

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the explanation of the introduction part. Those are the background of the study, statement of the research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study and scope and limitation.

1.1 Background of The Study

According to Hari and Kujala, Human's mind receives and processes the information of our interaction with other people both physically and mentally. It can affect or even control our cognition toward the social environment (2009: 454). Social interaction is dominated by a sort of phenomena called thoughts (more formally, cognition). The cognition then manifests into decision and action that seem to follow an orderly chain of reasoning depends on social norms applied in particular social conditions.

Based on Chekroun, Social control is explained as a particular rules and standards in society that sustain individuals bound to conventional standards as well as to the use of formalized mechanisms (2008:01). In taking any decision, a person considers social implicit rules in his/her social dimension to avoid conflicts. In some cases, conflicts cannot be avoided due to a particular social situation.

When some attitudes are not fit to some social situation, an individual may experience some mental discomforts or dissonance. In this case, he/she may change his/her cognition to minimize conflict. Most of the conflicts can be solved by changing

the level of personal cognition fitness or by seeking and adapting behaviour toward social norms and rules in the social community. Consequently, our cognition may be changed or even controlled by our social environment.

The term social environment nowadays becomes more wider since the era of the internet reached its peak in the 21th century. Social media is another level of modern social dimension, it is more than an alternative of our daily interaction. In social media, we are able to interact, debat, learn and get involved physically in instant time by using our gadget ang thumbs. Furthermore, in the online community, people create social systems nearly the same as in the actual social dimension. It can affect how humans behave and act in the real world.

Human mind, social matters and literature are the evidence of human existence, those elements can be portrayed in literary work as the written stories that contain particular moral value. One of literary work's functions is its usefulness for cultural and societal purpose to human life. Moral values depicted in literary works give people wider vision to the related social issues that are explicitly and/or implicitly depicted through their stories. According to Castle (2007:07) literary texts are delivered in various ways of conveying meaning to the readers. In presenting a story about real events in many times or era, it is written as an imaginative story or a fiction story. A novel becomes a literary text that is used to deliver fictional stories that contain the perspectives of their writers. Thus, the interrelation between literary work and reality can be examined in the way literary work portrays human's nature and perspective in the written stories.

This study attempted to analyze an individual's inconsistent cognition in literary work. The writer of this study decided to analyze social environment influence an individual cognition from the perspective of cognitive dissonance theory because the writer wanted to know the factors and the process of how the social condition influences a person's cognitions.

Dave Eggers, an American novelist, is famous for his works that criticize social issues. One of his works is *The Circle*. In *The Circle* novel, Dave Eggers represents how Mae (the protagonist) gets her new job in the huge technology company and is slowly influenced by her new environment.

Dave Eggers *The Circle* (2013) tells about the life of Mae Holland, a recent college graduate, she gets a job at The Circle, a huge technology company run by the "Three Wise Men". She meets a totally new social community in the company. She is happy being in the company because the big salary and the company is famous in developing technology. In the company, Mae faces her new environment at her workplace. The circle believes that the use of technology information should make the information of people in the online community have total transparency, especially their employees. The new social environment which forces Mae to be a "transparent human" leads Mae to experience cognitive dissonance.

The writer found previous studies that used *The Circle* novel as a source of data. The first entitled with Protest Against the Loss Privacy in Dave Eggers' *The Circle* Novel (2013): A Sociological Perspective by Ekawati Tyas (2019), The second is Transhumanism in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*: Utopia vs. Dystopia, Dream vs.

Nightmare written by Carmen Laguarda Bueno (2018). *The Third is Delusions, Echoes, and Machines: Human Subjectivity and Social Media* by Sean Paul Sokol (2018). In addition, other studies describe the same theory as this study entitleds with Cognitive Dissonance Theory “A Closer Look at The Spreading of Alternative” by Myra Saeed of the Ohio State of University (2017) and articles found with the same topic discussed: “Literature and Psychology in the Context of the Interaction of Social Sciences” by Badegul Can Emir (2016), and ”Cognitive Dissonance in Social Work” by Susan Burke, Glen Schmidt, Shannon Wagner, Ross Hoffman & Neil Hanlon (2017). .

The writer of this study chose *The Circle* as the source of the data because its story focused on the social experience of Mae. She is depicted as a social being that could be affected by her social community. The gap found by the writer is that human ideas and action (cognition) can be influenced by their implicit social rules through their social experience and moral value that is practically used by ideology of a particular social community to arrange its social participants. Referring to previous studies above, the writer found that there is no detailed information about social environment affecting an individual cognition from the perspective of cognitive dissonance theory.

The writer of this study applied Social Psychology, particularly Cognitive Dissonance Theory proposed by Leon Festinger to analyze the novel. The theory explains about how a person experience mental discomfort that is led by her inconsistent cognition and how she seek for consistency to reduce her mental discomfort that is influenced by her social environment. Thus, the writer of this study found that Festinger’s cognitive Dissonance theory is suitable for *The Circle* novel. The

theory proposes factors of social psychology that illuminates social condition, values, and mental society.

1.2 Research Question

Related to the background of the study, the statement of the research question can be formulated as follow;

1. Why does Mae experience inconsistent cognition in *The Circle* ?
2. How does Mae solve her inconsistent cognition *The Circle* ?

1.3 Objectives of Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are to describe:

1. The causes of Mae's inconsistent cognition in *The Circle*.
2. The ways Mae uses to solve her inconsistent cognition *The Circle*.

1.4 Significance of The Study

Theoretically, this study is expected to give understanding about social psychology particularly in cognitive dissonance theory in literature. The study tries to observe the factors of how a person can be influenced by her social environment and how she experiences cognitive dissonance caused by her involvement in the social community.

Practically, this study is dedicated to be a reference about social psychology, particularly cognitive dissonance theory in literature for other writers, especially for english study program students of Trunojoyo University Madura. This study is also expected to enrich the readers' knowledge about literary work and cognitive dissonance theory.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study focused on Leon Festinger's social psychology particularly cognitive dissonance theory, the study focused on how the influence of social environment on a person's cognition that is depicted in the Novel, especially Mae's inconsistent cognition in *The Circle* Novel. Therefore, the limitation of this study is that this study covers only Mae's inconsistent cognition in Dave Eggers *The Circle*. In addition, the writer of this study hopes that the next writer may do wider analysis and use this study as a reference related to the limitation of this study.