

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Film as a visual art medium has the power to reflect social reality and depict human living conditions in various dimensions. As an object of research, films are often a means to understand social, economic, and political issues that occur in society. Through a feminist theoretical lens, *The Florida Project (2017)* offers critical ways of analyzing the life experiences of the single mother, Halley, and Ashley, who negotiate a world filled with oppression and economic strain. This is how Halley's failures are reflected in the film, pointing to broader societal issues that affect women, such as inferiority. This representation shows the lack of choices for women in such positions and how societal structures make it even more difficult for them. Besides, the concentration of the film on the lives of Halley and Ashley from a child's perspective accentuates women's resilience and, at the same time, the brutality they face, including losing custody because of economic instability. Yet critics have responded that, in pointing out these issues, the film too often does little to investigate its female characters' inner lives and aspirations, leaving their experiences as mere portrayals of pain without agency or the potential for empowerment. Thus, *The Florida Project (2017)* serves as both a poignant narrative of single motherhood and a call to examine the systemic barriers that hinder women's autonomy and well-being in contemporary society.

Chronic stress affects the mental health of most single mothers, but it equally impacts their children by increasing their chances of encountering developmental and mental health issues. Thus, solving these problems through appropriate support networks and mental health resources is essential for the well-being of new single mothers and their families. If the single mother and her family need to improve their situation, addressing such areas of concern with the right support systems and mental health resources is essential. In contemporary cinema, Sean Baker's *The Florida Project* (2017) continues the tradition of sociological aspects by depicting the lives of suburban communities in the United States, raising issues of economic and social inequality that are still relevant. The absence of a supportive companion further increases the levels of loneliness and anxiety because they cannot seek time off, as in some cases, single parents are unable to share responsibilities.

Directed by Sean Baker, the drama film *The Florida Project* (2017) explores the hardships faced by the impoverished residents in the suburban areas of Orlando, Florida, near the opulent tourist enclave of Disney World. The film skillfully juxtaposes the vibrant colors and carefree activities of childhood with the grim realities of adult life, portraying Halley's difficulties, such as unemployment, financial strife, and clashes with the authorities. Ashley's character represents the challenges faced by many in low-income communities, dealing with issues such as economic instability and the pressure of single parenthood. She embodies the struggles and complexities of life in a transient community.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do sociological factors influence the stress experienced by two single mothers, Halley and Ashley, in *The Florida Project (2017)*?
2. How does social support reduce or intensify the sociological stress experienced by single mothers in *The Florida Project (2017)*?
3. What is the conflict between the characters Halley and Ashley through the film?

1.3 Research Aims

This research entitled, “The Struggles of Single Motherhood Facing The Sociological Stress Through The Characters Halley and Ashley *The Florida Project (2017)*”, aims to elaborate on the research question problem by answering related questions below:

1. To point out how the film represents sociological factors that are influenced by the stress experienced by two single mothers, Halley and Ashley, in *The Florida Project (2017)*
2. To analyze how social support reduces or intensifies the sociological stress experienced by single mothers in *The Florida Project (2017)*
3. To analyze the conflict between the characters Halley and Ashley through the film.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The writer will analyze Sean Baker's film *The Florida Project (2017)* in this research. To get the results from some specific problems regarding sociological stress

experienced by single mothers, the focus of social science research is underpinned by extrinsic elements. The study only focuses on Halley and Ashley, two characters who experience different struggles as single mothers that also affect their friendship and lives, and how they overcome these problems. Intrinsic elements, including the cinematographic aspects, also assist the writer in analyzing scenes in a film.

1.5 Previous Studies

Escape to Totality: Realist Commitments in *The Florida Project's* iPhone Finale by (Thompson, 2021). This research focuses on discovering how Sam Thompson examines the final scene of Sean Baker's '*The Florida Project*', where the shift from traditional filming to iPhone footage represents a change in realism. The story follows Halley and her daughter Moone, who live in unstable conditions near Disney World. The fast-paced editing, intense emotions, and non-diegetic music in the ending depart from the film's realist style, challenging established views of realism in cinema. Thompson suggests that this part sheds light on societal totalities and the practical aspects of filmmaking while underscoring themes of social reproduction, emotion, and unpredictability. The children's escape into the bustling Disney World crowd illustrates the balance between joy and vulnerability, highlighting the film's criticism of capitalism and the importance of social connections in navigating uncertain circumstances.

An Analysis of *The Florida Project* by Rosier (2023) delves into the social and institutional issues presented in Sean Baker's film, specifically focusing on the outdated

welfare system and the increasing homelessness among children in the United States. The film depicts the lives of Hayley, a young mother, and her daughter, Moone, who live in a budget motel near Disney World. Rosier examines themes such as the influence of neoliberal capitalism on housing, the cycle of poverty, and childhood trauma. The thesis underscores the significance of exposing concealed societal problems through film by addressing subjects such as sex work and its social struggles, as well as the impacts of childhood poverty on development. Ultimately, Rosier intends to shine a light on the challenges experienced by marginalized families in America, suggesting that films like “*The Florida Project*” are vital reflections of these realities.

Films that Portray the True Miseries of Life: *The Florida Project*, *Joker*, and *Parasite* by (Islam, 2022). Examines how three significant films, namely "The Florida Project," "Joker," and "Parasite," depict the challenges of life. These films act as a reflection of the harsh realities of poverty, mental illness, and social inequality. "Joker" delves deep into the psychological deterioration of its main character, showing how societal neglect plays a role in his transformation into a villain. “Parasite” offers a darkly humorous perspective on class differences, portraying the survival strategies of the struggling Kim family as they integrate into the lives of the affluent Park family. “The Florida Project” provides a touching portrayal of childhood innocence overshadowed by economic adversity. Together, these films offer a compelling commentary on social issues, compelling audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about the real struggles experienced by those living in poverty.

An Analysis of Naturalism in Sean Baker's Film "*The Florida Project*" examined in this article by (Bahri et al., 2022), with a focus on the application of Vernon L. Parrington's naturalism theory, which outlines seven crucial elements: Objectivity, Casual Attitude Towards Material, Determinism, Preference for Negative Details, Characters Vulnerable to Specific Temptations, Frankness, and Pessimism. Employing qualitative descriptive approaches, the research delves into scenes and conversations, ultimately suggesting that Halley, the main character, embodies a tendency towards negativity, displaying her anger and recklessness. The film effectively depicts the harsh realities of life for the lower middle class, delving into themes of poverty and the struggle for survival against the backdrop of a seemingly idealistic setting such as Walt Disney World. In essence, the analysis illustrates how naturalism can enrich the understanding of character motivations and societal issues portrayed in the film.

1.6 Method of the Study

This research employs two types of data. The primary data is collected from the film *The Florida Project* (2017) by using some scenes in the film, the dialogue of the characters, and the storyline. The secondary data obtained from previous studies, such as online journals, articles, academic sources, and digital libraries, is relevant to this study.

1.6.1 Method of Research

Library research is the theoretical study that the writer uses in analyzing the data, references, and other scientific data related to the culture, values, and norms that develop in the society under study. Carried out by collecting information and data with the help of various kinds of materials in the library, such as reference books, similar previous research results, articles, notes, and multiple journals related to the problem to be solved. Collect, process, and summarize data using specific methods/techniques from various references to support propositions and ideas. The study uses two types of data: primary and secondary. Any sources that support or challenge the perspectives and contribute to addressing the research inquiry are considered valid, including books and essays.

1.6.2 Method of Collecting Data

The writer uses data concerning the research method. First, the primary data is that the writer researched *The Florida Project (2017)* film multiple times. Second, the library research method includes the intrinsic elements, character, setting, conflict, cinematic elements, and extrinsic elements concerning sociological aspects obtained from the journal. This research applies the use of library research; therefore, (George, 2008) Library research concerns reviewing and interpreting the data from selected articles. The steps and procedures for research library operations are shown in the figure below. Additionally, it employs the process of taking notes, capturing, and examining the dialogue between characters for use as data in the research.

1.6.3 Method of Approach

In this study, the writer uses Leonard I. Pearlin's 1978-1989 sociological perspective on stress, leading to sociological distress caused by their social experience. This theory is applied when analyzing the two single-mother characters in the film. His framework underscores the significance of understanding the social context in which individuals operate and the varying effectiveness of coping responses across different social groups. Also, he mentioned that the causes of sociological stress were similar levels and types of stress experienced by people with similar economic and social conditions. This approach examines the connections between social characteristics, life strains, stress factors, and coping behaviors to analyze the factors contributing to sociological stress, specifically by the two specific single-mother characters.

1.7 Organization of the Writing

This study will be divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter has seven sections: the introduction, the research questions, the study's scope, the study's objective, earlier studies, the research methodology, and the writing organization.

Chapter II: Intrinsic Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter contains a review of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that are utilized to explain the narrative and cinematographic aspects of the film.

Chapter III: Extrinsic Theoretical Frameworks

Contains a review to address research inquiries as well as the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts of U.S. society connected to the researcher's selected topic of the film.

Chapter IV: Analysis

This study's main chapter covers the film's discussion and findings. The findings and data will be analyzed using the theory from the previous chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusion