Ages Discrimination In Steinbeck’s Mice And Men, A Study In Ageism

A. Background

Literary works is a form of art either orally or in writing that displayed through language. literary works literally have two functions: entertaining and educating. In the point to entertain, literary works can provide satisfaction, sadness, and happiness for the readers. Literary works are also classified as communication media which function to express things related to the problems that are happening. In the point of educating, literary works have a function to teach people's life experiences where literature is inseparable from the reality of life. In the book Theory of Literature, Wellek dan Warren (1963: 94) said: “Literature represents life in large measure, a social reality and the real world are also an object of imitation literature”. It would mean that literary works represent the social reality around us. So, actually the contents in the novel are not just about entertainment, but a lot of moral values that we can take from the lives of the characters and stories in a novel

Most of literary work made by its author portrays idea or situation in society. Author has their own approach to write it based on theory he or she believed. There are three (3) kinds of literary work; poem, drama, and prose. The book “Mice and Men” from the author John Ernst Steinback is a story that can be analyzed by using Ageism Theory.

In the world of Discrimination, we knew a populer term that called racism and feminism, beside that there is one of unpopular term of discrimination that focuses on the discrimination of the ages that we called ageism. Ageism is process of systematic stereotyping or discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish with skin colour and gender. Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different than themselves; thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings.” (as cited in Butler, 1975), in the simple term ageism is stereotyping about people of different ages not only in older people, but also in younger people.

Based on the description above, in this study, the author examines the two main character of Mice and Men by John Ernst Steinback namely George Milton and Lennie Small that experienced this discrimination. Lennie that has a mental disability, he can be described as having a childlike innocence. His attitude towards the world and others is simplistic, childish, and often warm view. Lennie, perhaps linked to the first notion of childlike innocence, is presented as a sympathetic character in spite of his constant failings and murdering tendencies. Innocence is something of a godsend and an excuse for bad behavior. It seems to fit in with Steinbeck’s insistence that characters be treated without judgment. The author chooses to analyze the two characters in this novel because according to the researcher, the characters in this novel have very unique characterization and story that bring us to understand how was this Ageism happened around us in society without aour awareness.

B. Research Question

1. What kinds of ageism discrimination experienced by George Milton and Lennie Small as reflected in the book of “Mice and Men”?
2. How are Geroge Milton and Lennie Small struggle agains the ageism’s discrimination in John Ernst Steinback’s “Mice and Men”?

C. Objectives of the Study

In line with the the research questions stated above, the objectives of this research are formulated as follows:

1. To identify, describe and analyze the kind of ageism discrimination potrayed Mice and Ment’s novel.
2. To identify and analyze how is the two main character George Milton and Lennie Small struggling agains this discrimination.

D. Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to be a discourse on the meaning of Ageism Discrimination and help and contribute to the study literature, especially on analysis characters of the main characters using theory from Robert Butler. Researchers also expect the results of this research can improve knowledge and become a reference for students and readers especially for students in English Letters Department Faculty of Humanities, State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, who want to make a study of the analysis on the discrimination of ages.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

The researchers limit the scope of research on events which is experienced by two main character explained in the book. The researcher analyzes the evidence that indicates of dicrimination onthe age according to ageism theory.

F. Research Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with the following steps:

1. Data Source

The main object of this study is a novel “Mice and Men” by John Ernst Steinbeck that published in 1937 in United States with 187 pages. The title of this novel taken from Robert Burn’s poem “To a Mouse” which reads: 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley'. Steinbecks’s wrote this novel based on his own experiences working alongside migrant farm workers as a teenager in the 1910s. The following year, this novel was translated to some language and adapted to some stages, film and radio with the same title.

2. Collecting data

The author buys / downloads the Mice and Men novel to be used as data, then quotes the words and conversations of characters in the novel to obtain information which is then made in

study material in analyzing the experience of the two main characters on this novel. The researcher also watch the Mice and Men Mvie in order to get better understanding of the story. Thw, some point related to the discrimination of age will be identified.

3. Data Analysis

At this stage, the author will use sociological approach to analyzing the discrimination of ages that happened. The data is in the form of quotation text and will be analyzed using descriptive qualitative method, in order to give a lear and brief explanation. There are three steps of analyzing the data. First, the evidence of act related to the discrimination of ages. Then, relating the theory of Ageism to the two main characters of the main suject in social life. The last is making a conclusion from the analysis.

G. Theoretical Framework

The framework of this study is Ageism Studies by Robert Butler. Butler describe the word of ageism as “prejudice by one age group against another age group” (Butler 1969, p. 243). The term of ageism firstly defined by Robert Buttler, he is one of the pioneers in ageing research, then defiitions and the concept of Ageism growing over the years. Butler argued that ageism represents discrimination against younger and older groups in society by the middle- aged group, because the middle- aged group is responsible for the prosperity of the younger and older age groups that are considered to be dependent. Buttler compared the effect of ageism to the poor outcomes of racism or discrimination primarily based on social type and discussed the intersections between ageism and different types of discrimination and disempowerment (Butler 1969). In subsequent work, Butler (1980) persevered to compare ageism to sexism and racism (the other two conventional “isms”), arguing that ageism is manifested as attitudes, behaviours, and institutional practices and insurance policies directed closer to older adults. Ageism can be either positive or negative, but it tends to elevate poor penalties with the aid of creating self-fulfilling prophecies (Butler 1980).

Another ageing researcher, Erdman Palmore argued that “older adults should be seen as a minority group in society” (Palmore 1978). Palmore seen that elderly as a loss abilities and functioning of life, because of that the terms “olderly” and “old” has negative connotative meaning and that should be avoided. This corresponds with the notion of language as shaping reality and constructing the meaning of old age (Nuessel 1982).

A clear acknowledgement of the presence of ageism not only in the way one group treats every other however also as the “enemy within” was added in a paper by means of Levy (2001). According to Levy, ageism is frequently directed at one’s self and can be implicit. It happens with very little consciousness or intention and actually influences the social interactions and life of every and every one of us. This definition considers ageism as having behavioural, attitudinal, and emotional aspects based on chronological age. It can be superb or terrible and is notion to form most interactions with older adults. It has been argued that older adults have internalised bad ageist messages in the course of their lives. This, in turn, impacts their view of themselves as properly as their view of others in their environment (Levy 2001; Levy and Banaji 2002). Every individual who grows historic is probably to be the target of ageism at some point in life. This is very exclusive from other kinds of discrimination, which are not in all likelihood to impact all human beings in society (Palmore 2001). Hence, the scope and breadth of ageism

are big (Ayalon 2014).

H. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding between the researchers and the readers, the following key terms are defined:

1. Main Character Burhan Nurgiyantoro in Teori Pengkajian Fiksi (1998) said: main character is a character that kept performing and dominating the whole story. The narration of this character is considered as the most important ina novel concern. In certain novels, a main character always present in every event and can be found in every page of novel. Even his superiority are not always the same, main character in a novel can be more than one.
2. Discrimination is a Making or showing an unfair or prejudicial distinction between different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex (Oxford Dictionary)
3. Ageism is one of discrimination in social life that related to the ages, either younger or older
4. Mice and men is a book by John Ernst Steinbeck that tell us the story of two main characters George Militon and Lennie Small, both of them are work on the Farm and feel loneliness.

I. Previous Study

The first previous study related to the theory of this study, that is A Conceptual Analysis of Ageism by Thomas Nicolaj Iversen, Lars Larsen, and Per Erik Solem (2009). This journal has two purposes. Firstly, is readability constitutes the foundation for greater reliability and validity in future research about Ageism. Secondly, its complexity offers a new way of systemizing theories of Ageism. The second is A Social Realismof Ageism and Innocence in Faulkner's the sound and Fury and Steinbeck's of Mice and Men by Nasser Mahmoudi, Fatemah Azizmohammadi and Farhad Ghobadi (2012). This journal showed the evidence from those two neovels as the example of harsh realism to depict the injustices of U.S society. The Last is Ageism and Future Cohort of Elderly: Implications for social work by Anna Azulai, MSW, PhD (2014). This journal is offers a evaluate of evidence of ageism amongst individuals of helping professions. The writer expresses situation and develops an argument that ageism will expand as Baby Boomers attain retirement years. Implications for social work are then discussed.

J. References

1. Nelson, Todd. 2004. Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Person. New York. The MIT Press
2. Butler, Robert N. 1975. Why Survive: Being Old in America. New York: Harper & Row.
3. Butler, R. N. 1969. Age-ism: Another form of bigotry. The Gerontologist, 9(4), 243–246.
4. Butler, R. N. 1980. Ageism: A foreword. Journal of Social Issues, 36(2), 8–11.
5. Nuessel, F. H. 1982. The language of ageism. The Gerontologist, 22(3), 273–276.
6. Levy, B. R. 2001. Eradication of ageism requires addressing the enemy within. The Gerontologist, 41(5), 578–579.
7. Palmore, E. 1978. Are the aged a minority group? Journal of the American Geriatrics

Society, 26(5), 214–217.
8. Palmore, E. 2000. Guest editorial: Ageism in gerontological language. The Gerontologist, 40(6), 645–645.
9. Nurgiyantoro, Burhan. (2007). Teori Pengkajian Fiksi. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
10. Steinbeck, John. 1937. Mice and Men. United States.Covici Friede.