

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Religion is an important aspect that cannot be separated from human life. It is used as the basis and foundation in people's lives. Based on an article was published in *Undergraduate Economic Review* entitled "Psychology of Religion and Spirituality" (2013). Paul T. P. Wong conveys that religion already contains valuable and essential things in human life that become the most crucial part of the human soul. Moreover, religion has rules that guide humans to face all problems that appear during life. It means that people do not need to be afraid and confused to overcome whatever happens to them. Therefore, religion is very notable for humans (2).

Many religions exist in this world. In society, adherents of these religions live side by side, so communication, interaction, and social relations occur between them. It is undeniable that interfaith family will live together in one family. Interfaith family does not always have a positive effect but also has a negative impact. One of them is the religious identity crisis experienced by children.

Thus, religion becomes a crucial and challenging issue to discuss. Many fiction writers also choose religion as a topic in their works. One of them is Judy Blume. Blume's works always have controversial themes. Her popular and controversial work is, *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret* was published in 1970. This novel is classified as young adult fiction. In the novel, Blume is considered demeaning religion by depicting some characters in the novel *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. It makes this work banned from circulation.

Judy Blume was born on February 12, 1938, in Judith Sussman, New Jersey. She is an American writer of children's, young adult, and adult fiction. Blume was born and grew up in a Jewish family. She wrote many works as her contribution to literature. Some of them are *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (1972), *Deenie* (1973), and *Blubber* (1974). Therefore, she received many awards like Outstanding Novel of the Year from New York Times for *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret* (1970), American Library Association (ALA)'s Margaret A. Edwards Award for her efforts in writing and developing young adult literature (1994), etc.

Blume is not religious, but she has a connection with God called a personal relationship. Blume concludes that religion is not a belief to follow but a culture to live in. One of the cultures that Blume often did is sitting shiva. It is a form of sadness when she loses the closest people around her. The experiences and perspectives about religion inspired Blume to produce her novels.

In this research, I will analyze one of Blume's controversial novels, entitled *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. The novel presents how the author portrays interfaith families. It also depicts how the interfaith family impacts Margaret's religious identity. Many problems that Margaret has force Margaret to find solutions. Thus, this research is entitled “ Interfaith Family and Religious Identity Crisis in *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume”.

1.2. Identification of Problems

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret implies an in-depth view regarding how a teenage girl has to feel discomfort in a family of different religions. The way Blume portrays interfaith families is through the family member's religiosity. It also

presents the life of the interfaith family, which contain the relationship of interfaith family members and the treatment of the interfaith family toward the main character. It can be seen from the novel how both families maintain their religion. This novel shows that living among people with different religions has caused uneasiness in Margaret. It becomes a big question for Margaret's religious identity. She starts a long psychological journey to find the solution to her problem.

Therefore, I expect this research to analyze how interfaith families may impact Margaret's religious identity, especially in the transition phase from adolescence to adulthood. The research shows how religion has become a crucial aspect of social life. Every religion has its teachings.

1.3. Review of Related Studies

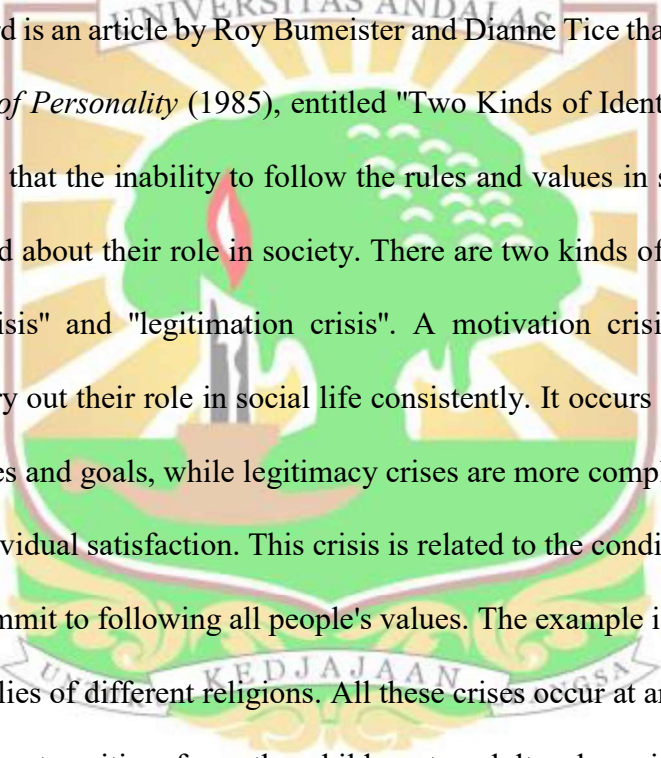
I have read some books, theses, journal articles, and essays as references to support this research.

First, a thesis was written by Vitriya, "An Analysis of Religious Perspectives on *Judy Blume's Are You There, God? It's Me Margaret*" undergraduate thesis University of Sumatera Utara (2017). This thesis focuses on religious perspectives in the Margaret self. The researcher would like to uncover that even though she believes in no particular God, she still has perspectives that serve as religious or spiritual beliefs. There are three religious perspectives that Margaret has unconsciously taken. Firstly, when she does good deeds for others, all good things will come to her. Secondly, Margaret believes in God. Lastly, she believes that the existence of God is from His help. She asks God to heal her father's wound. The thesis uses a thematic study that analyzes more on the theme of the

story. In my opinion, the thesis is clear because the researcher explains the main character in detail through every act of Margaret, who carries out a religious perspective. However, the way the researcher in writing this thesis is less varied. This research will be even better when the author also uses passive sentences.

Second is a thesis written by Rahma Larissa (2009), "An Identity Crisis in *Hanrahan's* Lost Girls and Love Hotels" undergraduate thesis, State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah. This thesis focuses on the main character Margaret who feels alone and doesn't know what she will become. In this thesis, the researcher uses the psychosocial theory by Erik Erikson. Margaret's isolation is inseparable from the experience she had. At school, she feels that she is an incompetent student. Margaret thinks that her friends do not consider her presence. In addition, Margaret's parents also do not provide direction and support for their child. Margaret's father left her, while her mother was busy partying and consuming alcohol. When entering the adulthood stage, Margaret has a boyfriend named Tony. Her boyfriend has a good impact on Margaret. He makes Margaret starts interacting with friends. However, the feeling of alienation makes Margaret end the relationship. Margaret thinks that what her mother says is true. She is a school prostitute. Loneliness makes Margaret decide to flee from Canada to Japan. When she is 20 years old (Young Adulthood), she finds a gangster man named Kazu. Margaret feels comfortable because Kazu is a reflection of her. However, her happiness is shattered when Margaret finds out that Kazu is married. Margaret's disappointment deepens until she finds a new man named Used. Kazu still loves Margaret. He kills Used in front of Margaret's eyes. Margaret also lost Kazu because Kazu died due to his wife's murder. As a form of isolation from people

around her, Margaret spends her time drinking alcohol. In my view, this thesis is good because the researcher analyzes and explains it clearly. She provides robust data on the relation in each stages; school age, adolescence, and young adulthood. I could get the point that through psychosocial theory, humans are not formed instantly but have gone through a series of psychological processes in their life. Experiences passed by someone, such as actions, trauma, and disappointment of people around, will impact an individual.



The third is an article by Roy Bumeister and Dianne Tice that was published in *the Journal of Personality* (1985), entitled "Two Kinds of Identity crisis". This article explains that the inability to follow the rules and values in society makes a person confused about their role in society. There are two kinds of identity crises: "motivation crisis" and "legitimation crisis". A motivation crisis is a person's inability to carry out their role in social life consistently. It occurs due to a lack of perceived values and goals, while legitimacy crises are more complicated than just a matter of individual satisfaction. This crisis is related to the condition of a person who cannot commit to following all people's values. The example is when we have parents or families of different religions. All these crises occur at an urgent time in human life. The transition from the children to adults phase is supported by situations and conflicts from the people around them. Therefore, the background and actions of people around can plunge or help someone from an identity crisis. This article helps me distinguish types of identity crises and know the causes. I think the article is easy to understand. The researcher uses common words and simple sentences to explain the factors that make someone experiences an identity crisis simply and easily. In addition, the article also contains an example of a

legitimation crisis. A religious family's background is one factor in an identity crisis. However, it would be better if the researcher not only gave an example but also explained the topic through examples in detail.

The following article relevant to this research is a journal from Remschidmidt H entitled "Psychosocial Milestone in Normal Puberty and Adolescence" Directed by *Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Philipps University Marburg, FRG (1994) (vol,41)*. The researcher explains that the psychosocial aspect greatly influences and plays an essential role in the puberty experienced by individuals. Remschmidt asserts that a person begins puberty, and Psychosocial influences the outcome of the pubertal process. The most highlighted thing in this phase is that the individual will be able to absorb and analyze the people's or society's views. In addition, individuals will explore introspection within themselves and develop their personality and sexual aspects. Social agents are family, parents, friends, and others needed by children at puberty. They can assist individuals in understanding and avoiding mental illness and deviance. Mental health at puberty will contribute and give light to adolescence. In my view, during puberty, children will think more critically about other people's views. It is usual for children who face this process. The support of the people around them may help the child shape children personality and identity.

The following source is an article by Cindy that was published in the *Journal of Literature, Linguistic, and Language Teaching* in 2021, Vol. II Issue II, entitled ‘ ‘ Mia Hall’s Decision-Making in *If I Stay* by Gayle Forman Based on Freudian Psychoanalysis Theory’ ’. The researcher explains how the main character, Mia, is confused. Her parents died, and she does not have a big family. Mia lives

only with her younger brother Teddy. The struggle between the id, ego and superego ensues. Id makes Mia want to leave the world with the purpose can meet her father and mother. However, the superego plays its role which the values instilled by people around her. They keep her alive. Aspect Id begins to control Mia, and she tries to commit suicide. When she wakes up from the coma, her friends (Adam and Kim) give Mia an understanding that suicide is not a good thing. They say that Mia still has a support system to survive. She still has brothers and friends who love her very much. In the end, Mia decided to stay with her brother to live life. This journal is exciting to read. The researcher explains clearly the topic to be discussed. Cindy as the researcher, also gives examples of how the id, ego, and superego play their roles in detail. She also provides a table in presenting this research so that readers can better understand Mia's personal structure. From this research, I get information that in making a decision, a person will go through a process that involves the id, ego, and superego. Additionally, the researcher explains that the ego is influenced by the experiences passed by the main characters in society.

Another source is an article by Hamdanah that was published in *The Open Psychology Journal* in 2018, Vol.11, entitled "Psychological Impacts on Interfaith Families in Palangkaraya in Educating Their Children". The researcher explains that the family has a significant influence on children. They will help the child through the stages of development. Interfaith families will find it challenging to have a happy life because of the different foundations of life. Many questions also arise from children about why mothers and fathers have other religions. Parents are the people who play an essential role in the identity of the child. Parents have a

responsibility to provide education, including religion. If they teach religion well, it will create obedient children and harmonious families. In general, interfaith couples do not teach religion to their children. It is closely related to the interfaith marriage that is carried out. In addition, harmony in a large family is also not created. Mostly, interfaith marriages are not approved by extended families. However, some of the families were able to accept. Even so, the interfaith family creates relationship estrangement and confusion for children. Extended families certainly want to maintain their respective religions. They will even take on the role of parents in educating children. In addition, this will trigger confusion among children born to different families, even if they do not know whether or not to participate in religious celebrations in other religious families. I can conclude that interfaith family influences how children are educated; generally, interfaith family does not get harmony. This journal is interesting because it discusses education, peace, and the effect of family interfaith on children. However, I have difficulty understanding this journal because the author uses a lot of tables in this study

My research is different from those studies above. It focuses on analyzing how an interfaith family's life and how it impacts Margaret's religious identity when she goes through stages in her life. It also analyzes Margaret's effort to solve her life's problems.

1.4. Research Questions

The research examines how psychological conflicts could be caused by religion or belief. There are research questions that need to be answered in this research:

1. How does Blume portray interfaith family in the novel?
2. What are the impacts of the interfaith family on self-identity?
3. How does Margaret deal with the problems related to religion?

1.5. Scope of Research

The research is intrinsic and focuses on how the continuation of the developmental stage of a teenage girl (Margaret) is caused by issues related to religions and beliefs. I will analyze how Blume shows the interfaith family in this novel and the impact on Margaret's identity. The research also shows how Margaret struggles to solve problems in searching for religious identity.

1.6. Objectives of Research

The research enriches the literary Psychosocial and Psychoanalysis field, particularly related to religious identity. It reveals the religious aspect of each member of the interfaith family and their life in influencing Margaret's identity. It also shows Margaret's feeling that she is experiencing difficulties at her age. Moreover, it exposes the way the teenage girl solves problems to help herself find her God.

