanan berkembang sebagai hasil dari penindasan yang telah terjadi. Tiga aspek utama telah diidentifikasi; eksploitasi dari Capitol kepada District, penggunaan kesadaran palsu dan rasa takut sebagai mekanisme kontrol, dan munculnya kesadaran kelas disebabkan oleh penderitaan yang sama sebagai terbentuknya perlawanan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penindasan yang berkelanjutan dapat menyebabkan perkembangan kesadaran bersama, yang pada akhirnya mengarah pada perlawanan terhadap struktur kekuasaan yang telah dieksploitasi.

Kata Kunci: Perspektif Marxis, The Hunger Games, Kelas Sosial

Abstract

This research study how resistance emerges as a response to the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class through a Marxist perspective. This research employs a qualitative method, with data collected through close reading of *The Hunger Games* novel 2008 by Suzanne Collins, followed by identifying and categorizing relevant textual evidence which was analyzed using Marxist theory. The findings reveal how the ruling class represented by the Capitol, exploits the working class represented by the Districts, and how resistance develops as a consequence of such oppression. Three major aspects are identified: exploitation by the Capitol to the Districts, the use of false consciousness and fear as mechanisms of control, and the emergence of class consciousness due to shared suffering as a form of resistance. These findings suggest that continues oppression can lead to the development of collective awareness, which eventually lead to resistance against exploited power structures.

Keywords: Marxist perspective, The Hunger Games, Social Class

1. INTRODUCTION

Social class is a serious problem in society, this happens when power, wealth, and resources are controlled by a system run by small ruling class, while the majority of people live under this unfair system. The ruling class maintains its dominance through various means, such as politics and economy, this dominance causes the working class experience difficulties such as hunger and poverty. The unequal system creates a clear classification between the ruling class who receive the benefit and the working class, who suffer from the system. As the result from the system, the working class is often forced to accept inequality as a normal part of their life. However, when the working class begin to realize the discrimination and exploitation carried out by the ruling class over time, they come to understand that their suffering does not occur naturally but is created by the ruling class to maintain power over them. This realization can develop into an awareness of shared oppression, that may lead to resistance and collective action, as the working class start to challenge the system that detain them from equality and justice.

Marxist theory views social class as a fundamental structure that shapes society and established the distribution of power, wealth, and resources. According to Marx and Engels (1973) society divided into two opposing classes, the proletariat, which is the working class who do not own any of means of production and must sell their labor to survive, and the bourgeoisie, which is a ruling class who own the means of production who buy labor from the proletariat and exploit them to generate profit. This division is regarding in political issue rather than economic issue, as the ruling class use its inequality system over the resources to maintain their dominance over the lower class. Marx and Engels (1973) argued that the gap between the ruling class and working class often leads to conflict, as the working class grows tired of being exploited by the ruling class, they began to resist the inequality system. Furthermore, the ruling class maintain its position not only through the money but also through controlling social laws and culture in a way to provide themselves, this situation makes the working class troubled to improve their life situation.

Suzanne Collins's novel *The Hunger Games* is a dystopian book that mention social class in the story. Suzanne Collins's create a dystopian society in the fictional nation called Panem, where society is sharply divided between the Capitol and the Districts. This novel portrays a social class system which ruled by the President of the Panem, President Snow, who represents the ruling class that maintains power through systematic inequality, exploitation, and oppression towards the Districts. The Capitol represent the ruling class is supposed to be the center of political and economic control, while the Districts represent the working class that is forced to provide resources for the ruling class under an unfair condition. To maintain its dominance, the Capitol create a system of control rooted by fear, the clearest example of this system is the annual Hunger Games that is originated from past civil war in Panem known as *The Dark Days* where all the Districts

rebelled against the Capitol. The game serves a constant reminder of consequence of the rebellion against the Capitol, this brutal event forces the Districts to sacrifice one girl and one boy from age 12 to 18 to fight to death in the game until there is one champion. While the Capitol view the games as entertainment, the Districts view the game as a symbol powerless and oppression.

In *The Hunger Games* book there is an emergence of a female character named Katniss Everdeen as a tribute in the 74th annual Hunger Games, who will become the symbol of resistance for the Districts. Katniss Everdeen voluntary action to protect her little sister from get chosen to fight in the Hunger Games represent a challenge to Capitol's authority and inspire hope among the Districts. This hope slowly make the Districts realize of class awareness that their suffering is a result from continues oppression by the capitol. This shared awareness creates solidarity among the Districts, as people start to realize that unity is their strongest power they willingly resist the unfair system. Collins demonstrates that extreme inequality and oppression between the ruling and working classes produce resistance, as oppressed groups begin to challenge a system that denies them dignity, justice, and freedom.

Several previous studies have analyzed *The Hunger Games* from various perspectives, including power relations, propaganda, exploitation, and rebellion. However, these studies tend to focus on specific aspects of the novel and do not comprehensively examine the process through which systematic discrimination and exploitation by the ruling class transform false consciousness into class consciousness and ultimately lead to collective rebellion. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by examining how the process leading to the emergence of rebellion specifically the transformation from false consciousness to class consciousness that leads to collective resistance in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Game*.

2. METHOD

The researcher of this study uses a qualitative approach as a method in examining Suzanne Collins's novel *The Hunger Games*. It applies a Marxist perspective to understand how the Districts, which were once separated and divided, slowly become a united group. The research focuses on analyzing the story, characters, dialogues, and important events in the novel. Through close reading and interpretation, this study explains how class awareness grows among the Districts and how unity becomes the main force that leads to rebellion against the Capitol. The goal of this study is to understand how collective power is formed through shared oppression and struggle.

The material object of this study is *The Hunger Games* novel written by Suzanne Collins as the primary source of data. The formal object of this study is the rebellion by the Districts to the Capitol, which arise from social class division and abuse of power from the Capitol to the Districts. The subject of this study is the character in the novel that experienced inequality by the Capitol. The data in this

study are categorized into primary data and secondary data. The primary data are taken directly from Suzanne Collins's novel *The Hunger Games*. The novel serves as the main source because it contains the narrative, characters, conflicts, and social conditions which reflect the theme of class division and rebellion. All characters' dialogue and description in the novel which related to exploitation are used as the main evidence in this research. The secondary data are taken from various sources, such as journals, articles, and previous studies which include references about Marxist theory, social class, and rebellion. These data are used by the researcher to support and strengthen the primary data by presenting theoretical and contextual background.

The researcher uses a library research technique to collect the data for this study. This technique gathers information from written sources related to the topic of the study. The primary data for this study are collected from Suzanne Collins's novel *The Hunger Games*. The researcher collected the data by reading the novel thoroughly and identifying relevant passages in the novel related to the topic of this study. The secondary data for this study are collected from various online sources such as journals and articles. The researcher collected the data by identifying all relevant sources, selecting and using the most relevant sources for this study, and finally taking all the important points from the studies that are able to support this study.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method through several steps, namely organizing, classifying, interpreting with the selected theory, and describing the data. The researcher first arranges the data found in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* so that the data are ready to be analyzed further. Next, the researcher sorts the data based on the themes of exploitation, false consciousness and fear, emergence of class awareness, and symbolic resistance. The researcher then analyzes the classified data using Marxist theory to understand how it relates to the study. Finally, after organizing, classifying, and interpreting the data, the researcher analyzes the data in detail in the form of sentences and shows how the data answer the research questions.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes Suzanne Collins's novel *The Hunger Games* using a Marxist perspective to explain how exploitation, false consciousness, and class consciousness gradually form a resistance against the ruling class. The Capitol represents the ruling class that maintains its authority by controlling the Districts through economic exploitation, political power, fear, and social division. Meanwhile, the Districts represent the working class that experiences oppression before eventually developing collective awareness and resistance.

A. The Capitol's Economic Exploitation of the Districts

The first finding is exploitation. In *The Hunger Games*, Chapter 1, the tesserae system

illustrates how the Capitol exploits the Districts by forcing poor families to risk their children's lives in exchange for additional food. This system shows that poverty is not eliminated but structurally maintained to ensure control. In Chapter 15, the condition is coming from in District 11 where they are not allow to eat the crops even though the crops is their labor results. People in District 11 also only got an extra food during harvest season, so they can work longer to fulfilled their labor. These condition is a proof how the Capitol exploit the Districts through the economy.

B. False Consciousness as an Effect of Fear and Control

The third finding is false consciousness. In Chapter 1, Katniss learns to remain silent because speaking against the Capitol could endanger her family, showing how fear suppresses resistance. The Hunger Games themselves function as a tool of ideological control, making the Districts accept oppression as normal through forced entertainment and public spectacle. In Chapter 15, the Capitol further strengthens false consciousness by isolating the Districts from one another, preventing communication and shared understanding. This isolation ensures that the Districts cannot easily recognize their shared oppression or unite against the system. These condition show how the capitol use fear and control to manipulate the Districts until they can not see their shared suffering.

C. The Development of Class Consciousness as a form of Resistance emergence

The fourth finding is the emergence of class consciousness. In Chapter 2, Katniss's decision to volunteer for Prim is followed by the silent protest of District 12, showing early signs of collective awareness. Furthermore, people from District 12 raise their three fingers to Katniss to show their support, this symbolic act shows that people in Districts 12 start to realize their shared suffering through Katniss and form a solidarity. In Chapter 18, solidarity becomes more visible when District 11 sends bread to Katniss after Rue's death, this act symbolizing unity between the Districts despite their difference. Katniss's then make a public acknowledgment of the solidarity act from District 11, which strengthens the sense of shared struggle and show that Katniss saw District 11 not as an enemy but rather than an ally with a shared struggle. These condition show how the development of class consciousness among the Districts will form into a resistance in the future.

4. CLOSING

Based on the findings and discussion, this study identifies three main aspects that explain the development of class conflict in Suzanne Collins's novel *The Hunger Games* through a Marxist perspective, which is exploitation, false consciousness, and class consciousness. The findings show that

the social structure in Panem reflects Karl Marx's concept of bourgeoisie and proletariat, where the Capitol controls the means of production while the Districts provide labor for the Capitol's benefit. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that exploitation is embedded in Panem's social system. In *The Hunger Games*, Chapters 1 and 15 show the tesserae system, cruel system by the Capitol, and exploited District's labor. The study also finds that the Capitol maintains its domination by creating false consciousness through fear and control. As shown in Chapters 1 and 15, the Hunger Games, restrictions on freedom of speech, and limited communication among the Districts encourage the working class to accept oppression as unavoidable. However, the development of class consciousness gradually emerges as a form of resistance, as the Districts begin to recognize their shared oppression. In Chapters 2 and 18, the silent protest of District 12, the three fingers salute to show their solidarity to Katniss, the solidarity shown by District 11 through the gift of bread, and Katniss's acknowledgment to the bread that show Katniss accept District 11 as her ally.

5. REFERENCE

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