

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

*The Lost Daughter* movie releases in 2021 which directed and re-written by Maggie Gyllenhaal based on the same title novel by Elena Ferrante. It tells the story of Leda, an independent 48-year-old mother who has two daughters, Bianca, 25, and Martha, 23. Apart from being a mother, Leda is also a university professor and a noted translator. Meanwhile, during her vacation in Greece, she meets a surprising Italian-American family who regularly disrupts her leisure time. Instead of having a great trip, Leda is unsure if her holiday will be an epiphany after meeting this family. Callie, Nina, and Elena are members of the Italian-American family that frequently engage with Leda and become the reason why she does not enjoy her vacation.

The interaction between Nina, a young mother, and Elena, Nina's three-year-old daughter, prompts Leda to recall her own memories as a young mother who struggle and suffer in caring for both of her daughters. They become well-known after Elena goes missing on the beach. Leda, who sees the entire scenario, attempts to assist the family in finding Elena. Leda later finds Elena and returns her to Nina, who appears fatigued and unhappy. However, Leda understands the current situation so well that she gets flashbacks of how she struggled as a young mother for Bianca and Martha, who is also frequently losing her anger and abandoning her family. The burdens and suffers she feels from her unpleasant past, make a different and unpredictable choice

that a mother will never have made throughout their life. Instead, she follows her gut and has left her children for three years in order to find serenity and ease up her problems. The past that keeps following Leda leads the guilt came to her and suffer negative emotion as well as inner turmoil caused by the struggles and challenges she used to face of being a mother.

Taken from Leda and Nina, being a mother carries a great deal of responsibilities in terms of child care. They contribute to the whole development of children, which includes both physical elements such as pregnancy and nursing, as well as emotional and psychological components such as bonding with children. It entails the lifetime process of guiding, supporting, and encouraging children's development, making them rely more on their mothers since they have a greater biological contribution. As a result, rather than their spouses, these responsibilities become the women's identity of the primary parent. As Simon views motherhood from societal perspective, "the role of motherhood is seen by society as central to a woman's identity. Parenthood is more salient for women's self-conceptions than for men'" (Katz-Wise et al. 19). The statement he makes represents a social outlook that frequently emphasizes the significance of parenting in establishing a woman's identity. Women's expectations and opinions are significantly impacted by their responsibilities as a mother who are responsible for raising and caring for children. This reflects greater gender differences in caregiving and family duties expectations.

The imbalance that caused by the unequal role leads mother to have big responsibilities which influence burden towards them. The big expectation of being a

good mother frequently influence a mother to make mistake that deviates from her role. Sometimes a mother who avoid her role is for her personal well-being, despite the fact it is contrary to traditional expectations of a mother. Thus, a woman ultimately struggles with motherhood, causing them to experience a variety of emotions such as guilt, within herself. The subsequent realization of the misbehavior enables the mother to feel guilty for what she has done to the family. As Breggin writes regarding guilt, “guilt itself is defined as a feeling of condemning one selves without doing anything useful about it” (151). He assumes a sense of lack of effective response to guilt feelings. The term "without doing anything useful" emphasizes how guilt in this situation may lead to a pointless or ineffective type of self-punishment. Individuals who suffer from guilt may engage in emotional distress instead of doing the initiative to solve the root of the problem. This may also entail reflection, communication, forgiveness, or doing amends.

*The Lost Daughter's* unflinching portrayal of these complex realities is the foundation on which this study analyzes the challenges of motherhood and the burden of maternal guilt. Unlike many idealized or sanitized portrayals of motherhood in film, *The Lost Daughter* explores the complex contradictions and emotional turmoil that women face in motherhood. By analyzing how guilt manifests in Leda and Nina, who face different pressures and consequences, it is possible to explore the societal expectations that contribute to this burden and the coping mechanisms the characters use to deal with it. Ultimately, studying this topic delves into the human experience of motherhood beyond idealized stereotypes, offering a nuanced and impactful reflection

on the challenges, complexities, and potential for growth within this universal yet deeply personal journey.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

A number of questions arise when looking at *The Lost Daughter* movie in its portrayal of motherhood struggles and guilt. This study focuses on the following three research questions.

1. How do Leda Caruso and Nina represent motherhood struggles in *The Lost Daughter* movie?
2. How is motherhood guilt depicted in *The Lost Daughter*?
3. How do Leda and Nina cope with their motherhood guilt in *The Lost Daughter*?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

To find the answers to the above-mentioned research questions, this study has three objectives.

1. To analyze and describe the struggle of Leda and Nina in motherhood in *The Lost Daughter*.
2. To analyze and describe portrayal of motherhood guilt in *The Lost Daughter*.
3. To analyze and describe Leda and Nina cope with motherhood guilt in *The Lost Daughter*.

## **1.4. Previous Study**

This study is related to several previous studies either in the topic or the object chosen by the writer. The first previous study is a journal article entitled “The

Association of the Secret, Guilt, and Ego Defence Mechanism in the Novel *And Then There Were None*” by Aulia in 2020. Aiming to the study of guilt, her research concentrates on how secrets and guilt affect the characters' psyches and how they allocate defense mechanisms, as she states “their guilt emerges less consciously, through dreams or memories that undermine their self-assurance and faith...The mind employs defense mechanism to represses the guilt, to a point” (76-77). Its findings suggests a complicated psychological terrain for the characters, in which guilt is not openly recognized but impacts them implicitly. The application of dreams and memories as connections for this guilt indicates an intense psychological influence. Furthermore, the characters' use of defense mechanisms reveals their attempts to cope with or escape the anguish associated with guilt.

Besides the previous study about guilt, this study likewise discuss motherhood which lead the main character to experience guilt that occurred in *The Lost Daughter* movie. The second previous study, is Shirley Li’s webpage review entitled “The Movie That Understands the Secret Shame of Motherhood”, she writes that the main character of *The Lost Daughter* named Leda, embodies an ambivalent character between a good and a bad mother for her children, although a movie usually tends to serve with only two types of mother character, either bad or good. Li adds that *The Lost Daughter* is brave enough to put thought of an “unnatural mother”, which is the opposite character of how a mother should be according to social norms expectation.

The third previous study that is used is a journal article by Samanta entitled “The Lost Daughter: Gerontological Reflections on the Life Course Perspective’s

Missing Plot” discusses “*The Lost Daughter* has uneasy dialectic between individual lives, social structures, and emotional states or in other word called gerontology or the life course perspective” (5). She identifies how Leda's past choices as a mother, shaped by personal desires and societal expectations, create a complex 'uneasy dialectic' with her present experiences and emotional turmoil. Through this analysis, she suggests that the life course perspective, traditionally focused on larger social and demographic trends, can benefit from incorporating the nuanced emotional landscapes and subjective realities of individual aging experiences.

The similarities within the previous studies and this study lies within the similar object chosen or the topic chosen. Yet, this study is still have difference regarding all the previous study. The gap that exist is that this study focuses more on how motherhood struggles which create maternal guilt portrayed throughout the film. Since *The Lost Daughter* recognizing its valuable insights into the motherhood experiences, this study delves into the mother’s individual journeys, such as struggles as well as guilty feeling of mother characters, in this case, Leda and Nina. Further this study also depicts how the mother characters cope with the problems or feelings they have, especially in motherhood struggles and feeling of guilt as being a mother.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the analyzes of some narrative and cinematography elements of the movie *The Lost Daughter* (2021), namely characters and characterization, plot, setting, conflicts, camera shot and camera angle. Its

cinematography. Using theories on motherhood struggles and guilt, this study examines the representation of those issues in two female characters, Leda Caruso and Nina. Her encounter with Nina results in having flashback of her own experience as a struggling young mother; *The Lost Daughter* portrays the complexity of motherhood struggles and guilt, showing how Leda and Nina cope with it.

## **1.6. Writing Organization**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This part consists of six sub-chapter, namely background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous study, scope of the study, and organization of the study.

### **CHAPTER 2**

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter explains the theory and the method used in this research.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **DISCUSSION MOTHERHOOD AND GUILT**

The most essential chapter of this research that analyze intrinsic aspects such as characters and characterization, plot, settings, conflict, as well as how motherhood and its guilt depicted throughout *The Lost Daughter*.

### **CHAPTER 4**

#### **CONCLUSION**

This part contains the conclusion of the result analysis in this research.

## REFERENCES