



Social Criticism in This Life Novel *is a Jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It* Puthut EA's Works: A Study of Literary Sociology

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ABSTRACT: The social criticism contained in the novel *Life is a Jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It* by Puthut EA is caused by a social system that does not work well. Using a literary sociology approach and hermeneutic methods, the main focus of this research is to look for issues of 1) discrimination, 2) marginalization, 3) economic inequality, and 4) negative stigma experienced by the main characters in the novel. The data of this study is a unit of sentence or paragraph in a novel. The data collection technique is carried out by reading and recording techniques. The data analysis technique is carried out with the content analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model which includes three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, verification and conclusion. Karl Marx's theory is used as a framework to understand how the capitalist system shapes social inequality through various mechanisms of oppression, exploitation, and labeling of vulnerable groups. The results of the study show that the characters in the novel experience unfair treatment both physically, psychologically, and symbolically as a result of systematic socioeconomic inequality. Discrimination, extreme poverty, social exclusion, and stigmatization form a negative stigma and demonstrate the failure of social structures to provide protection and justice for vulnerable groups. The implications of this study are to present literary works as an effective means to express social inequality and build awareness of unjust systems, therefore literature plays an important role in shaping a critical perspective for readers about social issues that occur in society.

KEYWORDS: Social Criticism, Literary Sociology, Social Inequality, Literary Hermeneutics

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a picture of human life that is added to the author's imagination and the background of the author's life. Novels are a form of literary works, presenting a metaphorical picture of the dimensions of life of various groups of society so that they are able to involve readers in conveying life values. Through the events and conflicts that occur in the novel, social issues are often raised and alluded to by the author. The representation of social inequality contained in the novel can be studied as part of the author's efforts to convey social criticism of social phenomena that are considered deviant from applicable norms and values (AlMa'ruf & Farida, 2021).

Social criticism is a process of evaluation, analysis, or response to an event that is considered deviant or violates the values that exist in social life (Andani, 2022). According to Karl Max (in Engels, 2007) Social criticism in novels is one of the genres in literature to provide criticism or response to an event that exists in the community described by the author. The author conveys social criticism because there are social symptoms that need to be criticized, because they violate social values in society. Phenomena that occur in society are often highlighted in social criticism so that negative labeling of individuals and groups arises. Karl Max (in Engels, 2007) Explaining further, there are four aspects that are criticized in literary works, related to social, including: 1) discrimination, which can be interpreted as the oppression carried out by the majority against minorities, through unfair treatment, 2) economic inequality, which is the economic inequality of individuals or groups, which causes problems in other domains such as education, health, and human welfare 3) marginalization, which can be interpreted as the act of exclusion of groups access to resources, opportunities, and the right to life, 4) negative stigma can be interpreted as giving bad labels to individuals or groups, thus causing negative sentiments in society.

Negative stigma is a bad label or label that society gives to individuals and groups based on the differences they have. Stigma arises due to prejudice, stereotypes, and ignorance that lead to discriminatory treatment, exclusion, and even unfair treatment in gaining social access. Negative stigma in the long run can create social inequality and psychological effects for individuals and groups so that it causes injustice just because someone has differences in society (Iriyanto & Gusnita, 2024; Subroto & Aliyandra, 2024). Novels that represent social realities related to negative stigma are one of which is novel *Life is a jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It* By Puthut EA.

This research aims to examine the forms of social inequality and negative stigma experienced by the characters in the novels *This Life is a jerk and I am forced to enjoy it*. Through the approach of literary sociology, this research tries to provide an understanding of the role of literature as a reflection as well as a critique of the dynamics that exist in society. Thus, *the novel Life is a Jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It* aims to present a critical perspective on social reality. Through the approach of literary sociology, elements of social inequality and negative stigma are represented explicitly and implicitly in storylines, characters, and settings that reflect the complexity of social life. This novel is a medium of social criticism to encourage readers to deviate from the values and norms that exist in society.

II. METHOD

Research on social criticism in novels *Life is a jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It* trying to unravel meaning contextually. In this study, the relevant method used to analyze social criticism is the qualitative method of hermeneutics. The hermeneutic method is used to analyze about the deep meaning of the message contained in the novel. This method focuses on understanding the social, political, and cultural context behind the novel (Lantowa & Marahayu, 2017). The researcher identifies various aspects of social criticism, both explicitly and implicitly by using the approach of literary sociology as the basis of analysis to understand the social criticism contained in the novel.

The data obtained from this study are in the form of narrative descriptions and sentence quotes about social criticism. The data source used is in the form of quotes from the novel *Life is a jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It*. The data collection techniques used are reading techniques and recording techniques. Reading techniques are carried out by reading the entire content of the novel repeatedly and recording the parts that are in accordance with the focus of the study. The analysis technique used is a content analysis technique, by describing the results of the findings. Based on the theory of social criticism which discusses discrimination, marginalization, economic inequality, and negative stigma, the stages carried out are in the following ways: *Data reduction* that is, analyzing the data findings from the novel *Life is a jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It*. related to social inequality and negative stigma, 2) *Data presentation* by interpreting the findings, 3) then *data verification* by drawing conclusions about the research conducted (Miles & Huberman, 2014:31-32).

III. RESULTS

This research was conducted to find forms of social criticism and negative stigma experienced by characters according to Karl Marx's theory in the novel *Life is Scrambled and I Am Forced to Enjoy It* by Puthut EA. In the analysis, social criticism includes three aspects, namely: 1) Marginalization, 2) Discrimination, 3) Economic Inequality, 4) Negative Stigma. The results and findings in the study are explained in inductive form, starting with presenting findings according to the focus of the research; theoretical discussions are complemented by interpretation; Then it ends with a form of research conclusion.

a. Discrimination

According to English (2007) Explains that discrimination occurs because the capitalist system creates and maintains unequal power relations, in which the dominant class exploits and oppresses the lower class in order to maintain its economic interests and social status. The theory is in line with Princess (2024) which explains discrimination as a form of different (unfair) treatment of individuals or groups, caused by differences in race, religion, or social class. The findings on discrimination are described in Table 1.

Table. Discrimination in This Life Novel is a Jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It

No	Forms of Social Criticism	Indicator	Data Citation	Code
1	Discrimination	Conviction without just cause	<i>Because when I came home from school in tears, my second brother who knew actually stuck to me and he left after sticking to me.</i>	HBADM.01/DK/09
2		Violence due to economic inequality	<i>Seeing that there was no rice, there was only me crying in the corner of the house, he threw a chair at me. My head was leaking, the blood was flowing down my cheeks, flowing towards my mouth</i>	HBADM.02/DK/09
3		Bullying	<i>Is it funny to tie me up in a crowd in a kate tree, and then smear my face with chalk and charcoal?</i>	HBADM.03/DK/14

Description: HBADM (*Hidup ini Brengsek dan Aku Dipaksa Menikmatinya*), data, DK (Discrimination), Page.

Based on data from HBADM.01/DK/09, it shows that there is discrimination experienced by *the character of Aku*. The data depicts discrimination in the family, the character *experiences* physical violence from his family members without any effort to understand his emotional state. This incident reflects criticism of the family system that is not empathetic and ignores the right of children to be listened to and understood emotionally. The social criticism that occurs in the data leads to a reflection of a rigid family system, power is used arbitrarily and is used as a solution to problems that should be solved with care.

Data from HBADM.02/DK/09 shows that there is a form of domestic violence that is rooted in economic inequality, namely poverty is the main trigger for excessive emotional venting to children. This condition shows how social and economic pressure can cause a loss of reason and empathy, so that children are used as objects of anger. The incident reflects structural violence, arising as a result of unequal social conditions and lack of support for poor families. The data presents a sharp critique of the social system that fails to the welfare of poor families, which should be a major concern in social protection. As a result of the failure of the social system, children become the most vulnerable victims in this scope.

Based on data from HBADM.03/DK/14, it reflects the form of bullying or *bullying* carried out in groups by the social environment, it can be said that peers. His friend committed violence that was carried out symbolically under the pretext of entertainment. This action creates psychological wounds due to humiliation in front of others and degrades the victim's physical dignity. This event illustrates how the social norms around the characters allow and justify acts of violence committed together on the basis of entertainment, without considering the emotional impact they cause. Social criticism in this context explains the failure of the education and supervision system in forming just and respectful human values.

b. Marginalization

English (2007) explains the marginalization that is a consequence of the capitalist system by marginalizing certain groups from access to resources, power, and influence, in order to maintain the dominance of the capital class over the working class. It means placing or shifting certain circles to the periphery or the lowest order in life. According to Polii (2024) Marginalization is a subtle way of eliminating human rights through the process of neglecting rights in life in various contexts, namely educational, economic, religious, and cultural. The findings on marginalization can be seen in the following table.

Table. Marginalization in the Novel of *Life is a Jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It*

No	Forms of Social Criticism	Indicator	Data Citation	Code
1	Marginalization	Psychological marginalization	<i>Only one child stood in the corner of the classroom because he couldn't memorize the multiplication of 8 and 9. A child who drinks. A child who wears shoes a lot is still wet, not because I'm wayward, but because it's my only shoe, and when mom washes it, it rains.</i>	HBADM.01/MG/07
2		Social rejection	<i>I know my friends don't like me. Maybe it's because I stink. Maybe it's because I only have one pair of shoes.</i>	HBADM.02/MG/08
3		Negative Labeling of Self and Economic Status	<i>But since fourth grade, I was just a stupid, shabby, poor child. No more whining.</i>	HBADM.03/MG/14

Description: HIBADM (*Hidup ini Brengsek dan Aku Dipaksa Menikmatinya*), data, MG (Marginalization), Page.

Based on data from HBADM.01/MG/07 reflecting the form of marginalization experienced by *the character of Aku* when he was a child, he was symbolically and physically marginalized because of his inability to follow academic standards. The character *of Aku* is also the subject of ridicule because he drinks and wears shoes that are still wet due to economic limitations. This incident reflects social inequality combined with a lack of empathy for the surrounding environment where economic hardship is used as an excuse for unfair treatment and humiliation.

Based on data from HBADM.02/MG/08, it describes a form of marginalization born from a social view of poverty. The character consciously reflects his marginalized social position, not because of a behavioral error, but because his physical appearance reflects poverty. In society, material conditions are used as a measure of a person's eligibility to be accepted in social interaction. This exclusion is carried out in the form of relational and an attitude of distancing from the social environment. The self-assessment

of poor children is shaped by the stigma of the general public that poverty is synonymous with helplessness, dirty, and shame. The figure felt that he had been labeled by his friends who judged that he lacked the economy, so he was ostracized. This condition shows how poverty not only has an impact on material aspects but also damages the psychological side of individuals, especially children.

Data HBADM.03/MG/14 presents marginalization to the recognition of characters who feel that they are stupid, shabby, and poor since the fourth grade of elementary school. This suggests that his social identity is negatively labeled by his environment. When he feels that he is no longer whiny, it is a form of adjustment to the harsh treatment that he continues to receive. According to Larasati & Noviani (2021) The stigmatization that is continuously experienced is a dangerous form of psychological marginalization because it can form a negative and persistent self-image in individuals. The data is a social critique of an environment that fails to provide a space for acceptance and emotional protection for poor children, and shows symbolic violence in the form of labeling that causes internal wounds rather than physical violence.

c. Economic Inequality

Max Weber in this case economic inequality makes people unable to access resources, education, and creates unequal social classes (Ambari, 2025; Hidir & Malik, 2024; Octavia, 2024). Therefore, economics makes the most influential problem in society so that it causes complex problems, making economic inequality give rise to various social classes. This is in line with Raya (2024) and Pratiwi & Israhayu (2024) explained that social inequality caused by economic inequality affects many aspects of life, ranging from education, health, employment, to opportunities to participate in political and cultural life. The findings on economic inequality can be seen in the table.

Table. *The economic gap in the novel This Life is a jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It*

No	Forms of Social Criticism	Indicator	Data Citation	Code
1	Economic Gap	Economic limitations	<i>He had to work in three houses. Starting from washing clothes, sweeping and mopping the house, to waiting for the neighbor's children and me to be left to grow with used cardboard at home. There are no toys and often no food.</i>	HBADM.01/KE/13
2		Poverty	<i>In the past, when I was hungry, I would go to people's gardens. I pulled out a stalk of cassava, then ate it raw. During corn season, I eat raw corn. I was just a starving little boy at home, then pulled out cassava and picked corn.</i>	HBADM.02/KE/13
3		Irrelevant social systems	<i>Then the gardens grew into housing. I started learning to eat lizards and mice.</i>	HBADM.03/KE/13
4		Extreme poverty	<i>If you want to lick my maniac, I will add another 500 rupiahs, to 1000. I licked the liquid. I just nodded. At that time, 500 rupiah money got two bowls of meatballs.</i>	HBADM.04/KE/19

Description: HBADM (*Hidup ini Brengsek dan Aku Dipaksa Menikmatinya*), data, KE (Ketimpangan Ekonomi), Page.

Data from **HBADM.01/KE/13** shows that there is a form of economic gap experienced by the parents of *the character Aku* (his mother), the parents of the characters work in three different places with work as ART (Household Assistant). As a result of busyness and economic pressure, his son, the character *Aku* grew up in extreme limitations. He grows up in a situation of deprivation that he should grow and develop like children in general; has toys, is full of food, and may be given affection, but the character is the opposite. The limitations experienced by the character *Aku* hint that extreme poverty causes emotional distress so that he experiences social and psychological isolation that can potentially get traumatized, experience difficulties in social relations, and even have an impact on mental deterioration that is difficult to repair.

Based on data from **HBADM.02/KE/13**, it is reflected in the form of extreme economic inequality where children who are essentially playing and learning but have to survive by stealing cassava and corn from people's gardens. This behavior shows not only hunger and poverty, but illustrates how basic needs such as food are not being met as a result of structural poverty. This phenomenon reflects the condition of the helplessness of poor children who do not receive special attention from the community or the government. The wrong social system often causes children to become victims of economic inequality, the impact of which is that these children are neglected and make themselves have to survive at all costs.

Data from **HBADM.03/KE/13** shows that there are very extreme economic problems that make children victims of this economic inequality. My character experienced an extreme decline in quality of life, to the point of having to eat wild animals such as lizards and rats. The decline in the quality of life of the characters is due to the narrowing of living space and alternative food sources for them. When food sources such as gardens are lost due to housing development, they have to find the most alternative ways to survive. This event is a picture of the capitalists of space and urban development who ignore the welfare of the lower class. Unobjective development policies have created structural hunger that forces humans beyond the limits of humanity until children become victims of this capitalism.

Data **HBADM.04/KE/19** shows the peak of the lowest economic gap that makes children sexual exploitation. In a situation of extreme poverty, the child's body becomes something that can be exchanged for money. In this event, *the character Aku* is described as having no power over his body because economic pressure makes him willing to accept inhumane treatment in order to live and buy food. The exchange rate becomes very low, only equivalent to two bowls of meatballs, this shows how corrupt the social system is that fails to protect the most vulnerable groups. The economic inequality experienced by the *character Aku* touches the darkest point of the inequality, when basic necessities such as food must be exchanged for dignity.

d. Negative stigma

English (2007) defines negative stigma as part of the ideological mechanism created by the dominant class to maintain power and normalize inequality. Negative labeling of the lower class creates a capitalist system that makes social inequality a tool of justification for structural and systematic abuses (Luke & Marxist, 2025; Mardizal & Ramatni, 2024). Findings on negative stigma are presented in a table.

Table. *The Negative Stigma in This Life Novel is a Jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It*

No	Forms of Social Criticism	Indicator	Data Citation	Code
1	Negative stigma	Negative stamp on economic status	<i>I know my friends don't like me. Maybe it's because I'm stupid. Maybe it's because I stink. Maybe it's because I only have one pair of shoes.</i>	HBADM.01/SN/08
		Intellectual stigma	<i>I was no longer a gravedigger, when my mother finally died. Dead old, people say. But my neighbor who is a lecturer at a well-known university, said my mother died because she had no hope.</i>	
3		Stigma against the background	<i>You must have thought I was going to be a bad person. Because I was born into a messy family and a sad life experience. You are completely wrong.</i>	HBADM.03/SN/41

Description: HBADM (*Hidup ini Brengsek dan Aku Dipaksa Menikmatinya*), data, SN (Negative Stigma), Page.

Data **HBADM.01/SN/08** illustrates the negative labeling experienced by *the character Aku* since elementary school age. He felt shunned by his friends because of his physical appearance and poor economic condition. The word "*stupid, smelly, and only has a pair of shoes*" is a social label that is indirectly attached by the surrounding environment. This phenomenon shows that there is a negative stamp on low economic status with low self-worth. The character experiences social and psychological pressure that leads to a loss of self-confidence and acceptance.

Based on data from **HBADM.02/SN/36**, it presents a stigma that not only refers to individuals, but also affects families from generation to generation. The figure of the deceased mother is described as a poor parent and as a figure who loses the meaning of life due to despair due to her social status as a poor person. The words of neighbors who are academics reflect a form of intellectual stigma in which misery is considered as a result of personal failure rather than as a structural failure. This assessment describes the

lack of social empathy for the lower middle class towards the plight of the poor, while at the same time confirming the existence of social distancing that is full of negative labels.

Data **HBADM.03/SN/41** shows a form of rejection of social stigma that often associates dysfunctional family background with crime or moral deviance. My character is aware of the prejudice he receives but he refuses to obey the social system. This event shows how stigma shapes negative expectations of a person's future as well as the character tries to counter a social narrative that judges him based only on his dark past. This is a form of broken social system where society generalizes the sense of trauma as something definite and produces emotional damage that causes the destruction of individual character.

IV. DISCUSSION

This Life Novel *Is Scrambled and I Am Forced to Enjoy It* by Puthut EA, highlights a lot of social problems that occur in society. This is in the character of "I", a fictional role that can be interpreted as a woman or a man. Therefore, the reasoning of this novel provides an infinite understanding that goes beyond moral standards in society. This means that irregularities and disharmony in society are not only formed in one aspect, but in many aspects that make social problems more obvious and have an impact on various orders of human life. The meaning of the human essence is not just survival, but more than that. Humans often act on natural instincts, thus maintaining their ideas and rejecting differences in any context. Thus, the chaos of the social system in society is a complex problem that has an impact on various things.

The data findings in the novel *This Life Is Scrambled And I Am Forced to Enjoy It* by Puthut EA, show that there is an element of discrimination, this novel dissects that discrimination can occur because of weak or strong standards, high or low, stable or unstable. This impulse arises the desire to control and dominate, through a naturally created dominant class. In this regard, it has been proven by an experimental study conducted by Harvard University called *Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE)*, this study examines the extent to which social roles and situations can significantly change individuals, and the results obtained are the tendency to violence or differences in treatment from individuals who get higher social roles. Thus, discrimination is created because of the impulse of humans to control and dominate.

This Life Novel *Is Scrambled And I Am Forced to Enjoy It* by Puthut EA, also interprets marginalization in a broad way. This means that the findings of data regarding the marginalization or marginalization of certain groups are planned crimes that cannot be punished just like the depiction of *the character Aku* who is marginalized from academic standards, poverty, and identity. Moral strength is a construction formed by society, Puthut EA straightforwardly emphasizes that sometimes morality is one of the causes of the marginalization of individuals of certain groups. It also applies to labeling, also due to the standardization of certain groups. Puthut EA's understanding of this indirectly adopts Nietzsche's thought, which views that truth is the product of a certain perspective, marginalization and negative labeling arise when there is a forced perspective from the ruling class over other groups, and then a general truth is created. Thus, morality is a social product that is often abused to control a person.

One of the social problems that has the most impact is economic inequality. The novel *This Life Is Scrambled And I Am Forced To Enjoy It* by Puthut EA, shows that domestic violence, child exploitation, educational inequality and bullying in academia are always rooted in economic inequality. violence is a model of collective behavior, as in the case of the character *I* experienced physical violence from family members and the environment without any effort to understand his emotional state, showing that there is no defense from around when the violence occurred, so it can be said that acts of violence are considered normal, even imitated collectively. Therefore, both domestic and peer violence, continues to occur like a cycle. It was similar to the *Bobo Doll Experiment study*, with subjects of children watching adults commit violence, then imitating it. The impact of economic disparities in the context of education, causing minimal empathy, is the forerunner of violence. In this regard, the *Scarr-Rowe Effect* (1971) proved in his experiments, showing that the academic potential and stability of individuals are more optimal, if they grow up in economically stable families. Thus, economic disparities are the main core that causes domestic violence, child exploitation, educational inequality and bullying in academia.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the forms of social criticism that occur in the novel *Life is chaotic and I'm forced to enjoy it* Puthut EA's work, found four forms of social criticism, namely: *discrimination, marginalization, economic inequality and negative stigma*. These four forms of social criticism are interrelated and reflect unequal social conditions and structural injustices in society, caused by the social system not functioning properly. The main characters in the novel experience discrimination from their immediate environment, such as family and peers, resulting in physical and psychological injuries. He also experienced marginalization due to poverty and his inability to meet social standards. Economic inequality is illustrated from poor living conditions to the level of sexual violence due to urgent needs. Meanwhile, negative stigma is attached to the character and his family due to low socio-economic status, creating emotional distress and hindering the growth of a healthy self-identity.

Novel *Life is a jerk and I'm Forced to Enjoy It* Puthut EA's work reflects a social reality full of inequality and exclusion, as well as a medium of criticism of the way society treats those in poverty. Readers are invited to be more concerned and understand that every individual, regardless of their background, has the right to get the same rights and be treated fairly. This novel is an important study of society to be more sensitive to the suffering experienced by vulnerable groups in society.

Acknowledgment: We thank the Rector of the University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto for supporting this research.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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