

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Children's Literature vs Literature about Children

Children's literature is generally defined as literature written for children as its intended audience, and it is usually characterized by simple ideas, familiar relationships, and accessible language (Obi, 2009, p. 4). However, not every literary work that features children can be classified as children's literature in this strict sense. Some texts place children as central characters while presenting complex themes, serious conflicts, and social issues that are not specifically designed for child readers (Obi, 2009, p. 4).

In this study, Lois Lowry's *The Willoughbys* is not discussed as children's literature in the narrow sense because, although the novel has child protagonists, it deals with issues such as neglect and family dysfunction. These themes are socially complex, so the novel is more appropriately treated as literature about children rather than literature for children.

2.2 Sociological Approach

After establishing that *The Willoughbys* is best understood as literature about children, the study then uses the sociological approach to analyze the novel. This approach views literature as closely connected to social life because literary works reflect human relationships, social institutions, and the conflicts that occur within society (Swingewood & Laurenson, 1972, pp. 12–13). Swingewood argues that

literature is concerned with man's social world, his adaptation to it, and his desire to change it (Swingewood & Laurenson, 1972, p. 12). Based on this view, *The Willoughbys* can be read as a reflection of social problems within the family, especially child neglect.

2.3 Narrative Elements of Literature

In analyzing a narrative text, understanding the narrative elements is an important step since these elements construct the story. Narrative elements consist of some aspects such as character and characterization, setting, and conflict, which tie one and another in constructing the entire meaning of a text. Through analysis of these elements, readers could understand how the story develops and how characters' experiences and dynamics are portrayed in the text.

2.3.1. Character and Characterization

One of the narrative elements in literature is character and characterization, as through characters, the story is conveyed and experiences are represented. Character is the core of various events and conflicts in narratives. Mays (2018) defines character as "any personage in a literary work who acts, appears, or is referred to as playing a part" (p. 211). Similarly, Kennedy and Gioia (1995) describe a character as an imagined person who exists within a story (p. 67). These definitions show that characters in narrative texts are fictional figures who contribute to the development of events and conflicts in the story.

Furthermore, Mays (2018) explains that characters may function as protagonists or antagonists, referring to the leading character and the character

opposing them, without necessarily implying moral judgment (p. 211). Characters can be distinguished by their complexity. Characters with complex psychological traits and multiple motivations are categorized as round characters (Mays, 2018, p. 212). In contrast, characters with simpler and more limited traits who tend to behave in predictable ways are categorized as flat characters (Mays, 2018, p. 212). Likewise, Mays (2018) differentiates between dynamic and static characters. Dynamic characters are the ones who experience changes throughout the story, whereas static characters are the ones who remain relatively unchanged (p. 212). According to Mays (2018), round characters are often dynamic because their complexity allows them to develop throughout the narrative (p. 212). Nonetheless, characters who are simple can still have a significant impact on the story, especially when they are constructed with certain features which make them easy to remember.

In addition, characters in a literary work could be analyzed by how they are presented in the text. Klarer (2004) explains that characterization may be presented through two modes, namely telling and showing (pp. 18–19). In the telling method, information about a character, such as their nature, background, or motivation, is directly given by the narrator. In contrast, in the showing method, characters are portrayed through their actions and dialogues without direct explanation by the narrator, allowing readers to interpret the character by themselves. Thus, understanding characters not only depends on their types and roles, but also on how these characters are presented in the text.

2.3.2. Setting

Setting is another narrative element that plays an important role in literary works, since setting helps provide context for the events happening in the text. Setting helps readers understand the context in which the events take place, which influences the actions and experiences of the characters. Mays (2018) states “all action in fiction, as in the real world, takes place in a context or setting—a time and place and a social environment or milieu” (p. 282). This shows that setting not only includes time and place, but also social surroundings that contribute to the interactions in the text.

Moreover, the setting is distinguished as temporal and geographical. The temporal setting is connected to the time of the events that occur in the text, which may correspond to the period when the work was written or take place in a much earlier or later period. Meanwhile, geographical setting refers to the location of the events, which may be confined to a single place or extend across several different locations (Mays, 2018, p. 282). In some literary works, setting is represented as general or unspecified, causing the events to appear more timeless and universal (Mays, 2018, p. 283). Taylor (1981) also explains that setting may be abstract or symbolic rather than strictly realistic or physical, allowing a literary work to create a sense of timelessness and universality (p. 69). Thus, setting not only functions to provide information about the place and time of the events, but also to help construct wider meaning and strengthen the universal dimension in a text.

2.3.3 Conflict

Conflict is the element that creates tension and drives the development of a

narrative. Through conflict, characters face various problems that they have to solve. Mays (2018) defines conflict as “some sort of struggle” which characters have to go through (p. 76). Similarly, Meyer (2011) states that conflict is “the struggle within the plot between opposing forces” (p. 995). These definitions show that conflict is a struggle experienced by characters that contributes to the progression of events and the development of the narrative.

Literary conflicts are commonly classified into two categories: external conflict and internal conflict. Mays (2018) explains that external conflict involves struggles between a character and forces beyond themselves, including nature, fate, society, or other people (pp. 76–77). In comparison, internal conflict occurs within the character and is associated with competing desires, needs, or responsibilities that must be reconciled (Mays, 2018, p. 77). A similar distinction is proposed by Meyer (2011), who describes external conflict as opposition between a character and another person, society, or nature, while internal conflict centers on moral and psychological struggles experienced by the character (pp. 51–52). The presence of both forms of conflict contributes to the creation of suspense and provides opportunities for characters to develop throughout the narrative.

2.4 Child Neglect

Child neglect is an important issue because it is often not noticeable at first, but its impact on a child's development can be very serious. DePanfilis explains that neglect is frequently not reported and has historically received less attention compared to other forms of child abuse (DePanfilis, 2006, p.9). This shows that

child neglect is often seen as a minor issue, even though its effects can last for a long time.

One reason child neglect is difficult to recognize is that its signs are not always clear, unlike physical injuries. However, its effects can still harm a child emotionally, socially, and in terms of brain development during early years. DePanfilis (2006) even states that neglect can be more harmful to a child's brain development than some other forms of violence (p.9). Therefore, child neglect is something that should not be ignored just because it is not always visible.

In simple terms, neglect refers to an adult's failure to meet a child's basic needs (DePanfilis, 2006, p.89). These basic needs include attention, protection, health, a sense of safety, and emotional support. When these needs are not met, children can experience difficulties in their growth and development. Therefore, child neglect should be understood as an issue that has serious consequences for a child's life.

2.4.1. Forms of Child Neglect

Child neglect comes in various forms, but this discussion focuses specifically on physical neglect and emotional neglect. DePanfilis (2006) explains that neglect generally includes several categories, such as physical neglect, medical neglect, inadequate supervision, environmental neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect, and other recently recognized forms (p.11). However, since this discussion is limited to the two most relevant forms—physical neglect and emotional neglect—other types are not explored in detail. Following this general explanation, the discussion will proceed with physical neglect, which is considered the most

basic and easily recognized form of neglect.

Physical neglect is one form of child neglect that occurs when parents or caregivers fail to meet a child's basic physical needs. DePanfilis (2006) explains that this type of neglect includes abandonment, malnutrition, lack of appropriate clothing, and neglect of cleanliness and safety for the child (p.12). Therefore, physical neglect is not only about not providing food or clothing but also about the child living in an unsafe and unsuitable environment.

One form of physical neglect is abandonment, which occurs when a child is left without adequate care or supervision. DePanfilis (2006) states that a child is typically considered neglected if they are not picked up within two days (p.12). This form indicates a severe level of neglect because the child is left without protection from the responsible adults.

Another form of physical neglect is nutritional neglect, which occurs when a child does not get enough food or often feels hungry for a long time. This can be seen in poor growth (DePanfilis, 2006, p.12). Clothing neglect, on the other hand, happens when a child does not have appropriate clothing, such as warm clothes or suitable shoes during winter (DePanfilis, 2006, p.12). Both of these forms show that a child's basic needs are not being met properly.

In addition, physical neglect also includes a lack of cleanliness and careless behaviors that threaten a child's safety. DePanfilis (2006) provides examples such as driving under the influence while transporting a child or leaving a young child alone in a car (p.12). This type of neglect highlights that physical neglect involves the failure of adults to ensure the safety and well-being of children.

Emotional neglect is a type of neglect that involves a lack of attention, love, and emotional support for a child. DePanfilis (2006) explains that this form of neglect is shown through ongoing indifference to a child's needs for love, emotional support, or attention (p.14). Therefore, emotional neglect can affect a child's feelings and their emotional relationships with people around them.

2.4.2 Causes of Child Neglect

The usual causes of child neglect are related to the conditions of the parents or caregivers that make it difficult for them to consistently meet the child's needs. DePanfilis (2006) indicates that signs of possible neglect are often seen in the behavior of caregivers who are indifferent, depressed, irrational, or who misuse alcohol and drugs (p.15). These conditions show that neglect is not simply about carelessness, but often connects to more complex personal and psychological issues.

In addition, neglect can occur when parents are unable to accurately understand their child's needs. DePanfilis (2006) explains that some caregivers deny the existence of a child's problems, blame the child for difficulties at home or school, or view the child as a burden and of little value (p.15). Such attitudes can hinder the fulfilment of a child's basic needs because caregivers fail to see the child as an individual who requires attention and protection. As a result, the risk of neglect increases.

In some cases, neglect occurs when parents place their children as a source to fulfil their own emotional needs. DePanfilis (2006) notes that some caregivers view children primarily as a means to seek attention, care, or emotional satisfaction

(p.15). This situation can reverse the roles between parents and children, resulting in the child's own needs not being adequately met. Therefore, the causes of neglect should be understood as a combination of individual issues, family relationships, and the caregiver's ability to respond to the child's needs.

2.4.3 Impacts of Child Neglect

Impacts of child neglect are not always visible directly, especially in the early stages of children's development. In many cases, the impacts emerge gradually over time and influence many aspects of children's lives. DePanfilis (2006) explains that the impact of neglect may not be immediately apparent during early childhood, yet it can be harmful and long-lasting for victims (p. 21). This shows that child neglect has prolonged consequences, even though they are not always immediately visible.

Furthermore, DePanfilis (2006) classifies the impacts of child neglect into a few main aspects: health and physical development; intellectual and cognitive development; and emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral development (p. 22). In this study, this section focuses on the impacts of child neglect related to health and physical development, along with emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral development, since these aspects are most relevant in understanding children's experiences within family relationships. Intellectual and cognitive development is not included in the present study because the selected indicators are less explicitly represented in the novel compared to physical, emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral impacts. Therefore, the discussion is limited to the impacts that are most relevant to the analysis.

One of the impacts of child neglect related to health and physical

development is poor physical health, which reflects the disruption of a child's physical development due to neglect. This condition shows that the failure to provide children's basic needs may directly affect their physical growth and health. DePanfilis (2006) identifies it as "failure to thrive," which refers to a condition in which children's growth deviates significantly from the norms for their age and gender (p. 23). This shows that the delayed physical development in children is not always due to medical conditions, but due to unmet basic needs and attention from parents or caregivers. DePanfilis (2006) explains that malnutrition during early childhood may contribute to difficulties in cognitive, social, and behavioral development (p. 24). Thus, poor physical health becomes an important indicator in understanding the impacts of neglect, as it is able to reflect a real consequence of the failure in providing children's physical needs in a long period of time.

Impacts of child neglect are also significantly visible through aspects of emotional and psychosocial development, which are related to children's ability to build social relationships and process emotions. DePanfilis (2006) explains that all forms of neglect, particularly emotional neglect, may result in serious emotional and psychosocial difficulties. These effects may include fear, low self-esteem, and long-term emotional problems (p. 25). This shows that neglect not only influences emotional conditions in a short period of time, but also children's ability to build trust and social relationships. Thus, disruption in emotional and psychosocial development reflects prolonged consequences of the lack of emotional support and a safe environment for children.

Child neglect also has an impact on behavioral development of children, which relates to patterns of behavior and social interaction over time. Neglect can affect the way children respond to the environment and contribute to behavioral problems. According to DePanfilis (2006), neglected children may experience behavioral problems that persist into later stages of life (p. 27). DePanfilis (2006) further explains that neglected children may fail to recognize their upbringing as harmful, increasing the possibility of repeating similar parenting practices in adulthood. Research cited by DePanfilis (2006) indicates that approximately one-third of neglected children later maltreat their own children (p. 27). This shows that impacts resulting from neglect not only influence children's behavior in a short period of time, but also may continue into adulthood and even be passed on to future generations. Thus, disruption in behavioral development reflects the serious consequence of neglect that could form maladaptive behavior patterns over a long period of time.

Based on these explanations, child neglect has wide-ranging and layered impacts on children's development. These impacts are not only visible through children's physical condition, but also include emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral aspects that develop over time. Although a few impacts may not be directly visible in the early stage, they may be long-lasting and may influence children's lives in significant ways. Thus, understanding the various impacts of child neglect is important for analyzing children's experiences and conditions in literature, especially in the context of family relationships and child rearing.