

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter contains five subchapters. These subchapters include the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and finally, the scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In life, experiences shape the perception and understanding of the phenomena occurring around individuals. This also applies to literature, which reflects various realities and perspectives born from human thinking and experience. Hudson (2015:3) explains that literature represents an important record of human existence, reflecting the experiences, thoughts, and emotions that resonate deeply with everyone. In its forms, literature serves as a medium for humans to express themselves, manifesting in different forms such as drama, novels, poetry, short stories, and many other literary genres. Klarer (2004:1) argues that literature includes many types of written work, but not everything can be defined as literature. Literature possesses its own uniqueness in conveying emotional experiences and the author's thoughts through the beauty of figurative language, symbolism, and diverse narratives to engage readers.

Characters, as one of the elements of a novel, bring life to the story by adding depth and dynamics to the plot. This aligns with the statement uttered by Card (1988:72), the story moves forward based on the characters' goals and actions, guiding it through all the twists and changes in the plot. Consequently, characters are vital to the story, as their decisions and actions drive the plot forward while adding depth and meaning to the narrative. As stated by Bressler (1994:9), through these characters, individuals are observed making decisions, struggling to retain their humanity in difficult circumstances, and reflecting values and human qualities that can be accepted, rejected, or critiqued. The presence of characters in a novel involves certain traits that contribute to the strength of their identities, shaped by their thoughts, emotions, and moral values within the narrative. As stated by Abrams and Harpham (2012:46), characters are individuals depicted in dramatic or

narrative works, understood to possess certain moral, intellectual, and emotional traits. Without characters in a novel, the written story might feel like a blank page, as characters are the essence of the literary work itself. Thus, character and its development become a crucial factor in engaging readers and maintaining their interest in the plot.

According to Wellek and Warren (1949:225), conflict possesses a dramatic nature, demonstrating a balance between opposing forces and involving actions and reactions in confrontation. From that perspective, conflict can be asserted as a fundamental element that drives the story and creates heightened tension, both in character relationships and within the characters themselves. Thus, conflict is an essential element in the development of a novel's narrative that cannot be separated. The presence of each character in the story inevitably triggers conflict, as every character brings different backgrounds, interests, and goals. Therefore, conflict is essential in literary works, especially in novels. Without conflict to spark readers' curiosity about the plot, a literary work may lack depth and interest.

The Godfather is a novel published in 1969. It tells the story of the Corleone mafia family, led by Don Vito Corleone, a well-respected and feared leader in the New York underworld. When Don Vito refuses a drug business offer from Sollozzo, a series of violent conflicts occurs, including an attempt on Don Vito's life. His youngest son, Michael Corleone, who initially distances himself from the family business, is forced to become involved to protect his family. Throughout the story, Michael undergoes a dramatic transformation, evolving from someone who wants to distance himself from the family's criminal activities, but gradually becoming a strong and determined leader, ultimately taking control of the family and firmly establishing his place in the criminal world.

The Godfather by Mario Puzo is chosen as the data source for this study due to its compelling exploration of themes such as family, loyalty, betrayal, and power within the context of organized crime. The novel provides an intricate portrayal of two main characters, Don Vito Corleone and Michael Corleone, whose lives are shaped by their roles in the mafia. Don Vito, as the head of the Corleone family, demonstrates the complexities of leadership and moral decision-making, while

Michael's journey from wanting to distance himself from the family business to eventually taking control highlights themes of transformation and responsibility. The rich character development and the conflicts they face within the family and the criminal world make the novel an ideal text for examining how personal and external forces shape individual actions and decisions.

Mario Puzo's journey as a writer further strengthens the selection of *The Godfather* as the data source for this study. Raised in Hell's Kitchen amidst adversity, Puzo's determination to pursue writing despite personal and financial struggles speaks to his resilience and belief in his craft. While he had no direct connection to organized crime, his extensive research and commitment to authentic storytelling enabled him to create *The Godfather*, a novel that resonated with readers worldwide. Though many assumed Puzo had ties to the Mafia, he consistently denied any personal connections, highlighting the effectiveness of his writing in capturing the criminal underworld. Puzo's perseverance and ability to turn his personal experiences into compelling fiction make his work an ideal choice for this thesis.

The writer is interested in the development of character traits and conflicts involving the character in the novel *The Godfather*. This analysis is significant as the novel explores the complex relationships between family members and the internal and external forces that shape their decisions, particularly the transformations of Don Vito Corleone and Michael Corleone. In this analysis, the writer uses Charles E. Bressler's (1994) New Criticism theory, which emphasizes the importance of analyzing literary works objectively based on the context created by the text itself. This theory rejects interpretations based on the author's or reader's personal thoughts and beliefs. New Criticism asserts that a literary work can only be assessed objectively through the elements present in the text, rather than through the feelings, attitudes, values, and beliefs of the author or reader (Bressler, 1994:32–33). Therefore, the writer focuses on internal elements such as character and conflict as part of the novel. It is also expected that readers gain an understanding of the meaning and value of the text itself through the analysis conducted by the writer.

There are four previous studies that support the writer's exploration to strengthen the analysis of character dynamics and conflicts in the novel *The Godfather*. Three previous studies found use the same data source but a different theory. The first is in the form of a thesis. The thesis was written by Ikhsan Abdul Aziz (2021) from Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, titled *Inner Conflict of the Main Character in The Godfather Novel by Mario Puzo (1969): A Psychoanalytic Approach*. The study applies internal conflict theory, as established by Wallek and Warren, and the psychoanalytic approach, as introduced by Sigmund Freud, to analyze how inner conflicts influence the main character's development within the scope of psychoanalysis.

The second previous study is in the form of a thesis, was conducted by Muhammad Rivaldy Ridwan (2020) from Universitas Bosowa, titled *The Personalities Structure of the Main Characters in Mario Puzo's The Godfather (Psychoanalysis)*. The study applies psychoanalysis theory and focuses on analyzing the personality structure of the main characters.

Meanwhile, the other two previous studies use a different data source from this recent study but the same theory. The third study, in the form of a thesis, was conducted by Nur Novelinda Sari (2016) from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, titled *A Study of Character Development Portrayed in Diana Palmer's Coltrain's Proposal*. This study examines the character development in Diana Palmer's novel *Coltrain's Proposal* and focuses on the development of characters within that novel.

The final previous study comes in the form of a thesis, was conducted by Zuly Rahmawati (2017) from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, titled *An Analysis of Conflicts Undergone by Mia in Gayle Forman's Novel If I Stay*. The study applies New Criticism, focusing on characterization and conflicts to analyze Mia's character and the challenges she faces. Additionally, it explores defense mechanisms to gain deeper insights into her psychological conflicts.

In considering the previous studies on *The Godfather* novel, two studies have applied psychoanalytic theory to understand the personality structure of the two main characters and explore how the perspective of one main character is influenced by various factors, while another study applied Maslow's hierarchy of needs to

examine the motivations of the Corleone family. However, these studies have not thoroughly addressed the character development and the conflicts experienced by the main characters in the novel. Psychological approaches, while insightful, often focus primarily on internal factors and personality, potentially overlooking the significance of external and internal conflicts and their evolution throughout the narrative. To fill this gap, this study employs New Criticism, which allows for a more focused analysis of character development and conflict by concentrating on the text itself. By examining the characters' development and the various conflicts they experience, this approach offers a clearer understanding of their transformation within the narrative, without relying on external factors like the author's intent or historical context, which other applied theories focus on.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study that has been described, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. How is character development portrayed in Don Vito and Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*?
2. What kinds of conflict contribute to the character development of Don Vito and Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze how character development is portrayed in Don Vito and Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*.
2. To examine the types of conflict that contribute to the character development of Don Vito and Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

There are two significances that can be found in the implementation of this study; they are theoretical significance and practical significance.

1. Theoretical significance

This study is expected to contribute to literary analysis by applying a New Criticism, focusing on intrinsic elements such as character development and

conflicts, in order to enrich literary studies, particularly in the analysis of novels as a genre distinct from drama and poetry.

2. Practical significance

For readers and literary enthusiasts, this study provides a clearer understanding of the complexities of characters and conflicts in *The Godfather*, helping them engage more deeply with the text. For scholars and educators, it offers valuable insights for analyzing characters and conflicts in literature, showing how New Criticism theory can be applied in practice.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The writer focuses on analyzing the character development and conflicts faced by the characters in Mario Puzo's novel, *The Godfather*. Specifically, this study analyzes the key aspects of character development in the main characters and examines the types of conflict that contribute to their development throughout the narrative, using Charles E. Bressler's New Criticism theory to assess these elements within the text. In its limitations, the analysis of the study focuses exclusively on the main characters, Don Vito Corleone and Michael Corleone, and their interactions, intentionally leaving out secondary characters and other literary elements that are not directly related to their development and conflicts. This study is also limited to the novel *The Godfather* and does not extend to other works by Puzo or adaptations of the novel.