

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Existentialism is a school of philosophy that focuses on unique human experiences and the meaning of life, emphasizing the absolute freedom of each individual (Oktavianti, Farlina, Djohar, et al., 2022). According to existentialism, it cannot be separated from suffering and the certainty of death. In short, existentialism is a philosophy about existence, the nature of human existence, values, and their meaning (Panza & Gale, 2008:1). The principal value of existentialism is usually considered the freedom found in the world. The freedom in question emphasizes that humans can find their purpose in life without the interference of others because, humans were created to determine the meaning of their own lives in a world that feels meaningless and full of challenges.

Existentialism cannot be separated from the thoughts of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish philosopher known as the father of existentialist philosophy. In his thoughts, he often discussed issues about the nature of faith related to individual religious emotions. This is often associated with Christian theological ethics and the emotions and feelings of individuals faced with existential choices (Tambunan, 2016). Existentialism emerged as a form of protest against pure thinking, which is considered too abstract and far from the reality of human life. Therefore, existentialism tries to emphasize that human life

is not only about logic but about how a person as a living individual.

Around the 19th and 20th centuries, several existentialist philosophers emerged, such as Nietzsche, Karl Yapers, Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Jean-Paul Sartre. However, of these existentialist philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre was a famous French writer, an activist, and the best representative thinker of existentialism among French existentialists (Dung, 2020). Each philosopher has his thoughts about humans as existence in facing life, the similarities in their thoughts only emphasize the existence of humans as individual beings (Tambunan, 2016). According to Jean-Paul Sartre (1940), he stated that existentialism is a philosophy that leads to freedom without being bound by the past. In this context, the point to be conveyed is not to let what happened in the past make us as humans unable to make our own decisions in the future. In existentialism, everyone is forced to realize that the world and human existence are endless and imperfect. Humans face new situations every day, and they must keep trying and no one can achieve perfection. It can be interpreted that humans always face existential problems such as fear, anxiety, restlessness, freedom, and death. This is something that every human being experiences.

The issue of existentialism is an interesting topic to study, especially in modern literary works. In this context, the author tries to show other literary researchers that digital literary studies can provide new insights into how philosophical ideas can be relevant to digital literary works. The rapid technological advances today have brought about significant behavioral changes in people worldwide

(Kardiansyah, 2019). The development of digital technology over the past 20 years has formed a generation that has grown up with gadgets, including smartphones and computer gadgets. Their interactions in cyberspace also influence their reading culture. Reading materials in the form of literature have also developed in cyberspace, such as Wattpad and web novels (Yoesoef, 2020). Digital technology's development has dramatically influenced students' access to various things. This is directly proven by research that uses web novels as objects of literary research. The existence of literary works can help find new perspectives to present phenomena that exist in society (Mardiana et al. et al., 2021).

Under the Oak Tree by Suji Kim (2021) is a web novel that has attracted much attention due to its complex storyline and in-depth character development. The story presents a narrative that combines the main character's personal growth, love, and struggle. Through the journey of the main characters, Maxi and Riftan, the novel touches on various existential themes, such as identity, freedom, and the search for meaning, making it an exciting topic for existentialists. Through the analysis of this web novel, the author believes that some of Sartre's thoughts are reflected in this literary work, such as freedom, alienation, and the search for the meaning of life.

This thesis proposal aims to explore existential themes in *Under the Oak Tree* through the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. By examining the actions, choices and consequences faced by the characters, this research will highlight how Jean

Paul Sartre's existentialism is reflected in the narrative of this story. The protagonist's struggle with identity, choices in dealing with society's expectations, and efforts to achieve self-fulfillment are at the heart of this analysis.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of study above, the problem formulation in this research is:

How are existentialism concepts reflected in the web novel *Under the Oak Tree* by Suji Kim?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on research question, here is the objectives in this reaserch:

To explain the concepts of existentialism theory in shaping the character and conflicts experienced by the main characters in web novels *Under the Oak Tree* by Suji Kim (2021)

1.4 Use of the Study

In this research the author has two implications which can be explained in two points. The first is theoretical use, the author explores and analyzes the application of Sartre's theory of existentialism in modern literary works, and the second is theoretical use, this research that aims to provide insight to literary readers about how the concept of existentialism according to Sartre can be

applied in this literary work, in particular in the context of a web novel. These two enactments will be explained as follows:

1.4.1 Theoretical Use

In this writing the author explores and analyzes the application of Sartre's existentialism theory in contemporary literary works. With the aim of expanding understanding of the principles of existentialism such as individual freedom, responsibility, and so on. Analyzing Suji Kim's work through the perspective of existentialism, this writing was carried out to contribute to the development of literary theory by showing a new perspective and the influence of existentialist philosophy in modern literature.

1.4.2 Practical Use

This research is a study that aims to provide insight to literary readers about how the concept of existentialism according to Sartre can be applied in this literary work, especially in the context of web novels. This research begins with an in-depth understanding of existentialist values as reflected in the characters and storyline in the web novel *Under the Oak Tree* by Suji Kim. Through this analysis, the author wants to reveal how the concepts of freedom, responsibility and self-identity, which are central to Sartre's thinking, are present in the narrative and interactions between characters in this web novel. Therefore, this research seeks to broaden readers' understanding of the influence of existentialism in modern literary works and its relevance in the current social and cultural context

1.5 Scope of Study

This study focuses on the analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism reflected in Suji Kim's web novel *Under the Oak Tree*, highlighting concepts such as freedom and responsibility, the search for the meaning of life, and alienation. This study aims to analyze the main characters, Maximilian and Riftan, and how the choices and actions taken by the main characters reflect the principles of existentialism. In this study, the author uses a philosophical approach and qualitative methods to examine important parts of the narrative and dialogue presented in the web novel. Through this in-depth analysis, it is hoped that this study can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of Sartre's existentialism in contemporary literary works, especially in the context of web novel.