

## Acquiring Clear Understanding of Social Values in Charles Dickens' 'Oliver Twist'

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### Abstract

*The objective of this research is to acquire deep understanding about social values in the novels Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens. The type of research was qualitative by using content analysis method. The data collected through document study and data observation about social values in the novel. The result of this research revealed that social values found and described in the novel Oliver Twist were love values consist of love and affection, dedication, mutual help, kinship, concern, and loyalty. Responsible values consist of sense of acceptance and belonging, obligations and discipline. Harmony of life values consist of justice, tolerance, cooperation, and democracy. The values were found and described through generic structure of the novel by the text quotations. Those results led to implication that Indonesian literature educators can apply Charles Dickens novel Oliver Twist directly in the teaching process and motivate the students to analyze the novels.*

**Keywords:** Dickens, Oliver Twist, novel, theme, problem, social value

### 1.0. Introduction

In this era of instant technology and information, the practical attitude of the majority of society resulted in the erosion of the noble values of the nation's culture. Violent culture and social anarchism also exacerbate socio-cultural conditions of the nation. The values of local wisdom were polite, friendly, respectful, wise, and religious as if they were eroded and reduced by instant and modern lifestyle, which is called as social problems. Therefore, it becomes the researcher's reason for conducting the research about the social values relating to literature aspect. Social problems caused by the lack of recognition of the values of community life occur easily like social gap, social violence, and the lack of tolerance to others (Mimar Türkkahraman, 2013: 635). One solution to solve the problem is to provide effective literary learning about social values, because literature as a means of self-expression can be treated as one of the media or means of psychiatric education. Literature contains ethical and moral values relating to daily life including human problems. Literature does not only speak of itself, but it also deals with God, the universe, and society. Literature is able to reveal many things from various facts because it has many literary genres that can be used as a source of character formation.

The novel is a literary work in which many human problems are discussed as a description of the deeds or social life of the everyday society. The novel presented a much more realistic picture of social life (Faruk, 2016: 45-46). This is because the scope of the novel is very possible to describe the situation through events that are woven by the author through his characters. Learning about social values is very important and be function as an example to see which is good and bad things. It is also a difficult challenge for educators today, to help learners to use their free time by doing activities that are useful for the development of self-learners to become a superior resource. Learning appreciation novel have an important role in helping the younger generation to develop themselves further into a subtle personality. In line with that statement, the researcher encouraged that by studying and appreciating the literature, the learners will be able to achieve good results in the teaching of language and literature (Sumardi et al., 2012: 10). Thus, it can be concluded that through the appreciation of literature, the learners will learn the values of good and bad life then they will appreciate the stories in the literary works and make the values contained therein as an example and role model in the life of society.

The focus of the research is analyzing social values in Charles Dickens's novel Oliver Twist through generic structure approach. From the focus, the researcher formulate the following research question is how the social values in Charles Dickens novel reviewed through generic structure of the novel? Based on the research question, it had be known that the objective of this research was to get deeply meaning about the social values in Charles Dickens novel through generic structure approach. Those results led to implication that Indonesian literature educator can apply Charles Dickens novel Oliver Twist directly in the teaching process and motivate the students to analyze the novels.

## **2.0. Literature Review**

This article concerned on the importance of assessing the social value in the novel is due to the appropriate function of literature to stimulate the reader to recognize, inspire, analyze and formulate the values through the character in the novel. So, the values in literary works can be an example, motivation and made the personality and behavior of its readers more refined. Novels are best known as fiction. It supported by Eagleton (1996:2) said that literature includes much factual writing, it also excludes quite a lot of fiction. Stanton (2007:8) said that novels can show human experiences. Smith (2008:7-8) said that quality literary work is a literary work depicting the soul, the author's thought, describes the author's ability to organize the story, contains understandable language, to be able to describe the human mind. Bakhtin and Patrick in Hoffman (1988:230) said that novel is a type of fictional prose that does not have a single plot, characters and settings like those of a short story, but the novel has complex plots, characters, conflicts and character development is a fiction.

Johnson (2012:56) said that value is an enduring preference for mode of conduct (e.g., honesty) or a state of existence (e.g., inner peace). Douglas (1986:3) said that literature as a product of life contains social values, philosophy and religion derived from the revelation or who have forward a new concept. Literature not talks about personal life values, but also the values of human life in the total sense. Social values can be benchmarks and beliefs held by most members in a particular society about what is right, proper, noble, and good to practice. Wicaksono (2014:323) said that social value refers to the relationship of the individual to the other individual in a society. How one should behave, how they solve problems and deal with certain situations are also included in social values. It can be concluded that in a very diverse society, self-control is a very important attitude to maintain the balance of society. In line with this, social value can be interpreted as a foundation for the community to formulate what is true and important, and plays an important role to encourage and direct individuals to act according to the norms that apply.

Literature and values are two complementary social phenomena in their essence as existential. Literature as a product of life contains social values, philosophy, religion, and so forth both from the revealing and one who have a new concept. Literature enters not only the space and values of personal life, but also the values of human life in the total sense. In essence, a value serves to direct the consideration or behavior of a person so that the guidelines in community life. Human life is patterned on social values. Social values can be said benchmarks, benchmarks, assumptions, and beliefs held by most members in a particular society about the right, proper, noble and good to be practiced. Jan Luxemburg (1992:24) said that literature presents the image of life itself, largely composed of social reality. In this sense life involves interpersonal relationships with people, between people, between events that occur within one's mind. Wicaksono (2014:323) said that social values refer to individual relationships with other individuals in a society. How one should behave, how they solve problems, and deal with certain situations are also included in social values. It can be concluded that in a very diverse society the pattern, self-control is something that is very important to maintain the balance of society. In the same way, social values can be interpreted as the basis for society to formulate what is true and important, has its own characteristics, and plays an important role to encourage and direct individuals to act according to the norms that apply.

## **3.0. Social Values in the Novel**

According to Anderson (2014:81) said that the characteristics of social values are: (1) Value is a community construction that is created through interaction among members of the community, (2) Social value is transmitted, (3) Values studied, (4) The value of satisfying human beings and taking part in the fulfillment of social needs, (5) Values are abstract assumptions in which there is social consensus about the relative prices of objects in society, (6) Values tend to relate to one another communally to form patterns and value systems in society, (7) Social value helps people determine priorities in their lives, (8) Social values almost always involve emotions, (9) Values can affect the development of individual personalities in society, (10) Cultural diversity with different forms and functions will produce the different value systems.

According to Thompson (2012:13) stated that the shapes of social values are: (a) Love Value is a genuine feeling present from the heart and contains a desire to give, to love and to be happy. Love values consist of love and affection, dedication, mutual help, kinship, concern, and loyalty, (b) Responsibility Values is one of the traits of our character which means that a person is able to respond for his actions, is able to take some duties and to face certain consequences of the actions that may occur. Responsible values consist of sense of acceptance and belonging, obligations and discipline. Harmony of life values consist of justice, tolerance, cooperation, and democracy, (c) Life Harmony Values is a human being as a social creature (homo socialist) because it always interacts with other humans in performing daily activities of life, in social life there must be norms that are mutually agreed in order to live in harmony, balanced and harmonious. Harmony of life values consist of justice, tolerance, cooperation, and democracy. By looking at the sub values contained in social values above it can be concluded that, social values are very important in social life if applied properly and correctly, and when associated with the deepening of a literary work can be a valuable learning about life, especially social life.

The novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens draws many parallels to the Victorian Era. Charles Dickens was one of the main writers to emerge from the Victorian Era. Dickens style and understanding of the period allow people to believe that he is “Victorians king of literature”. In *Oliver Twist*, young Oliver is an illustration of the harshness that is evident during the time. The treatment of adolescence, child labor, British Laws, and British society all are examples of the Victorian Era that Dickens makes reference in *Oliver Twist* even through the reality to the time, Oliver is still able to find happiness. In this story, Oliver and some of characters proved that even though they lived in a chaotic world, there were still connecting with the goodness, worthiness, and nobility happened around them.

#### 4.0. Analyzing Some Social Humane Values in the Novel

##### Mutual help

The value of mutual help in the novel *Oliver Twist* is illustrated when Oliver is helped by Mr. Brownlow after the trial of the burglar case. It can be seen in the following quotation: *Little Oliver Twist lay on his back on the pavement, with his shirt unbuttoned, and his temples bathed with water; his face a deadly white, and a cold tremble convulsing his whole frame. ‘Poor boy, poor boy!’ said Mr. Brownlow, bending over him. ‘Call a coach, somebody, pray, directly.’ A coach was obtained, and Oliver, having been carefully laid on one seat, the old gentleman got in and sat himself on the other.* (Dickens, 1992:69) From the quotation above it can be concluded that, despite being a victim of robbery, Mr. Brownlow has a great heart and wants to help Oliver, who he previously thought was a pickpocket. The testimony of the bookstore owner frees Oliver from the punishment of 3 years in prison for allegedly stealing. ‘This,’ said the man: ‘I saw three boys – two others and the prisoner here – loitering on the opposite side of the way, when this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy. I saw it done; and I saw this boy was perfectly amazed and stupefied by it.’ Having by this time recovered a little breath, the worthy book-stall keeper proceeded to relate, in a more coherent manner, the exact circumstances of the robbery. (Dickens, 1992:68) This value is an example to the reader of our obligation to help others, the need to tell the truth, and be empathetic to love our fellow human beings.

##### Kinship

The familial values in *Oliver Twist* are illustrated in the following text. The young lady would sit down to the piano, and play some pleasant air, or sing, in a low and gentle voice, some old song which it pleased her aunt to hear. There would be no candles lighted at such times as these; and Oliver would sit by one of the windows, listening to the sweet music, in a perfect rapture. (Dickens, 1992:208) The value is very much reflected in the family atmosphere created in the Maylie family’s home. There is no visible social class distinction between the richer and the poorer in the treatment between Oliver and his employer. They are happy together with lots of love and sharing. The value is also seen when Rose gives mental encouragement to Oliver, when he reminds his best friend. Dick when they through the rough days in the workhouse. Oliver feels so sad and hopes that he will meet Dick again someday and share the happiness that he feels at that moment. ‘You will see him soon,’ replied Rose, gently taking his folded hands between her own. ‘You shall tell him how happy you are, and how rich you have grown, and that in all your happiness you have none so great as the coming back to make him happy too.’ (Dickens, 1992:340)

##### Concern

The concern value in *Oliver Twist* is described in the following quotation: There was fresh groundsel, too, for Miss Maylie’s birds, with which Oliver, who had been studying the subject under the able tuition of the village clerk, would decorate the cages in the most approved taste. When the birds were made all spruce and smart for the day, there was usually some little commission of charity to execute in the village; or, failing that, there was rare cricket-playing sometimes on the green; or, failing that, there was always something to do in the garden, or about the plants. (Dickens, 1992:208-209) From the quotation above it can concluded that, Oliver’s behavior is the realization of the value of the environment around him.

##### Loyalty

The loyalty value in the *Oliver Twist* is illustrated in the following quotation: ‘It is because I was your father’s oldest friend, young man,’ returned Mr. Brownlow; ‘It is because the hopes and wishes of young and happy years were bound up with him and that fair creature of his blood and kindred who rejoined her God in youth, and left me here a solitary, lonely man; it is because he knelt with me beside his only sister’s death-bed when he was yet a boy, (Dickens, 1992:323) The friendship between Mr. Brownlow and Monk’s father Mr. Leeford is a sincere friendship. They go through hard times and happy times together as a form of the loyalty of friendship and fraternity. The power of friendships make Mr. Brownlow wants to change Monk’s attitude so he can have a better life. This value is a positive value that is essential and can be an example for the readers to apply to their own life.

#### 5.0. Conclusion

Social values in terms of the value of love, the value of responsibility and the value of harmony in the life of *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens are clearly visible in the contents of the novel. The description of the social values in the story illustrates the value of community life is about the relationship between human and daily life. The value of social values can be adopted by certain societies about what is true, worthy, sublime, and good to practice in real life. These values are

the values of love and affection, the value of service, the value of helping, the values of kinship, the value of caring, the value of loyalty, the value on a sense of acceptance and belonging, the value of obligation, the value of discipline, the value of justice, the value of tolerance, the value of cooperation and the value of democracy. The overall values are combined within the story's structure in *Oliver Twist* novel by Charles Dickens.

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