

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The idea of identity lies in the fact that it is a life story, a journey that has constantly changed and developed over the course of a lifetime as an example of reality mindset (Amelia & Gulo, 2022). It has settings, scenes, characters, plots, and themes (McAdams, 2018). Although the life story is significant throughout the lifespan, the development of the life story begins in adolescence because of the onset of formal operations and, in many societies, demands for making a name for oneself in the world through employment, education, and connections (McLean, 2008). Therefore, a part of literature is related to messages and behaviors created through imitation of real life as written in novels, poems, short tales, and other literary works printed on paper (Puspawarni & Amelia, 2023; Simanjuntak et al., 2022). Across all eras, literature and the novel, in particular, continue to be ageless and vital forms of expression.

On the other hand, a story reflects the lives of characters and depicts the real state of an existing social phenomenon (Heryanti et al., 2022). Nowadays, communicating is one of the social phenomena. According to Amedie (2015) Social media has broken down communication barriers, provided communication channels, and given everyone the opportunity to participate in online conversation, even those living in oppressive nations. The development of social media has become a powerful phenomenon. Social media platforms provide an avenue for people to express themselves, share their experiences, and connect with others (Lund et al., 2018). As social media plays a role in providing popular

spaces for users (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015). In the digital era, social media provides a rich landscape of ideas for authors to explore and write about in their works. Social media serves as a powerful issue in narrative texts or novels and is commonly found in fiction, including Tara Isabella's Burton's *Social Creature*.

The relationship between identity construction and the development of social media within literary plots is a compelling and contemporary theme that mirrors the evolving nature of human identity in the digital age (Yılmaz, 2014) (Yılmaz, 2014). The writers are increasingly incorporating social media into their literary works to examine how internet platforms affect characters' interactions and perceptions of themselves. De Waal (2008) states that the purpose of developing literature is to emphasize key concepts like sensibility, discussion of other people's perceptions, and passion.

In Tara Isabella Burton's novel, *Social Creature*, social media plays a prominent and complex role in the lives of the characters, reflecting the author's exploration of contemporary society's obsession with digital platforms and its impact on personal identity. Lavinia, one of the central characters, is portrayed as a charismatic and enigmatic figure that epitomizes the glamorous lifestyle often associated with social media influencers. Her Instagram perfect life, filled with exclusive parties and luxurious experiences, serves as a magnet for the protagonist, Louise, drawing her deeper into a web of obsession and deception.

Lavinia is the ideal influencer since she uses social media as a tool to control her image, status, and social networks. Her identity is the perfect example of the performativity nature of online personalities since she meticulously curates her life for viewing by the public. Lavinia's obsessive search for social acceptance via websites like Instagram captures the evil side of influencer culture by illustrating the potential for superficiality, manipulation, and exploitation of one's identity in the digital age. Her character serves as a reminder, showing the dangers of prioritizing online contacts over in-person interactions and the issues that can arise when individuals become entangled in the pursuit of online popularity at any cost.

Previously, several discussions related to the characteristics of Lavinia's character revealed identity construction. An influencer is observing themselves as a public persona to be consumed by the public (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Synchronizing characters, plots, and events refers to symbolizing an individual's developing story of identity (Bates et al., 2020). Moreover, identity construction is repeated and fascinating in literature. This reflects the complex process of an individual or character shaping and defining themselves within the complex narrative of their lives.

This research examines Lavinia's character in *The Social Creature* Novel by Tara Isabella Burton. Lavinia shows a dynamic correlation between communication and her identity. As a social chameleon, Lavinia cautiously crafts her identity by adapting to fit the privileged circles she belongs to. Then again, as a part of society, the user of social media tends to socialize and interact on social media by liking or disliking posts, texting, and most likely uploading interesting

photographs or videos in their current condition (Gündüz, 2017). Therefore, as an active person in the world of social media, Lavinia can reflect real events; photos that have been posted or have not been posted can be used as manipulation material by others, especially if they have malicious intentions. At the end of the story, Lavinia's death is a dangerous manipulation because not many are aware that someone can post a picture of her when she is actually dead.

Therefore, based on the issues and analysis from previous studies, this research will be conducted. This study will focus on the importance of being careful when posting and taking pictures frequently, as seen in the depiction of Lavinia's life path. Lavinia's online identity makes people tend to be unaware of her non-online identity, which results in not knowing that what was posted on her social media at that time was not her real situation. In addition, the social media discussed in several previous studies below also proves that the role of social media is very influential on the formation of identity, especially for an influencer. For that reason, this research is entitled Identity Construction of Lavinia as Seen in a *Social Creature* Novel by Tara Isabella Burton.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background, this research aims to examine the answer to the following question related to communication condition: How is Lavinia's character reflected personal-relational identity construction related to social media interaction?

1.3 Research Objective

The question above stated, this research aims to analyze how Lavinia's character reflected personal-relational identity construction related to social media interaction in *Social Creature* Novel.

1.4 Uses of the Study

This research will benefit both society and future researchers. As indicated below, the researcher divides the uses into two categories: practical use and theoretical use.

1.4.1 Theoretical Uses of the Study

As a work of fiction, the novel offers a fictionalized portrayal of characters and events, but it also serves as a powerful tool for exploring and theorizing about Communication Theory of Identity/ CTI by Hecht (1993). According to Hecht theory, this theory investigates the complex link between identity development and communication. Hecht believes that repeated communication activities change our identities rather than keeping them static. Therefore, CTI discusses a personal, relational, and communal as a multilayer identity.

1.4.2 Practical Uses of the Study

This research is expected to be used by other researchers as a reference for relating research. Therefore, by understanding this research, the reader will acknowledge the role of social media in daily and unconscious impact of social media on identity construction.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The research main analysis is the character named Lavinia in *Social Creature* novel. The researcher will examine Lavinia's character to understand the relevant and significance direct in representation as constructed by social media. This research focuses on using Communication Theory of Identity by Hecht (1993). The method used in this research will use descriptive qualitative methodology. This research will reveal the relation between the personal-relational identities of Lavinia's character in her social media interactions as depicted in Tara Isabella Burton's (2018) novel.