

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CLASS DISCRIMINATION ON THE LIVES OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL SAHA MANSHION BY CHO NAM-JOO

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how social class discrimination affects the lives of the main characters in the novel, especially in terms of psychological, economic and social conditions. Using a qualitative approach with content analysis methods and literary psychological theory, this research explores the narrative and characters in the novel which depict social injustice due to rigid class stratification.

The research results show that social class discrimination has a significant impact on the lives of the characters in Saha Mansion. This discrimination causes severe psychological distress, hinders economic mobility, and exacerbates social exclusion. The characters in the novel experience an identity crisis, social alienation, and mental decline as a result of the injustice they experience. This research also highlights the limitations of social mobility in the society depicted in the novel, which emphasizes the existence of a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break.

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana diskriminasi kelas sosial mempengaruhi kehidupan tokoh-tokoh utama dalam novel, khususnya dalam hal kondisi psikologis, ekonomi, dan sosial. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis isi dan teori psikologi sastra, penelitian ini mendalami narasi dan karakter dalam novel yang menggambarkan ketidakadilan sosial akibat stratifikasi kelas yang kaku.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa diskriminasi kelas sosial berdampak signifikan pada kehidupan tokoh-tokoh dalam Saha Mansion. Diskriminasi ini menyebabkan tekanan psikologis yang berat, menghambat mobilitas ekonomi, dan memperparah pengucilan sosial. Tokoh-tokoh dalam novel mengalami krisis identitas, keterasingan sosial, dan keterpurukan mental sebagai akibat dari ketidakadilan yang mereka alami. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti keterbatasan mobilitas sosial di dalam masyarakat yang digambarkan dalam novel, yang mempertegas adanya siklus kemiskinan yang sulit dipatahkan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Deskriminasi Kelas Sosial; Kehidupan Tokoh dalam Novel; Novel Saha Manshion*

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## Introduction

In the world of literature, novels are often an effective medium for conveying social criticism, both explicitly and implicitly. One theme that often appears in literary works is the issue of social injustice and class discrimination. The novel *Saha Mansion* by Cho Nam-Joo is a contemporary literary work that depicts social inequality through the lives of its residents who come from the lower and marginalized classes. (Marzuqi et al., 2024). The strong background in depicting social inequality in South Korea makes *Saha Mansion* a real reflection of how social class discrimination has a significant impact on the lives of the characters.

Social class discrimination is a form of injustice that has a broad impact, covering various aspects of an individual's life, from access to education, employment, to treatment in society (Joko Sutopo, Sariban, 2024). The novel *Saha Mansion* describes how the residents of this low-class apartment live life with various limitations and face various challenges because of their marginalized social status. (Sukowati & Ihsan, 2022). The characters in this novel often experience psychological pressure, social exclusion, and persistent poverty, all of which is caused by discrimination based on social class.

The urgency of this research lies in the relevance of the themes raised by Cho Nam-Joo, especially in the context of modern life which continues to be characterized by social and economic inequality (Ratna, 2018). This novel not only describes life in South Korea, but also voices universal issues that can be found in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. Social injustice that arises from class stratification affects a person's quality of life and often limits their access to economic and social opportunities (Sukowati et al., 2019). This condition creates a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break and has a negative impact on individual psychological well-being.

In addition, this research offers novelty by looking at how literature, as a reflection of social reality, can function as a medium for understanding the impact of social class discrimination on individual lives. (Ihsan & Zuliyanti, 2018). Using a literary psychology approach, this research will examine the psychological impacts experienced by the characters in the novel *Saha Mansion*, especially those related to social class discrimination. It is hoped that this research can make a theoretical contribution to literary studies, especially in understanding the relationship between social stratification and the psychological well-being of fictional characters in literary works.

Thus, this research will not only enrich literary studies, but also provide a new perspective on how social injustice affects individuals and how this is represented in contemporary literary works. The urgency of this research becomes stronger when we realize that the social inequality depicted in *Saha Mansion* is a reflection of the reality that still occurs in many countries, thus opening up a wider space for discussion about social justice and the protection of human rights.

## Method

uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research type, and is based on content analysis methods and a literary psychology approach. This research uses a qualitative approach because it focuses on in-depth understanding of the text and analyzing how social class discrimination impacts the characters in the novel. This approach aims to interpret the meaning and dynamics contained in literary texts, so it requires in-depth analysis of narratives and dialogues that reflect the lives of the characters in the work. This research will use a literary psychology approach, namely analyzing the characters and behavior of characters in novels based on a psychological perspective. The focus is on how social pressure and class-based discrimination affect the character's psychology and how the character faces injustice in his life. The literary psychological theories used include Sigmund Freud's views on self-defense mechanisms and trauma, as well as Erik Erikson's theories on identity crises and social relationships.

## Results and Discussion

Discrimination in the form of social class is unfair treatment of a person or group of people who are considered to have a low social status. This can be caused by a person's economic factors. Every society always has certain respects in the society concerned and every society must have or possess something that it values. Something that is valued is actually the seed that grows a multi-layered system in society. Higher appreciation for certain things will place those things in a higher position than other things. Items that are valued are in the form of money or economic objects, land, power, knowledge, and higher honors in society such as being descended from a respectable or high-ranking family. Discussion of research data related to discrimination in the form of social class contained in the novel *Saha Mansion* by Cho Nam-Joo is as follows:

- (1) *"persediaan air dan gas ke setiap rumah diputus, tetapi keran di halaman depan gedung masih mengalirkan air apabila keran diputar. Saluran pembuangan berfungsi dengan baik. Berkat panel surya yang dipasang diatap, mereka masih mendapat persediaan listrik. Kadang-kadang terjadi pemadaman listrik diseluruh gedung, tetapi tidak seorang pun mengeluh. Tidak ada polisi atau pejabat pemerintah yang datang ke Mansion. Para penghuni Mansion bisa bekerja disekitar sana, misalnya dilokasi kontruksi, gudang, dan tempat-tempat kotor dan berbahaya lainnya". (hlm.26)*
- (2) *"Retakan besar terlihat ditembok akibat cat yang sudah mengelupas. Palang besinya sudah berkarat parah sampai lantai tempat koridor palang ditancapkan pun ikut berkarat. Tangga darurat yang ada disisi gedung pun sudah sangat bobrok sampai tidak bisa lagi dilewati. Semua akses ke tangga darurat ditutup. Gedung yang mulai hancur perlahan-lahan tanpa disadari Gedung tua yang menghembuskan debu. Digedung itulah orang-orang saha mansion tidur, makan, dan bertambah usia". (hlm.29)*
- (3) *"Dibelakang tulisan "saha" terdapat kantong-kantong sampah hitam besar yang terlihat seperti bangkai hewan liar, dengan cairan kuning yang mengalir keluar. Pemerintah tidak memberikan fasilitas pengangkut sampah, jadi para penghuni terpaksa menyewa perusahaan pengangkut sampah". (hlm.29)*
- (4) *"Kau tahu kami mendapat aliran listrik dari panel surya diatap kan?aliran listriknya lemah dan sering kali terputus. Kami tidak punya sistem pemanas atau pendingin. Kami bahkan tidak punya pipa air didalam apartemen. Kami harus mandi dan memasak dengan air dari halaman depan, dan kalau kami membutuhkan air panas, kami harus memanaskannya sendiri dengan kompor gas. Tempat ini sangat berbeda dari rumah tempat tinggalmu sekarang. Disini dingin, panas, dan kotor. Kalau tinggal bersamaku disini kau mungkin akan membenci tempat ini dan membenciku". (hlm.143)*

Based on the quote above, it describes the housing conditions provided by the government to a group of people who are considered to have low social status. The residence used for them to live their lives is called Saha Mansion, the people or community groups who live there are called L2 and Saha residents. L2 residents consist of people or families who have low social status, this is caused by economic factors and they only have temporary residence permits in the Town. Meanwhile, the Saha group, which is a group that is not recognized, consists of illegal immigrants, people with disabilities, victims of violence and former prisoners.

The quote explains that the government only sides with a group of people who have a high social status or who are considered to be profitable and can help the progress of the city, the residents who live in Saha Mansion are not provided with adequate and appropriate facilities like residents belonging to this group. L. Apart from the injustice in providing housing facilities, they also do not get the slightest attention from the government, this is illustrated by the quote "Sometimes there are power cuts throughout the building, but no one complains. No police or government officials come to the Mansion." The quote explains that no government party will come to visit even if something happens to them.

The third data quote above illustrates another form of injustice in the treatment of residents who live in Saha Mansion, apart from inadequate housing, other facilities such as cleaning facilities are also not provided by the government. This happened because the government considered providing cleaning facilities unnecessary for those who could not help in making the city prosperous, so the residents living in Saha Mansion privately rented rubbish disposal trucks. This is illustrated through the following data excerpt:

- (5) *"Pemerintah tidak memberikan fasilitas pengangkut sampah, jadi para penghuni terpaksa menyewa perusahaan pengangkut sampah. Entah apa yang dipikirkan para pemerintah itu, mungkin mereka pikir kita tidak berguna karena kita tidak cukup uang untuk menguntungkan mereka". (hlm.29)*

There are other data quotes that illustrate unfair treatment or forms of discrimination carried out against Saha Mansion residents due to their social status class being considered low, this quote is:

- (6) *"Ini adalah kejadian umum. Jika terjadi kejahatan tanpa sasaran khusus yang membuat daftar tersangka sulit dipersempit, seorang polisi akan dikirim ke Saha Mansion. Si pria tua mengibaskan tangan, "aku tidak tahu. Kenapa kau datang kesini mencari orang yang menyulut kebakaran dipusat kota? Apakah kau tidak mencari pelakunya disekitar pusat kota? Apakah karena mereka termasuk orang kaya jadi kau pikir mereka tidak bisa jahat?". (hlm.61)*

Based on the data excerpt above, it describes the treatment received by Saha Mansion residents, if there is a crime or criminal act that occurs in the city center, the police will immediately come to Saha Mansion to look for the perpetrator, but if there is a criminal incident or any incident that occurs in At Saha Mansion, no police were willing to come looking for the real perpetrator. And if the real suspect is not found, the police will appoint residents from Saha Mansion without conducting a previous investigation. Saha residents are often used as suspects in crimes even though they have tried to deny and defend themselves, but they are considered not to have the right to defend themselves, this is reflected in the following quote data.

- (7) *"Ada perempuan yang bekerja sebagai dokter dipusat kota, dia ditemukan meninggal didalam mobilnya dengan kondisi kelebihan dosis obat-obatan, dia juga meninggal dalam posisi tidak menggunakan pakaian. "Pihak kepolisian pasti akan datang ke Mansion untuk mencari pelakunya padahal belum tentu dari kita lah yang berbuat, siapapun ingat jangan terlihat gugup agar tidak dituduh" ucap nenek Konnim. (hlm. 64)*
- (8) *"Kau ditetapkan sebagai pelaku pembunuhan itu, karena ada saksi mata yang melihat kau berjalan kaki pada malam itu" pihak polisi menuduh seorang pemuda dari kalangan Saha. Dia diberikan hukuman mati dan tidak ada pengadilan yang diadakan untuknya". (hlm.65)*
- (9) *"Si pria bahkan bukan warga L2, hanya seorang Saha, sedangkan si wanita adalah dokter anak di Town. Konon, si pria mungkin mengetahui keemahan si wanita dan si wanita merasa terancam. Secara resmi, insiden itu adalah kasus seorang pria Saha memerkosa dan membunuh seorang wanita warga Town. Pada akhirnya, Do-Kyeong tidak mampu melindungi Su. Su menjadi bahan gosip tidak senonoh, sementara Do-Kyeong sendiri tidak mampu melepaskan diri dari jerat yang melilit dirinya, sekeras apapun usahanya meskipun kejadian sebenarnya bukanlah dia pelakunya, Su mengakhiri hidupnya sendiri karena depresi". (hlm.162)*

The data excerpt explains and illustrates that residents who fall into the Saha category, who are considered residents who do not have full residence permits, are residents who often

commit crimes, they are considered criminals because they are former convicts. They were not given the opportunity to defend themselves or even explain what they did that day. This includes acts of discrimination carried out by the authorities and people who have a high and respected social status against people with a lower social status than them.

As illustrated in the eighth quote, he was immediately sentenced because Do-Kyeong was known to be a close friend of the pediatrician Su. Do-Kyeong was not given the slightest opportunity to explain what really happened and defended himself that he did not know this could happen. Do-Kyeong was immediately made a suspect because he was a close friend of the doctor and moreover, he was a resident of Saha's social status, he was included in the Saha community because he was a former convict, this made the police even more convinced that Do-Kyeong was the perpetrator of the murder without carry out inspection and identification first. Do-Kyeong finally gives up and surrenders to what the police will do about him, because he believes that no matter how hard he argues and defends himself, he will not be able to free himself and no one from the police will believe him.

Apart from the unfair treatment experienced by Saha Mansion residents in the world of law, they also receive unfair treatment in the world of work. They are considered not to have the right to choose work that suits their interests, it is as if they are prohibited from having a dream, they do work according to their calling and what is required by the owner of the place where they work. They often feel that they are just being squeezed into their own work, but they can't argue because they don't have the right to argue with the owner where they work, they also often don't get what was previously promised. This can be seen from the data excerpt below.

- (10) *"Perselisihan kecil sering terjadi di Mansion. Beberapa penghuni pernah ditahan karena menyerang warga atau menyebabkan sebuah keributan. Padahal hal itu terjadi bukan sepenuhnya kesalahan mereka, biasanya gara-gara pemilik usaha tidak menepati janjinya. Sering kali kasus-kasus itu ditutup dengan penghuni Mansion yang tidak mendapatkan kompensasi atau perawatan medis yang dijanjikan kepada mereka. Melakukan pekerjaan yang dianggap remeh dan monoton seumur hidup, seperti robot, tanpa jaminan kompensasi bagaimana berjalan mundur"* (hlm.62)

Based on the data excerpt above, it illustrates the unfair treatment received by Saha Mansion residents in the world of work. They are often given promises regarding work compensation and health facilities that will be provided while working. However, when the work was carried out they did not get what had been previously promised. They are often made suspects and detained only because they claim the rights they have been promised. This describes a form of discrimination carried out by someone who has a high social status against someone who has a low social status in the world of work. Those who are considered to have a high social class status will behave arbitrarily towards people who are considered below them, they make promises so that the residents of Saha Mansion will be interested in working with them, after the residents of Saha Mansion are bound by contracts with them these promises are not given in full, this is considered detrimental to business owners. They use the residents of Saha Mansion to make big profits without having to spend a lot of money.

Discrimination in the form of social class also occurs in the lives of children who no longer have parents, they live in an orphanage. It is as if they are prohibited from having dreams and choosing good things for their future lives, they are given housing facilities as long as they are fifteen years old. After they reach the age of fifteen they are directed to receive work training for one year, after one year they will be sent to their place of work as chosen by the orphanage. This can be seen from the following data excerpt.

- (11) *"Anak-anak panti asuhan dirawat dengan baik di panti asuhan, mereka diberikan waktu tinggal selama umur lima belas tahun. Anak-anak dari L2 sudah ditetapkan*



*pekerjaannya. L2 tidak bisa memiliki impian atau merencanakan masa depan. Anak-anak panti asuhan menerima pelatihan pekerjaan sejak usia mereka lima belas tahun". (hlm.170)*

The next discriminatory treatment caused by social class is still in the world of work. A person who from the beginning belonged to a high social class status or was considered respected got a job that was decent and suited to what he was interested in, but when that social status changed the job was considered inappropriate and was expelled from that job because he was deemed not worthy of getting a job that was worthy of him. while he belongs to a low social class status. This was experienced by one of the characters in the novel Saha Mansion by Cho Nam-Joo, named Yeon-Hwa. She is one of the women in the city center, she belongs to residents who have a fairly high social class status, she lives on an economy that is considered very adequate. When he decided to continue his education in college, it turned out he couldn't enter because he didn't pass the college entrance test. He had spent a lot of money just to go to college, he took the college entrance exam twice but failed both times. This can be seen from the data excerpt below.

- (12) *"Yeon-Hwa lagi-lagi dipecat dari posisi karyawan dapur di rumah sakit besar yang didapatkannya dengan susah payah. Alasannya adalah ia tinggal di Saha Mansion dan menjadi warga berstatus L2. Namun karyawan L2 juga tidak diizinkan tinggal di mes karyawan. Pihak rumah sakit berkata bahwa Yeon-Hwa bisa mendapatkan pekerjaannya kembali apabila ia berhasil menemukan tempat tinggal lain yang lebih bersih dan aman. Tetapi pada kenyataannya, mustahil menemukan tempat tinggal yang bersih dan aman tanpa pekerjaan maupun uang." (hlm.78)*

Based on the data excerpt, it illustrates that the character Yeon Hwa received unfair treatment just because he was a citizen with L2 social status, this happened only because he no longer had the assets he had before, he lost his assets and his economy fell because he wanted to continue into the world of higher education, but this did not materialize, he failed and the money he had spent could not be returned. He has tried to work and go back to studying to take the next college entrance test, but things are not going the way he wants. He lost all the property he owned and had to live in Saha Mansion because he was no longer able to pay the bills for the luxury house where he and his younger siblings lived all this time. This is what resulted in Yeon-Hwa being expelled from the job she got when she was still an L resident. She was deemed no longer worthy of the job because she was no longer an L status resident and now lives in Saha Mansion.

Apart from acts of discrimination in the world of work, Saha Mansion residents also experience unfair treatment in the provision of health facilities from the government. The government provides health facilities at very expensive prices, for residents of low social status such as L2 and Saha residents, they think this is very burdensome, they think that the government is unfair because they cannot afford to pay a high price for the health facilities they get. Never mind using it to pay for health costs, they just don't have enough to eat. This is what makes them not get health facilities from the government, the government does not provide any assistance because they think this could be detrimental and hinder the progress of the city. This is illustrated in the following data excerpt.

- (13) *"Aku akan membantu mengobati anakmu bu, datanglah setelah semua pergi, jika ada yang melihat atau tau, kau dan aku akan mati. Jika luka itu terinfeksi, pengobatannya akan semakin rumit, karena kalian termasuk warga Saha Mansion jadi kalian tidak memiliki fasilitas untuk mendapatkan obat yang mahal". (hlm.149)*

The data quote makes it clear that those who are residents of Saha Mansion do not have the right to receive health facilities, let alone free ones. If someone finds out about the doctor's

actions in providing free medicine and health care, they will receive threats, especially to the residents of Saha Mansion, they will receive severe punishment, even the death penalty. Because they are considered to have caused harm and used something without compensation and used it even though it was not their full right.

The author can conclude from the explanation of the results of the analysis and in the quotation of the data that it is very clear that this includes acts of discrimination in the form of social class, this occurs because those who are considered citizens with low social status do not have more rights in the survival of their own lives, they It is considered detrimental and not very important to be given the same facilities as those given to residents with high social status, on the other hand, those with high social status are considered to be beneficial and support the progress of the Town.

## Conclusion

This research has found that social class discrimination has a significant impact on the lives of the characters in the novel Saha Mansion by Cho Nam-Joo. This novel clearly depicts the social injustice experienced by characters who live in marginalized areas, where their low social status impacts various aspects of life, such as mental health, economic well-being, and their social relationships.

It was found that four impacts were experienced by the characters in the novel Saha Mansion by Cho Nam-Joo in their lives, namely, giving rise to hostility and feuds between groups, making it difficult to solve problems, preventing the establishment of justice, and hindering survival.

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