

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

Literary works as one of the results of human creativities and wisdom also have an important role in social life. Social life is an interesting subject to be studied times by times because it always changes every seconds, minutes, hours, days, years, and till decades (Sociology, 2008). Literary works can also illustrate the historical events or social conditions at a particular time and place. It is undeniable that literary works are much influenced by the interaction between an individual and society. Wellek and Warren in their book titled “Theory of Literature” (1976) stated that literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation. Literature represents life; and life is, in large measure, social reality, even though, the natural world and the inner of the individual have also been objects of literary ‘imitation’ (94). As a matter of fact, this is what causes many social phenomena in literary works that can be used as a reference in real life. In the point of social life, there are many cases that displayed human life such as the attitude and manner of an individual from the environment as shown in a play.

A play might describe everything in reality of life as the reflection of life which is represented in the form of literary works by the author and it is showing the condition of the circles and talk about human interrelationship in the way how individuals related to each other. Reaske (1961) stated that a play is a work of literature or a composition which delineates life and human activity by mean of presenting various actions of- and dialogues between- a group of characters (5).

As a part of literary works, the play has been one of the important witnesses that represent the issues of human beings; one of the issues is parenting styles towards adult children. Nowadays, many literary works have depicted the reflection of human life which consists of parents and children. As Abrams in “Romantic theory and Critical tradition” (1999) states that literary work as imitation or reflection, or representation of the world of human life and the primary criterion applied to a work is the truth of its representation to the subject matter that it represents or should represent” (51). In the play, the author was represented the family and the way parents raised their children in different ways based on their purposes.

According to Parke and Clarke (2011), the difference of parenting styles is influenced by many factors. Such as the personality of parents, the quality of relationship that the parents built, and based on their parent’s experiences when they were children. the different parenting styles will give a huge impacts on their children as well. so, one of the best known psychologists, Diana Baumrind (1967) proposed her research on parenting entitled “Children care practice antecedents three patterns of preschool behavior” which discussed about three parenting styles; (1) *authoritative*, (2) *authoritarian*, and (3) *permissive*.

August: Osage County is a play written in 2007 by Tracy Letts, an American playwright, screenwriter, and actor who was born on July 4, 1965 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Letts beginning career in theatre and eventually in television and film industry as well. He received the Pulitzer Prize for his play *August: Osage County*. *August: Osage County* is his fourth work, which premiered at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago on June 28, 2007, and closed on August 26, 2007. Natasha Tripney (2008) said in her Musicomh Magazine that *August: Osage*

County is a play based on actual events in the author's family as the source of inspiration". In an interview with Off Camera with Sam Joe EP.215 titled "*Tracy Letts Shares His Personal Story in August: Osage County*"(2019) Letts said that he take 30 years for him to write *August: Osage County* because he was 40 when he wrote it and he was 10 when his grandfather committed suicide. He put all his thoughts and feelings about his family. He also think that the ideas about parenting have changed so much every couple of generations, all the wrong he have done has taken a big piece out of him or he re-writing himself (0:39-4:10). In the interview, Letts explains that every family has some darkness and some violence of some kind, emotional or otherwise which affected the parenting circumstances.

The play has several complicated problems portrayed in American families such as the conflict between parents and children, among siblings, haunted by addiction, emotional violence, disappointment and burning arguments of parents and the destruction of the patriarchal system. When it comes to social attitudes especially the topic of parenting styles, one of the most interesting topics is how it affects the character of the children in the story. The fact that parenting style itself is the way parents raise their children in ways such as personality building, attitude, manner, and children development is fully reflected in the play. Every parent has their unique way when they raise their children.

In the play, Letts describes different parenting styles from three different families who raise their children in different ways which shows the different impacts that they give to each child in the family. This play excavates into our human challenges and a play that brings to the complex chaos, sorrows, and bad parenting styles. In many sites around the world, many societies place the

contribution of a family at a higher level, especially parents who take active positive roles in the children's life. This became a stereotype among the community, which believed that the quality of children was based on parents' social class.

In the play, Letts portrays the importance of parenting style by the parents toward their children to build the children's personality, habits, and opinions about society and life. Besides, Letts presents the dark side of bad parenting and the breakdown of the patriarch in American family which is the exchanged position between the head of the family. Thus, it will be interesting to discuss *August: Osage County* since Letts explicitly represents different parenting styles.

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

August: Osage County represents the myth of American family and inspired by the author's personal family experience. This play depicts the contrast of manner of the character of different parents which consist of three parents dealing with their children which gives a big influence on their lifestyle and well-being. There are three aspects of parenting styles that the writer will evaluate: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. The writer notices that the main characters are the representation of these three aspects and needs to compare the character in the play with the social condition of the author in that era.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

In order to highlight the analysis, the writer examines how *August: Osage County* described the characters of the parents which have different ways in parenting and the changes of the father's and mother's roles as the head of the

family figure as reflected in the play. The play offers the examination and analysis of the parenting styles in American society. The writer focuses on parenting styles such as attitude, behaviour, values, and different ways to raise children in America as presented by Tracy Letts in his play *August: Osage County*. This research will be limited to two focuses, the author's family life experience and the parenting styles as reflected in Tracy Letts' *August: Osage County*. To analyze the problems, the writer will apply Sociology of Literature by Alan Swingewood to this research.

1.4 Research Question

The research question is how are the parenting authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles in *August: Osage County* written by Tracy Letts?

1.5 The Objective of the Research

This study aims to evaluate how *August: Osage County* represent different ways of parenting style as a way of raising children in American family which is related to one of the social aspects in sociological that is called dysfunctional family which seen in society. After analyzing the point, the writer will find out whether the main character is the representation of the author experience or not. The writer hopes this research will be useful for other researchers and will enrich the literary research about parenting styles in America.

1.6 The Review of Related Studies

Many researchers have read and analyzed Letts's works. Many researchers have analyzed their research about parenting styles. However, the writer has not found any research that discussed the play *August: Osage County* using sociology

of Literature focuses on parenting styles. All of the article journals are related to the theory and the topic. Here, the writer finds an essay which analyzes this play.

The first article is from Bradford (2017) in his essay entitled “Characters and Themes from Tracy Letts’ *August; Osage County*” focuses on the characters and themes as the title suggests. He mentions "A post-colonialist critic could write an entire paper on that alone", which means that he thinks *August: Osage County* contains an element of post-colonialism. But in the play's themes, he derives from the male and female archetypes in *August: Osage County*. There we can see that the play *August; Osage County* by Tracy Letts can be analyzed with many approaches which gives the writer the idea to analyze the play with the theory Sociology of Literature. The weakness of Bradford's essay is he does not write about all characters. He just writes and explains six of thirteen characters in the play. This article helps the writer to get to know more about the character in other point of view.

In the second review, the writer finds related studies with this research about the same literary work, but now coming from an English seminar capstone research paper at Cedarville University by Kate Soules (2012) with an article entitled “Waste, Wasting, Wasted: Repercussions of Simulations on the American Family in Tracy Letts’s *August: Osage County*.” Kate Soules' uses post-modern theory based on Jean Baudrillard and post-modern literary theory based on Lucy Niall supported by postmodern theory by Steven Best and Douglas Kellner. In Soules’ research, she concludes that Tracy Letts’ *August: Osage County* is a dark drama that proves beneficial because it exposes problems inherent within the workings of American culture. Letts does not provide an exact answer as to how to fix these problems, perhaps the end of the play can serve as a warning. If the

world ends with a mother left sobbing on a staircase abandoned by her children, this drama may be read as the worst-case scenario. This article gives good research and assist the writer in finding further facts on *August: Osage County's* family.

Third, the writer finds the related studies in the research article at College of Education for Women in Baghdad University written by Marwa Ghazi Mohammed (2022) entitled "Tracy Letts' *August: Osage County* as Paradigm of Bad Parenting" concluded that bad parenting does not only refer to the physical and emotional abuse done by the parents to their children, but it is also the lack of responsibility and the inability to provide love and warmth to their children. This research helps the writer to understand the bad parenting in nurturing children.

Fourth, the writer finds the related studies using the same approach and theory in the research article from Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature at English Department, Andalas University written by Resty Maudina Septiani and Eva Najma (2017) titled "Society's Contribution to Silent tendency of Sexually Assaulted Child as Reflected in Laurie Hasle Anderson's *Speak*" concludes that *Speak* sends a deep moral message that family, friends, and authorized person as part of society play a role in influencing a sexually-assaulted child to bravely speak up about the assault. The novel provides mirror to its age as believed by Swingewood is proved. *Speak* reflects the silent tendency of sexually assaulted children in America in 1999 is influenced by society. This article helps the writer in finding further information about the theory and how to applies the theory.

The fifth previous study is a thesis written by Clara Acitya Ose Lengari (2018) titled "Authoritarian Parenting in Shaping the Characteristics of Ruth

Young in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*". Her research focuses on Ruth who has a suicidal thought and even attempts suicide caused by her mother, Luling who practiced an authoritarian parenting style. She analyzes the portrayal of an authoritarian parenting through Luling's actions. This thesis helps the writer to get more point of view and insight about authoritarian parenting which this style influences the characteristic of children.

The sixth study is a thesis written by Hanifah Afifah (2021) titled "The Impacts of Parenting Style on the Behavior Auggie, Julian, and Miranda, of *Wonder* Movie (2017)". This research was conducted to analyzed the attitudes of parents and the parenting style of Auggie, Julian, and Miranda's parents. She found out three tendenciew of parents' attitudes, namely cognitive, affective and conative. So, she concludes that the impacts of their parents' parenting style affected to the children. This research might helps the writer to getting to know more about children's behavior based on their parents' attitude.

The last study is from a thesis titled "The Impact of Two Different Styles of Parenting Styles on Kevin's Personality Development seen in Lionel Shriver's *We Need To Talk about Kevin*" written by Rinda Pratiwi (2017), she is a student of Sanata Dharma University. In her research, Pratiwi concludes that Kevin is raised using an authoritarian style and his father uses a permissive style which is it gives a negative impact on him. So it makes Kevin develop self-rejection which leads him to become a cruel, evil, and duplicitous person. The research assists the writer in understanding authoritarian and permissive parenting style.

All of the related researches which are already mentioned above are some examples of references that the writer used to help analyze this play, those studies

are related to this because they focus on parenting style and the play. However, those studies have a different object, perspective and theory. In this, the writer will show the impact of three different parents using different types of parenting style in raising their child which is presented in some ways that break the order, rules and the common portrayal in facing their family's problems, traditions and culture to fulfil their necessity of life. The writer will also investigate the experience of the author parent's parenting style using expressive theory.

