AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL CONFLICT REPRESENTED IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMEN*

A FINAL PROJECT

Presented as Partial of Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the
Sarjana Sastra Degree in English Literature

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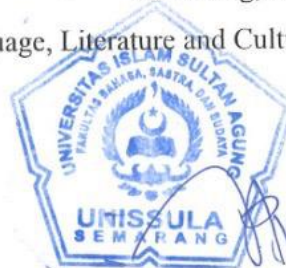
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Hereby, I sincerely affirm that the undergraduate thesis I wrote does not contain the works or portions of the works of other individuals, with the exception of those that were cited in the quotations and references, as is required for a scientific paper. I am willing to accept an academic sanction in the form of the revocation of my paper and the degree obtained from it if my statement is deemed invalid in the future.

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

"Like a sunflower, remain cheerful and positive no matter how dark the surroundings. "

_____

This final project is dedicated to my mother, the best single parent in the world. No matter how tired or exhausted she is facing life, she keeps moving forward, giving me everything she has. Regardless of what others may say, she remains my strongest support system. Therefore, no matter how heavy the world may be, I will keep moving forward. So, please always stay alive and happy, Mom.
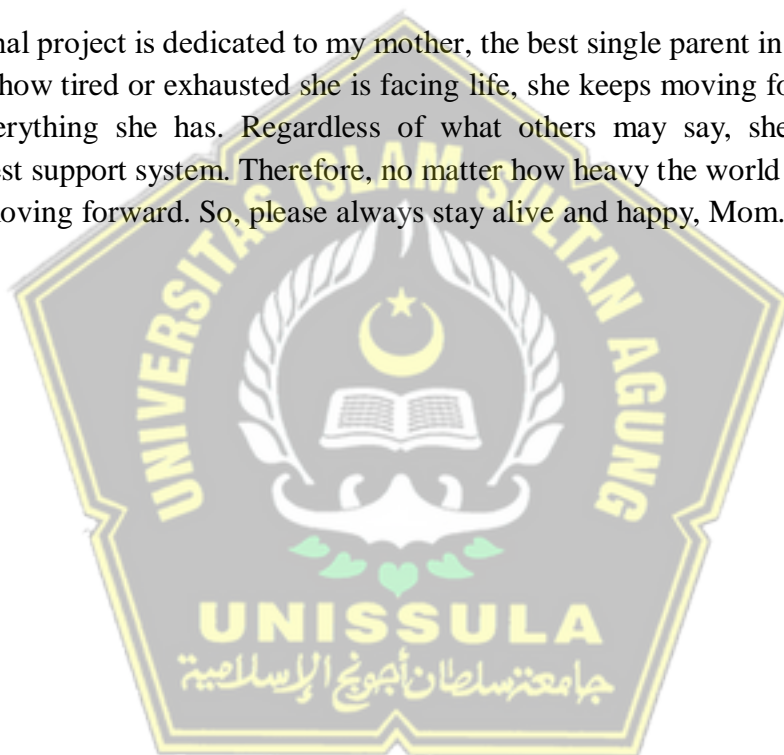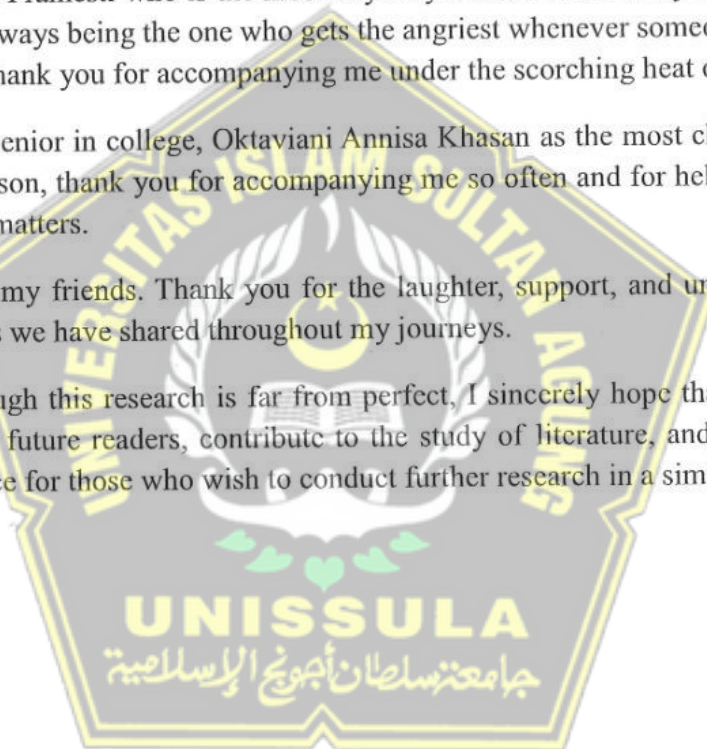
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First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT, whose guidance and blessings have enabled me to complete this final assignment as a requirement to obtain a bachelor of Literature degree at the English Literature Study Program of Sultan Agung Islamic University. This research would like to extend its deepest gratitude and appreciation to:

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iv

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Finally, although this research is far from perfect, I sincerely hope that it can be beneficial for future readers, contribute to the study of literature, and serve as a small reference for those who wish to conduct further research in a similar field.

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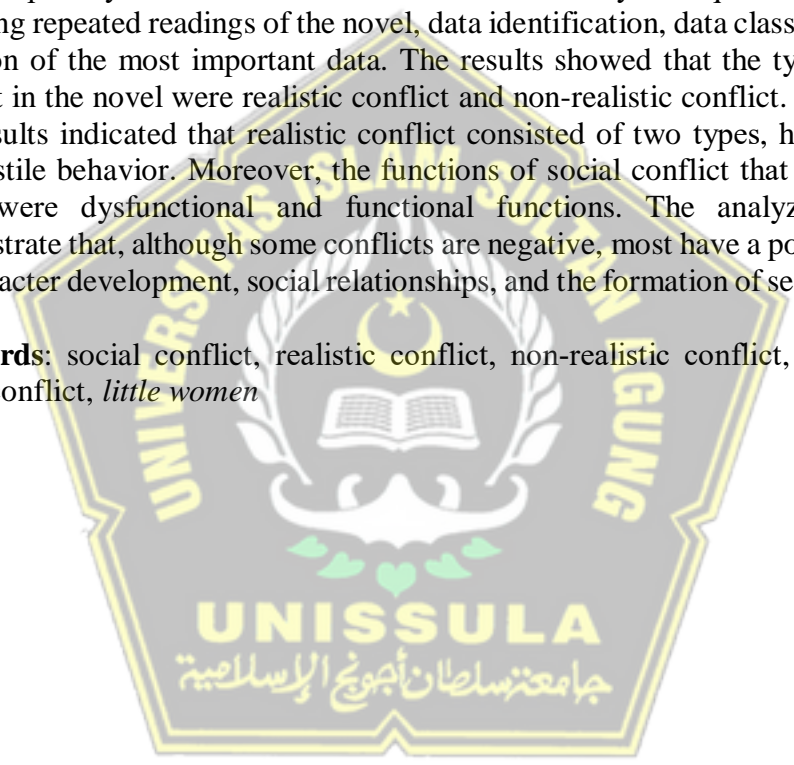Alfita Fauziah

v

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Fauziah, Alfita. 30802100008. "An Analysis of Social Conflict
Represented in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*." Final Project of English
Literature Study Program. Faculty of Languages, Literature and Culture.
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Little Women was a novel written by Louisa May Alcott that portrayed the life
journey of the four March sisters, where the dynamics of their relationships
represent various types of social conflict. This study aims to explain the types of
social conflict and to analyze the functions of social conflict based on Coser
Theory's portrayed in the novel *Little Women*. This study used qualitative methods,
including repeated readings of the novel, data identification, data classification, and
selection of the most important data. The results showed that the types of social
conflict in the novel were realistic conflict and non-realistic conflict. Furthermore,
The results indicated that realistic conflict consisted of two types, hostile feeling
and hostile behavior. Moreover, the functions of social conflict that found in this
study were dysfunctional and functional functions. The analyzed conflicts
demonstrate that, although some conflicts are negative, most have a positive impact
on character development, social relationships, and the formation of self-awareness.

Keywords: social conflict, realistic conflict, non-realistic conflict, functions of
social conflict, *little women*

INTISARI

Fauziah, Alfita. 30802100008. "Sebuah Analisis Konflik Sosial Diwakili dalam *Little Women* Karya Louisa May Alcott". Tugas Akhir Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. Dosen Pembimbing: Diyah Fitri Wulandari S.S., M.Hum.

Novel *Little Women* karya Louisa May Alcott merepresentasikan perjalanan hidup empat bersaudara March, dengan dinamika hubungan yang mencerminkan berbagai bentuk konflik sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan jenis-jenis konflik sosial dan menganalisis fungsi konflik sosial berdasarkan Teori Coser yang digambarkan dalam novel *Little Women*. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif, dengan sumber data berupa dialog, monolog, dan narasi dalam novel. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui pembacaan berulang, identifikasi data, klasifikasi data, dan pemilihan data yang paling relevan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa terdapat dua jenis konflik sosial, yaitu realistic conflict dan non-realistic conflict. Realistic conflict terdiri atas dua bentuk, yakni hostile feeling dan hostile behavior. Fungsi konflik sosial yang teridentifikasi meliputi fungsi fungsional dan disfungsional. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa meskipun sebagian konflik bersifat negatif, mayoritas memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap perkembangan karakter, kualitas hubungan sosial, serta pembentukan kesadaran diri.

Kata Kunci: konflik sosial, konflik realistis, konflik non- realistis, fungsi konflik sosial, *little women*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explained the introduction of the research, which included the background, problem formulation, scope and limitation, objectives, significance, and organization of the study.

A. Background of the Study

According to Esten, literature uses language creatively to reflect human experiences and societal life, contributing to the shaping of character. (9). Literature can be a mirror of social change, as well as give voice to voices that are often marginalized. Thus, literature not only serves as entertainment, but also as a tool of education and reflection for its readers. Through literature, readers can gain a deeper understanding of human life and the complexities that exist within it.

Literature as a broad concept, finds its concrete expression through literary works that embody artistic and cultural values. In literary works, authors often portray social structures, gender roles, and cultural values to give deeper meaning, as well as invite readers to reflect and question the existing reality. Literary works emerge from reflective and imaginative interpretations of the social experiences and life events individuals go through (Al-Ma'ruf 1).

In the social environment, conflicts are often encountered. Society and conflict are inextricably linked, and conflict is an inevitable necessity as long as interactions between people exist. Indeed, conflict is a normal element of social life and, in certain situations, can play a constructive role in advancing

societal progress. Conflict and society are indeed very closely related, there is no social life without conflict.

Social conflict occurred when two or more parties, whether individuals or groups, perceived their interests or goals as incompatible, leading to confrontation (Fisher 4). Differences of opinion between two individuals with each other can cause social conflict. According to Coser, social conflict can be defined a struggle based on value differences and competition for limited power, status, and resources, where both sides intend to harm or overpower the other (Coser 8).

Furthermore, Conflict is not inherently harmful to the relationship in which it takes place, in many cases, it is essential for preserving that relationship (Coser 47). In Coser theory, While often viewed as dysfunctional, Coser contends that conflict can also produce constructive outcomes, depending on how it is handled. It is related to the novel *Little Women*. The various conflicts in Little Women can offer readers insights into navigating relationships and social interactions.

Represented in the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, the characters consist of members of the March family and several supporting characters who play an important role in the development of the story. Meg March, the eldest child, is a mature and responsible figure, Meg faces a dilemma between personal ambition and public expectations to marry for social status, but Meg chooses love and simplicity by marrying John Brooke, a form of resistance to class norms. Jo March, the second child, was a

passionate boyish character who loved the world of writing, and rejected the traditional role of women, Jo refused marriage for the sake of personal independence, although she ended up marrying Professor Friedrich Bhaer of her own choice, not social pressure. Beth March, the third child, who is gentle and loving, becomes a symbol of innocence and kindness in the world that pressures women to always be obedient and not stand out. Amy March, the youngest, initially seemed selfish and greatly influenced by the dream of being part of the upper class, but over time Amy realized the importance of personal values and true love, which led her to marriage with Laurie. Marmee, their mother, became a moral role model who subtly opposed the patriarchal system by raising her children to think critically and independently, while Mr. March is more passive in his role as the head of the family. Supporting figures such as Aunt March reflect the pressure of society to maintain social status through a profitable marriage, and Mr. Laurence describes the figure of an old man who is rich but finally shows affection and openness to changes in traditional values. Through these characters, *Little Women* presents realistic and non realistic conflict in a way dysfunctional and functional.

There were several researchers discussing conflict in literary works. First, it was conducted by Mentari Pratiwi's research entitled The Family Conflict in Alcott's *Little Women*. This study analyzes family conflicts that occur in the novel *Little Women*, The theory used in this research is the theory of conflict according to Ursula's perspective, the results obtained from this research are a description of the lives of the four March sisters' teenagers with

different characters that often cause conflicts with themselves, siblings and others. Previous research primarily discusses dysfunctional conflict limited to the March family. In contrast, this study analyzes conflicts both among the March sisters themselves and between them and other characters. Additionally, earlier studies apply Ursula's perspective, this study adopts Lewis A. Coser's the functions of social conflict theory.

Second, An Analysis of Social Conflict in Rick Riordans's Novel *The Red Pyramid* by Arifuddin. This research examines the forms and underlying factors of social conflict in the novel The Red Pyramid by applying Lewis A. Coser's theory of social conflict. The study reveals that conflicts stem from interpersonal ties, situational factors, violent actions, and characters' acts of self-sacrifice. Within The Kane Family, these conflicts are driven by the relationship between the Gods and the characters in the magical realm. The difference in this research apart from the problem formulation, previous research explained the kinds of social conflict happen in Rick Riordan's novel *The Red Pyramid* and causes of social conflict happen in the novel. In previous study limits the kinds and causes based on dysfunctional only, while in this research limits the type and the functions of social conflict that occurs is not only dysfunctional but can also be functional according to Coser's theory.

From the explanation above, this research is very important because this research will discuss the social conflict as a whole that occurs in March Sister. By focusing on the Coser's theory, the conflict that occurs is not only

dysfunctional but can also be functional. This research is entitled *"An Analysis of Social Conflict Represented in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women".*

B. Problem Formulation

Based on the title and the background of the study, the problem of this study can be stated as follows:

1. What are the types of social conflict portrayed in the novel *Little Women*?

2. How does social conflict functions portrayed in the novel *Little Women* based on Coser's theory?

C. Limitation of The Study

Based on background of the study, the study is entitled An Analysis of Social Conflict Represented in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Furthermore, this study discusses the novel using theories in Lewis A. Coser's The Functions of Social Conflict theory. This research will focus on examining the types of social conflicts in 19th century represented in the novel *Little Women* and the functions of social conflict in a way dysfunctional and functional based on Coser Theory's.

D. Objective of The Study

Based on the problem formula cited above, this study proposes the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To explain the types of social conflict portrayed in the novel *Little Women*.

2. To analyze social conflict functions portrayed in the novel *Little Women* based on Coser's theory.

E. Sigificances of the Study

This study is expected to be useful in the following ways:

1. This study is hopefully can be used to advance the understanding of how to do literary criticism, especially in studying literary works using Lewis A. Coser the functions of social conflict theory and such a being reference for other researchers who conduct research on the same topic using this theory.

2. This study is also can be useful and provide insight to readers regarding the study of social conflict types and the functions in the novel *Little Women*.

F. Organization of the Study

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter I is an introduction. Consists of research background, problem formulation, research limitations, research objectives, research significance, and research organization. Chapter II is a theoretical framework consisting of a synopsis of the novel and related theories of Social conflict, what are the types and the functions of social conflicts through Lewis A. Coser Theory. Chapter III is the research method, which consists of the source of the data, data collecting method, and data analysis method. Chapter IV presents the data and discussions about the types and functions of social conflict. Chapter V shows the conclusion and suggestions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter two is a review of related literature, there are two subchapter in this chapter. The first sub-chapter is the synopsis of *Little Women*, the second sub-chapter is the related theory of literature which consists of social conflict, the types of social conflict, and the social conflict functions based on Coser's theory.

A. Synopsis

First published in 1868, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* was a classic bildungsroman that followed four sisters Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March growing up in New England during the American Civil War. With their father serving as a chaplain and absent from the home, the four girls were raised by their strict but loving mother, Marmee, amid modest family circumstances. Set in a time of social change and moral tension, the story depicted the transition from girlhood to adulthood within a framework of traditional 19th-century values. Each of the March women had a different character, set of ideals, and perspective on the world around them. Meg, the eldest, strove to maintain dignity and grace despite the demands of life's realities. Jo, independent and spirited, rejected conventional feminine roles and dreamed of becoming a writer, even if it meant defying social norms. Beth, shy and devoted, chose a domestic role as an expression of her love for her family. Meanwhile, Amy, the youngest, had high ambitions and a strong determination to build a better life through art and social connections.

The differences in their views, desires, and life paths created tension that often led them to disputes or self-reflection. The choices they had to make often risked relationships between family members and society, tested their sense of responsibility, and forced them to make peace with themselves. At various moments, they were faced with the dilemma of fulfilling other people's expectations or pursuing their own desires a condition that reflected the social reality faced by women at that time.

However, it was precisely through these conflicts that each character experienced significant development. Decisions made in difficult circumstances, conflicts between desires and reality, and relationships tested by differences in life visions became turning points that brought maturity. The outside world they faced, with its offers, limitations, and demands, became a mirror through which they redefined the meaning of happiness, success, and life goals.

Overall, *Little Women* was not only a portrait of a family, but also a social reflection on how individuals, especially women, sought space and voice in a society that had not fully provided the freedom to choose their own path in life. This novel presented not only the drama of family life, but also a profound message about the search for identity, meaning, and role in a social structure that was constantly changing.

B. Related Theory of Literature

B.1. Social Conflict Based on Lewis A. Coser Theory

Lewis Alfred Coser (1913–2003) developed one of the earliest sociological frameworks to merge conflict theory with structural functionalism (Raho 54). The theory of conflict developed by Lewis A. Coser is commonly known as the functions of social conflict, due to its focus on the beneficial functions that conflict can serve within social structures (Raho 107). Building on Simmel's original analysis, Coser broadens its application by integrating ideas from Marx, Weber, and modern conflict theory. Coser approaches conflict from a wide-ranging perspective, considering current scholarly discussions. Turner then outlines the major elements that define this comprehensive view, including: 1) The causes of conflict, 2) The violence of conflict, 3) The duration of conflict, 4) The functions of conflict.

The core theory of Lewis A. Coser and also the difference from other theoretical thoughts is that conflict is not always dysfunctional. On the contrary, conflict can be a tool to strengthen social relations, clarify norms, encourage social change, and even improve unfair social structures. This perspective underlies the naming of Coser's theory as the functions of social conflict, as he views conflict not merely as a cause of disruption but as a mechanism that can preserve or enhance the social system. However, according to Coser, social conflict can be defined a struggle based on value differences and competition for limited power, status, and resources, where

both sides intend to harm or overpower the other (Coser 8). Within a social framework, social conflict denotes disagreements among members of a community that have substantial effects on various aspects of life.

Although Coser's theory highlights the positive function of conflict within social structures, Coser's definition of conflict actually reveals a sharp and confrontational side. Conflict is seen as a serious struggle involving differing values and competition for status, power, and limited resources. In this context, each party not only has differing views but also seeks to weaken or even eliminate its opponent. In Coser's theory, social conflict is divided into 2 types, namely: 1) Realistic, 2) Non-Realistic.

B.1.1. Realistic Conflict

In Coser's view, realistic conflict occurs when unmet demands in a relationship lead participants to confront the source of dissatisfaction directly (Coser 49). when individual feels they are not getting what they want or deserve. These conflicts are based on a calculated expectation of gain, meaning the people involved believe they can benefit from engaging in the conflict.

Based on the explanation above, realistic conflict can be divided into two types:

1. Hostile Feeling

Hostile feeling as a type of conflict that originates within an individual, focusing on internal tensions rather than interactions with others (Coser 37). For Coser, this conflict is created or

caused by oneself, it could be because of overthinking that controls oneself. This feeling can also occurs when the roles or positions people hold within a social structure limit their ability to pursue their own interests (Coser 157) (Coser 157).

2. Hostile Behavior

Hostile behavior refers to the external manifestation of negative attitudes, generally occurring in face-to-face engagements involving two or more people (Coser 37). Unlike hostile feelings, which are internal predispositions or feelings, hostile behavior involves actual actions or conduct that reflect conflict. Furthermore, Social conflict always involves direct interaction between people, while attitudes or emotions are inner tendencies that may influence someone's actions (Coser 38). Therefore, social conflict is something real and involves two parties directly, not just secret feelings or hatred in the heart.

B.1.2. Non-Realistic Conflict

Conflict are motivated not by practical goals, but by emotional impulses such as resentment, frustration, or the wish to retaliate (Coser 48). Coser defines non-realistic conflict as stemming from emotional release rather than genuine competition for objectives (Coser 49). This type of conflict often manifests not as a direct retaliation against the actual source of frustration, but through a third party or what is commonly referred to as a scapegoat. In such cases,

when an individual feels disappointed or frustrated by a certain outcome, they may construct a narrative aimed at blaming someone else, not to resolve a genuine issue, but merely to vent their emotions. This redirection of anger may also involve targeting an unrelated person as an outlet for emotional release. The primary function of this conflict is thus not resolution, but emotional discharge.

Meanwhile, the social process is an incessant reaction of persons prompted by interests that in part conflict with the interests of their fellows, and in part comport with the interests of others (Coser 18). These conflicting interests can trigger unrealistic conflicts because there is a feeling of dissatisfaction and a desire to express it without a specific reason.

B.2. Social Conflict Functions

In Coser's theory, social conflict does not only create problems but also performs important roles in society (8). On one side, it can be dysfunctional because unresolved disputes may damage relationships, weaken solidarity, and even cause disintegration. On the other side, it can be functional because conflict can clarify values, strengthen group unity, stimulate adaptation, and support social change. Coser generally categorizes the functions of conflict into two types: functional and dysfunctional.

B.2.1 Dysfunctional

Coser chose to show various contributions of conflict that are potentially positive for forming and maintaining the structure of society. Coser advanced his work by drawing on classical sociological inquiries into social conflict, particularly influenced by the ideas of German sociologist Georg Simmel (Poloma 107). Some types of conflict can harm group cohesion and may even result in the breakdown of particular social structures (Coser 8). According to Coser, however, conflict can indeed cause disintegration in the social structure of society, if the handling of this conflict is not appropriate.

Institutions that simply channel hostile feelings without addressing the root issues in a relationship may serve as temporary safety valves, yet they cannot prevent the eventual return of conflict (Coser 47). This inappropriate handling is described as a lightning rod which means a temporary solution that dampens anger or conflict so that it does not explode, but cannot prevent the recurrent gathering of clouds meaning problems or social tensions that will continue to reappear if not addressed in depth. The accumulation of unresolved or only partially resolved tensions, rather than allowing adaptation to new circumstances, results in structural rigidity and increases the likelihood of a disruptive outburst (Coser 47). If the social structure remains unjust, inequality is maintained, and role conflicts are ignored, then institutions that only dampen the surface will not be

able to prevent recurrent social conflict. Furthermore, If nothing is fair, then there will be a struggle for values and power involving efforts to bring down each other between competing parties over something limited. As Coser said, conflict as a contest over values and the pursuit of limited status, power, or resources, in which each side seeks to weaken, harm, or remove its rivals (Coser 54).

This type of conflict does not help strengthen social relationships or improve structures, but rather disrupts stability, breaks down group solidarity, and widens the gap between individuals or groups. Coser states that conflict can be functional if managed well, because it can clarify norms, strengthen group identity, and encourage change. However, when conflict is prolonged, not channeled properly, or arises from irrelevant sources, then the conflict becomes dysfunctional. In this context, dysfunctional conflict does not produce a resolution, but instead causes disintegration, emotional tension, and even violence, thus weakening the existing social structure. Conflict tends to be dysfunctional in a social structure that lacks sufficient tolerance and effective institutional mechanisms to manage it (Coser 157). Coser's theory can emphasize that all conflicts can have a negative impact if each party involved does not show tolerance.

B.2.2. Functional

Conflicts that are not treated fairly and are not resolved to the root will become a time bomb for society, because they continue to cause tension, disrupt social structures, and damage the sense of trust and solidarity between individuals and groups. Conflict tends to be dysfunctional in a social structure that lacks sufficient tolerance and effective institutional mechanisms to manage it (Coser 157) Meanwhile, A flexible society, conflict can be advantageous because it fosters the creation and adaptation of norms, thereby enabling the society to persist despite changing circumstances (Coser 128). Flexible and open societies can develop through conflict, because conflict encourages adjustments to norms to remain relevant to changing times, because for Coser, While Conflict is not inherently harmful to the relationship in which it takes place, in many cases, it is essential for preserving that relationship (Coser 47).

For Coser, social conflict can strengthen the somewhat loose group solidarity. Although initially this conflict can worsen the existing atmosphere and threaten social integrity, but with the existence of conflict can function to communicate. Through exchanging ideas or planning strategies and even planning to work together with other groups, to produce solidarity within the group. Conflict with external groups can actually strengthen internal unity,

as it frequently encourages the creation of alliances with other group (Maliki 210).

Conflict can be an important part of maintaining and strengthening social relationships, as long as it is handled in the right way. Added to Coser, Conflict serves to reconcile opposing differences and functions as a means of creating a type of unity (Coser 72) Dualisms in Coser's theory can be interpreted as contributing to the integration of social systems and causing change. Conflict can be an important part of maintaining and strengthening social relationships, as long as it is handled in the right way. For Coser, conflict does not always have a negative connotation, on the contrary, social conflict can strengthen closed social groups. Conflict can have positive or negative impacts, depending on each individual or group in dealing with it.

Lewis A. Coser in his theory of conflict functionalism explains that conflict is not always negative, but can have an important function in maintaining or improving social structures. This is called functional conflict, namely conflict that provides benefits for social relations, such as strengthening group solidarity, affirming shared identity, and giving rise to changes and adjustments in the social system. Coser emphasizes that conflict that occurs openly and in a controlled manner can function as a means to release tension, clarify differences in values, and avoid the accumulation of latent conflicts

that can be more damaging. Thus, functional conflict plays a role in maintaining social dynamics and encouraging stronger integration within the group, especially when the conflict is directed towards constructive goals.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

Chapter three presents the research method, consisting of types of research, data organization, which consists of data collecting methods and types of the data, and the last is analyzing the data.

A. Types of the Research

This study used qualitative research, qualitative research as an approach that emphasizes detailed, holistic descriptions of contexts, interactions, and relationships (Fraenkel 426). Qualitative research had five general characteristics. First, data were obtained directly from natural settings, with the researcher serving as the main instrument. Second, the data were presented in the form of words or images rather than numbers. Third, qualitative researchers focused on both the process and the product. Fourth, the data were typically analyzed inductively. Finally, the central concern of qualitative research was understanding how individuals made sense of their lives (Fraenkel 426-427)

Furthermore, this type of research is not an approach that involves statistical and mathematical data related to numbers but will focus on descriptions and explanations in the form of words, setences, and dialogues. In this case, the type of qualitative research was used to analyze how the social conflict in 19th century society are represented in novel *Little Women*.

B. Data Organizing

In data organizing the steps in collecting the data and the types of data were explained.

B.1. Data Collecting Method

This study has four steps in collecting the data, there were as follows:

B.1.1. Reading the Novel

The primary step involved intensive and repeated reading of Little Women (751 pages) to develop a comprehensive understanding of its content and to identify relevant passages for analysis.

B.1.2. Identifying the Data

After reading the novel carefully, the second step was to identify the data. Data identification is required to decide which part of the novel that best correspond with the reference used in this study. This was done to find the parts of the novel to be analyzed by highlighting and underlining the novel. The data were identified in the form of narratives and dialogues on the character.

B.1.3. Classifying the data

The next step was to classify the data. The identified data are organized and separated into categories according to the problem formulation, it could make the data used more organized and easier to understand so that the comparison between the data could be seen clearly. Therefore, the data in the appendix were classified

based on the problem formulation. The data obtained from the novel were written in a table called an appendix. The appendix consists of column numbers, the content of the novel, type of analysis, references, and comments. Details of the attachments were discussed in Chapter IV.

B.1.4. Reducing the data

The final step was data reduction, which referred to the process of selecting the most relevant information from the novel for analysis. These data served as answers to the problem formulation in Chapter I and were later used to support the discussion in Chapter IV.

B.2. Types of data

Two types of data were used in this study, those were primary and secondary data. The explanation of the data was as follows:

1. Primary data Primary data is the main source of analysis. It was taken from the novel *Little Women*. This novel was published in 1998, but in this study the researchers used fourth edition that published on 2024 and written by Louisa May Alcott with 751 pages. This novel provided data in the form of dialogues, monologues, phrases, and narratives which were used as evidence.

2. Secondary data referred to additional information that supported the primary data in this study. These were obtained from various sources

such as journals, articles, previous theses, and e-books related to the theoretical framework of the research.

C. Analyzing the Data

Analyzing the data was the final step in conducting this study. The analysis followed a qualitative approach, interpreting the novel's content in relation to Coser's theory of the functions of social conflict, as organized in the study's appendix. Thus, the study reports the results by describing and explaining together with related quotes. The complete analysis will be reported in the chapter four of this study, and supporting data are shown in the appendix.
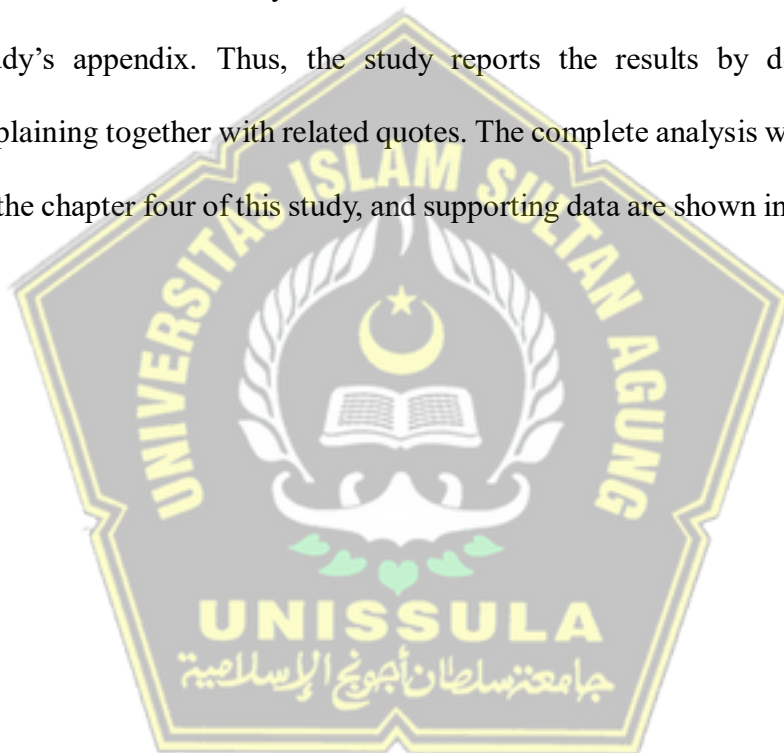
CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter aims to answer the problem formulations presented in Chapter I by analyzing the types and functions of social conflict in *Little Women* based on Lewis A. Coser's theory. The discussion focuses on how conflicts are represented in the novel and how they reflect both functional and dysfunctional roles in the characters' social interactions..

A. Social Conflict Based on Lewis A. Coser Theory

Social conflict defined as a struggle rooted in differing values and competition over scarce resources, prestige, or power, with each party aiming to weaken or dominate the other (Coser 8). This definition highlights that social conflict is not merely a misunderstanding or disagreement, rather a deliberate and dynamic interaction driven by opposing goals and intentions. It emphasizes the intensity of conflict where both parties actively seek dominance, making it a central force in shaping social structures and relationships. In Coser's theory, social conflict is divided into 2 types, namely: 1) Realistic, 2) Non-Realistic (Coser 49).

A.1. Realistic Conflict

Realistic conflict arises from specific, goal-oriented disagreements that are rooted in actual conditions, such as competing interests, values, or limited resources. Coser further divides realistic conflict into two types: hostile feeling, which refers to internal emotional responses such as resentment or frustration, and hostile behavior, which involves direct

outward expressions of conflict through actions or verbal confrontation. The analysis in this section explores how both types of realistic conflict appear in the novel and how they influence character development and social dynamics.

1. Hostile Feeling

     Hostile feeling as a type of conflict that originates within an individual, focusing on internal tensions rather than interactions with others (Coser 37). This means that this conflict is internal, originating within the individual, usually due to frustration, stress, or dissatisfaction with their social situation, rather than due to direct confrontation with others. This type is clearly portrayed when Meg expresses her despair over her limited social and economic condition that makes her dissatisfaction:

    "**I'm poor, and can't enjoy my life as other girls do. It's a shame!**"
    So Meg went down, wearing an injured look, and wasn't at all agreeable at breakfast-time.
    (Alcott 54)

    This quote represents dissatisfaction of hostile feeling, an internal conflict rooted in Meg's frustration over her social condition. This is a type of internal complaint about the social injustice she feels. She feels helpless and bitter due to poverty, which prevents her from enjoying life like other girls.

Another instance of hostile feeling also emerges in their complaints reflect a shared frustration that remains internal and unspoken toward others, yet reveals emotional distress caused by structural limitations. As Coser argues, Conflict occurs when the roles or positions people hold within a social structure limit their ability to pursue their own interests (Coser 157). This concept is reflected in the following dialogue:

> "It's so dreadful to be poor!" sighed **Meg, looking down at her old dress. "I don't think it's fair for some girls to have plenty of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all,"** added little Amy, with an injured sniff.
>
> (Alcott 5)

In this quote, Meg and Amy voice their dissatisfaction with the poverty they experience. The desire to have nice clothes and live like "other girls" is a type of real interests that they cannot achieve due to their position in the social structure. This quote explains that conflict occurs when a person's social position limits their ability to fulfill their interests or desires. In this case, Meg and Amy cannot fulfill their desire to live comfortably or look beautiful due to their low economic position, so internal conflict and a sense of injustice arise, the essence of hostile feeling.

This expression of dissatisfaction illustrates how prolonged discontent with one's social and personal conditions may gradually

lead to frustration. When a person perceives their efforts or desires as futile, such as wishing to be seen, appreciated, or to live a fulfilling life like others, the resulting emotional strain can evolve into internalized anger or hostile feelings. In this context, the character's dissatisfaction is not merely a passive sentiment, therefore a psychological burden that threatens her sense of self-worth. It fosters resentment and self-directed hostility, revealing how unresolved dissatisfaction can serve as the root of deeper emotional conflict within the individual.

2. Hostile Behavior

While hostile feeling remains internal, hostile behavior represents the external expression of those negative emotions. Hostile behavior refers to the external manifestation of negative attitudes, generally occurring in face-to-face engagements involving two or more people (Coser 37). In this type of conflict, frustration is no longer held inside rather it is expressed through verbal or physical confrontation. In this case illustrates a verbal confrontation, as the character expresses emotional frustration through direct criticism. Although not delivered with shouting or physical aggression, the use of harsh language and serious tone reflects a negative type of interaction that aligns with Coser's notion of hostile behavior in social conflict.

This type of frustration through verbal confrontation is clearly portrayed in the following dialogue between Meg and Laurie:

"I hate you," in a petulant or coquettish tone, he would have laughed, and rather liked it; but the grave, almost sad, accent in her voice made him open his eyes, and ask quickly—

"Why, if you please?"

"Because, with every chance for being good, useful, and happy, you are faulty, lazy, and miserable."

"Strong language, mademoiselle."

"If you like it, I'll go on."

"Pray do; it's quite interesting."

"I thought you'd find it so; **Selfish people always like to talk about themselves.**"

(Alcott 626)

This quote represents frustration, conflict emerges explicitly through sharp and hurtful exchanges, such as when the female character calls her interlocutor "faulty, lazy, and miserable" and accuses him of being selfish. These remarks are no longer merely hidden feelings of dislike, therefore are expressed directly in verbal type. Thus, this quote clarifies that social conflict occurs when hostile behavior or attitudes are manifested in real relationships between individuals through actions or communication.

Another example of hostile behavior is found in Coser Theory, Social conflict always involves direct interaction between people, while attitudes or emotions are inner tendencies that may influence

someone's actions (Coser 38). Internal tendencies or inclinations refer to latent emotional dispositions within an individual. This kind of conflict is no longer internal, moreover directly expressed through behavior and speech, marking it as hostile behavior.

This type of hostile behavior rooted in resentment is clearly portrayed in the following dialogue between Jo and her family:

"It's always so. Amy has all the fun and I have all the work. It isn't fair, oh, it isn't fair!" cried Jo passionately.

(Alcott 477)

The line is the Jo's expression an resentment toward Amy, stemming from the envy and injustice she feels. This not only reflects hostile sentiment furthermore begins to resentment overt hostile behavior in social interactions. In this context, Jo has expressed her inner tendencies through open conflict toward Amy. This quote reflects a realistic conflict, as Jo's conflict arose from resentment over the unfulfilled personal expectations, namely her desire to join the trip, which was instead given to Amy. This conflict is rooted in a concrete and clear goal, namely the opportunity to gain experience and enjoyment through the trip. Jo's emotional reaction shows that she feels a real disadvantage, so that the conflict that arises is not just an emotional outlet, it is related to the struggle for opportunity and position within the family dynamic, in accordance with the characteristics of realistic conflict according to Coser.

The hostile behaviors depicted in *Little Women* represent outward expressions of unresolved emotional tensions between characters. These behaviors, as seen through verbal attacks, reflect Coser's view that realistic conflict involves direct interaction and confrontation. Therefore, hostile behavior in the novel functions not only as a sign of conflict, moreover also as a catalyst for character development and relational transformation.

A.2. Non Realistic Conflict

Non-realistic conflict arises not from the pursuit of tangible objectives, furthermore from emotional impulses such as anger, pride, or the need for revenge. Some conflicts are motivated not by practical goals, but by emotional impulses such as resentment, frustration, or the wish to retaliate (Coser 48). This type of conflict often lacks instrumental purpose and instead serves as a release of internal tension.

A powerful example of non-realistic conflict appears in the Amy's action itself, burning the book is a clear representation of non-realistic conflict driven by vent emotions.

"Scold as much as you like, **you'll never see your silly old book again," cried Amy, getting excited in her turn.**

"Why not?"

"I burned it up."

"What! My little book I was so fond of, and worked over, and meant to finish before Father got home? Have you really burned it?" said

Jo, turning very pale, while her eyes kindled and her hands clutched Amy nervously.

"Yes, I did! I told you I'd make you pay for being so cross yesterday, and I have, so—"

(Alcot 119)

This quote demonstrates a conflict that is not driven by a specific instrumental goal, rather by emotional drives such as anger or a desire for revenge. Amy's action of burning Jo's manuscript was not for profit, on the other hand simply to vent her anger: "I told you I would make you pay for being so angry yesterday, and I did." This reflects a conflict that functions as a release of emotional tension, not as a means to achieve a specific outcome.

Coser defines non-realistic conflict as stemming from emotional release rather than genuine competition for objectives (Coser 49). Another example of non-realistic conflict appears in Jo's emotional monologue about her frustration with traditional gender roles. In this conversation, Jo symbolic action to vent inner pressure:

"I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China-aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boys' games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy; and it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with papa, and I can only stay at home and knit, like a poky old woman!"

And Jo shook the blue army-sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room.

(Alcott 9)

This quote represents inner pressure, Jo's outburst serves a symbolic and emotional function, she is rejecting the role society expects her to fulfill. The act of shaking the sock and flinging the yarn across the room is a physical release of internalized frustration, consistent with Coser's notion that non-realistic conflict often provides emotional discharge rather than goal resolution. This type of conflict reflects here is a clear example of non-realistic conflict, where emotional and symbolic frustration leads to behavioral expression, even without interpersonal confrontation.

B. Social Conflict Functions

In Coser's theory, it is stated that there are two functions of conflict, namely dysfunctional and functional (Coser 49).

B.1. Dysfunctional

These unresolved social conflicts will cause the conflict function to become dysfunctional, thus leading to disintegration. Some types of conflict can harm group cohesion and may even result in the breakdown of particular social structures (Coser 8). Dysfunctional conflict damages personal relationships, creates emotional distance, and weakens solidarity between individuals.

One clear example of dysfunctional conflict appears in a conversation where Amy directly criticizes Laurie's personality and actions. While earlier arguments between them often involve sarcasm or teasing, this confrontation carries a disintegration.

> I hate you," in a petulant or coquettish tone, he would have laughed, and rather liked it; but the grave, almost sad, accent of her voice made him open his eyes, and ask quickly—
>
> "Why, if you please?"
>
> **"Because, with every chance for being good, useful, and happy, you are faulty, lazy, and miserable."**
>
> (Alcott 626)

In the quote shows Laurie does not consider previous conflicts as material for self-improvement, which makes the conflict dysfunctional. Meg said that she hated Laurie not without reason, therefore according to Meg, Laurie is very disappointing Meg because she can't use the opportunity as best as possible, he remains lazy and doesn't want to make any effort. This can illustrate that Laurie does not use conflict as functional because he does not run the opportunity well.

Other instances of dysfunctional conflict can be seen in the daily tension between Jo and her sisters, especially when emotional outbursts are met not with resolution therefore with passive accommodation. When conflict is left unresolved or when the emotional response does not lead to any meaningful change in the relationship dynamic, it may become

dysfunctional. Institutions that simply channel hostile feelings without addressing the root issues in a relationship may serve as temporary safety valves, yet they cannot prevent the eventual return of conflict (Coser 47). This is evident in the following interaction between Jo and her sister:

> **"You don't have half such a hard time as I do,"** said Jo. "How would you like to be shut up for hours with a nervous, fussy old lady, who keeps you trotting, is never satisfied, and worries you till you're ready to fly out of the window or cry?"
>
> **"It's naughty to fret; but I do think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world.** It makes me cross; and my hands get so stiff, I can't practise well at all;" and Beth looked at her rough hands with a sigh that anyone could hear that time."
>
> (Alcott 7)

This quote represents unresolved disputes, Jo vents her frustration about being stuck with a demanding aunt, while Beth responds by quietly stating that her own chores are even more exhausting. Rather than resolving Jo's irritation or challenging her view, Beth's comment functions as a type of passive comparison. While it may seem like empathy, it does not address the emotional tension or lead to deeper understanding. It can be concluded that Coser's theory is closely related to the problems in the quote, if Meg's words are continuously served, it will cause dysfunctional social conflicts or do not have good benefits for both.

In some cases, emotional tension builds up and eventually erupts when individuals are no longer able to contain their frustration. This kind of conflict often results in open emotional outbursts that damage relationships rather than strengthen them. As Coser notes, The accumulation of unresolved or only partially resolved tensions, rather than allowing adaptation to new circumstances, results in structural rigidity and increases the likelihood of a disruptive outburst (47). This phenomenon is reflected in the following exchange between Meg and Aunt March:

"Everyone likes and respects him, and I'm proud to think he cares for me, though I'm so poor and young and silly," said Meg, looking prettier than ever in her earnestness.

"He knows you have got rich relations, child; that's the secret of his liking, I suspect."

"Aunt March, how dare you say such a thing? John is above such meanness, and I won't listen to you a minute if you talk so," cried Meg indignantly, forgetting everything but the injustice of the old lady's suspicions. "My John wouldn't marry for money, anymore than I would. We are willing to work, and we mean to wait."

(Alcott 358)

This quote represents do not accept other people's decisions or selfish. The explosion that is reflected in this novel is, Meg's outburst of anger because of Aunt March's actions who openly expressed her dislike for Meg's choice, Meg felt that what Aunt March said was very contrary to

her. In this case, there is no potential that the conflict can be positive and vice versa.

Another of dysfunctional conflict occurs in the explosive confrontation between Amy and Jo after Amy burns Jo's manuscript. Coser emphasizes that social conflict as a struggle rooted in differing values and competition over scarce resources, prestige, or power, with each party aiming to weaken or dominate the other (54) this case, the conflict escalates rapidly when both parties act out of frustration and emotional retaliation, rather than seeking understanding or reconciliation.

"You wicked, wicked girl! I never can write it again, and I'll never forgive you as long as I live."
(Alcott 116)

In this passage represents disintegration, Amy feels emotional because Jo didn't invite her to the party, so she burns Jo's book to vent her frustration, Jo who knows how to be angry, and labels Amy as a "Wicked girl". This phenomenon is in accordance with what Coser has talked about, Amy and Jo fight each other's frustrations to claim their power. This is a representation of social conflicts that have a dysfunctional functions.

Furthermore, the dysfunctional conflict is also reflected in Jo's attitude that refuses to apologize to Amy even though the apology has been delivered. Conflict tends to be dysfunctional in a social structure that lacks sufficient tolerance and effective institutional mechanisms to manage it (Coser 157).

This type of dysfunctional conflict rooted in disrupt social relations is clearly portrayed in rhe following dialogue between Jo and her sisters:

"It was an abominable thing, and she don't deserve to be forgiven."

With that she marched off to bed, and there was no merry or confidential gossip that night.

(Alcott 117)

In this quote, Jo shows intolerance towards Amy, even though an apology has been said. She closed the communication room and created a cold atmosphere among his brothers, which was shown by the absence of a warm conversation that night. According to Coser, when conflict is not managed through tolerance and understanding, the impact is actually destructive. Therefore, this conflict becomes dysfunctional because it does not produce understanding or resolution. Instead, Jo chooses to stay away and strengthen the gap in the relationship with her brother. Thus, this quote shows that conflicts that are not accompanied by tolerance will have a negative impact on the smallest social structure, namely the family.

Based on the analysis, the dysfunctional conflict in *Little Women* is characterized by unresolved tension, resistance to reconciliation, and actions that worsen social relations between characters. This functions of conflict reflects Lewis A. Coser's view that conflict becomes dysfunctional when there is no tolerance or social mechanisms capable of channeling conflict constructively. As a result, this functions of conflict did not

produce positive change, rather weakens social interaction and relationship stability. Thus, the dysfunctional conflict in this novel demonstrates that not all conflicts contribute to social renewal or strengthening relationship structures, especially when managed without openness or adaptive resolution.

B.2. Functional

In a flexible social structure, conflict can actually function positively, namely creating changes, strengthening relationships, and adjusting norms to changing conditions. A flexible society, conflict can be advantageous because it fosters the creation and adaptation of norms, thereby enabling the society to persist despite changing circumstances (Coser 128). That is, conflicts that are managed with an open attitude can be a means of learning and social transformation.

This is reflected in the emotional conflict between Meg and John, which arises personal growth:

"Meg admitted to John that she could not control herself, explaining that she never intended to waste his money and had not realized how quickly small purchases could accumulate. She confessed that it was difficult to resist when Sallie freely bought whatever she wanted while pitying her for not doing the same, and although Meg tried to remain content, she found it challenging. Meg confessed to John that she had not meant to waste his money, but small expenses added up without her noticing. Seeing Sallie

buy freely while pitying her made it harder for Meg to stay content.

"O John, my dear, kind, hardworking boy, I didn't mean it! It was so wicked, so untrue and ungrateful, how could I say it! Oh, how could I say it!"

(Alcott 439)

In the quote, the conflict started from Meg's inadvertence in expressing her frustration over financial limitations. John, who had sacrificed a lot, felt hurt by Meg's statement, and reacted silently and disappointed. However, instead of making the situation clouded, Meg realized her mistake and apologized sincerely. Thus, the conflict that was initially emotional and potentially destructive, instead became a moment of reflection and maturity in their relationship. Meg's regretful response shows emotional flexibility and readiness for change, characteristics that, according to Coser, allow conflict to be functional and adaptive.

In addition to conflicts that strengthen romantic relationships, social conflicts can also strengthen the somewhat loose group solidarity and perform a functional role in preserving emotional bonds and reinforcing unity. Conflict is not inherently harmful to the relationship in which it takes place, in many cases, it is essential for preserving that relationship (Coser 47). In this context, minor disagreements or emotional tensions may actually serve to reaffirm mutual care and understanding among family members.

This concept is illustrated in the following quote, which reflects a subtle type of conflict that deepens the sisters' emotional connection:

"Don't peck at one another, children. Don't you wish we had the money papa lost when we were little, Jo? Dear me! how happy and good we'd be, if we had no worries!" said Meg, who could remember better times.

(Alcott 7)

This quote represents create close defense. They create conflicts when they are child, on the other hand this conflict does not make them fight, instead the result of this conflict creates a close defense of brotherly relationships, this conflict can be called functional.

Furthermore, there is another proof that functional conflicts not only appear in the type of open quarrels, moreover can also occur as an inner struggle within the individual. In this case, the conflict becomes a tool to achieve a new balance and understanding of two conflicting values. Conflict serves to reconcile opposing differences and functions as a means of creating a type of unity (Coser 72). In other words, conflict functions to unite differences in values or desires that appear in a social or psychology system.

This concept is illustrated in the following quote, which reflects a strengthen social bonds:

Meg spent her days both working and waiting, gradually becoming more mature, skilled in domestic duties, and lovelier in appearance,

as love seemed to enhance her beauty. Although she still carried her youthful dreams and hopes, she felt some disappointment with the modest beginning of her new life. Seeing Ned Moffat and Sallie Gardiner newly married with their fine house, carriage, gifts, and elegant possessions, she could not help but compare them with her own situation and quietly wished for the same. **Yet, those feelings of envy and discontent soon faded when she remembered John's patient love and hard work in preparing their small home. In the evenings, as they sat together discussing their simple plans, the future always appeared bright and full of promise.**

(Alcott 371)

This quote represents the dualism that occurs between desire and reality in Meg, Meg has a desire to live a luxurious life, she is always haunted by envy of other people's households or even other girls who have luxury, on the other hand the reality that Meg is surrounded by is the affection given by John which is not necessarily obtained from other men, John is a good person and a hard worker, seeing that reality makes Meg aware and achieves her unity in thinking that Meg's life is much more than enough. In this case, the conflict faced by Meg has a positive impact on her so that it can be said to be functional.

Functional conflict in *Little Women* plays a role in strengthening social relationships, encouraging value adjustments, and facilitating social

change among the characters. According to Lewis A. Coser's theory, this type of conflict contributes to the stability of the social system through the process of adapting to changing conditions. In the novel, functional conflict is reflected through disagreements that produce new understandings, increased self-awareness, and the formation of stronger social norms or agreements. Therefore, conflict is not always destructive, therefore can be a tool for maintaining social continuity and strengthening relational structures in society.
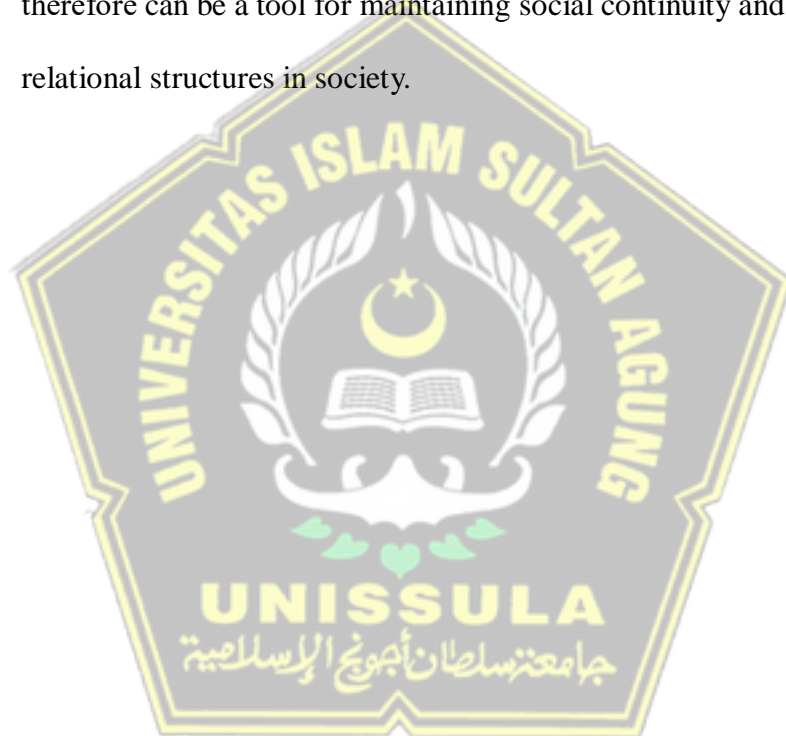
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Chapter V is divided into two sub-chapter, the conclusion and suggestion. The conclusion presents the result of the analysis, and followed by suggestion.

A. Conclusion

Based on the analysis that presented in the Chapter IV. There are two problem formulation in the study: The types and the functions of social conflict.

Based on Coser's theory, types of social conflict refers to the quotes found in the object that are implying social conflict occurs in each characters, whether the main character or the figurants. These types of social conflict are divided into two types, namely, Realistic conflict and Non-realistic conflict. The realistic conflict divided again into two types which are Hostile feeling and Hostile behavior. Furthermore, the functions of social conflict are divided into two functions: Dysfunctional and Functional.

The types of social conflict that are found in the object are: Four Realistic conflicts and two Non-realistic conflicts. The realistic conflict is further divided into hostile feeling, which involves internal emotional tendencies such as dissatisfaction or despair and hostile behavior which consists of frustration and resentment. And the last type is non-realistic which action to vent emotions and inner pressure.

In terms of function, the findings reveal that social conflict in the novel serves both dysfunctional and functional roles. Dysfunctional conflicts, such as not considere for self-improving, unresolved disputes, do not accept other

people's decisions, disintegrate, disrupt social relations and do not contribute to positive change. In contrast, functional conflicts, as seen in reconciliations or shifts in character attitudes, contribute to personal growth, create close defense, strengthen social bonds, and facilitate adaptation to new conditions.

In addition, based on the result. It can be drawn that each characters in the *Little Women* novel has their own struggles based on value differences and competition for limited power, status, and class in that era. The conflict that happened between whether between individual or group, both sides intend to harm or overpower the other. Thus, it can be concluded that even though some types of social conflict happened in the plot between the characters, these conflicts are attend to be functional conflict or dysfunctional conflict depending on how the individual would respond. Furthermore, these functions of social conflict that exist in the novel can be used as moral value for socializing.

B. Suggestion

From the conclusion described above, there will be several suggestion from the researcher that future researchers can use or to convey and help the readers' acknowledgement. *Little Women* novel by Louisa May Alcott is analyzed with the references of Coser's social conflict theory, concerning how the plot of narrative works must be containing conflicts. Future researchers can apply theories from other literary expertise to discuss or to analyze the social conflict or another types of conflict to the novel. From the psychological approach, the *Little Women* novel can be analyzed using Abraham Maslow's self-actualization theory and Carl Jung's archetypes theory. Additionally, the

novel can so be analyzed through another sociological theory, such as Max Weber's the concept of social class theory.

Another suggestion, future researchers can use the same theory about social conflict by Coser to analyze other literary works, for instance *Black Clover* movie.

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