

Conference Paper

Aspects of Interpersonal Conflicts in Benni Setiawan's Film Scripts *Toba Dreams*

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with aspects of interpersonal conflicts in a family depicted in Benni Setiawan's film scripts *Toba Dreams* released in 2015. The aims of the research are to find out the causing factors of interpersonal conflicts found in the film scripts and to describe how those conflicts lead to bad impacts to the family members. The problems of this research focus on interpersonal conflicts involving father, mother, and the children. The theory of conflict in this research is adopted from Wilmot and Hocker (2011). The method used in this research was a qualitative method proposed by Creswell (2007). The analysis in this study covers the aspects of interpersonal conflicts consisting of expressed struggle, interdependence, perceived incompatible goal, perceived scarce resources and interference. The findings show that conflicts in a family may lead to serious effects that can damage children and the whole family. This research is theoretically significant to give the readers the concept of interpersonal conflict. This is also practically significant to provide some insight and knowledge for readers about conflicts in literary works and in the film scripts as well as in real life.

Keywords: interpersonal conflict, expressed struggle, interdependence, perceived incompatible goal, perceived scarce resources, interference.

1. Introduction

A literary work that contains great conflicts will make literary readers interested to digest and understand the contents of the literary works and tend to be favoured by the readers. The position of conflict in a literary work is very important. A literary work that has a conflict, which gives effect to the reader, will make the reader more amused and want to always read the literary works. On the contrary, if a literary work has no conflict, it will make the reader bored and not interested to read the literary works.

Humans, as social beings cannot be separated from a conflict. The different nature and character of human beings raises competition. Every human being has his own

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personality and dreams. The attitude of the man who always strives to achieve his desire makes him willing to do everything in order to realize his desires. This often leads to various conflicts, whether conflict with self, others, or with people who have the same desire to achieve the same goal. Conflict may happen in a family environment, in the office, in a community or between two countries. The causes of conflict in the community also vary, from a small scale up to larger areas. The social conflicts that occur in the society are related to individual, culture, interest, and social aspects [8].

The existence of conflicts that happens in the society constitutes the source of ideas by an author to write a literary work. The power of imagination of the author could succeed to catch the reader's attention so that the conflicts look more natural and as if they were real. Basically, conflicts occur when in one event there are two or more ideas or actions to consider. Conflict does not necessarily mean hostilities, although this situation can be part of a conflict situation (Pickering, 2006: 1). Furthermore, Wilmot and Hocker (2011) states that conflict is known to be a fact of life and it truly exists and happens in life. Conflicts occur between individuals, families, and even nations.

Setiawan's film scripts *Toba Dreams* is adopted as the main sources of data of this research because it tells how interpersonal conflicts are illustrated vividly through the story of the film scripts as though it really happened in the society. These film scripts also portray various types of behaviour which lead to some conflicts. Conflicts among the characters will be studied through the aspects of interpersonal conflicts which are proposed by Wilmot and Hocker (2011) such as: expressed struggle, interdependence, perceived incompatible goal, perceived scarce resources and interference.

2. Literature Review

Conflict comes from the Latin verb *configere* which means to hit each other. Sociologically, conflict is defined as a social process between two or more people (or groups) where one party attempts to remove the other by destroying it or making it powerless (Johnson, 1981: 25). Each interpersonal relationship contains elements of conflict, conflict of opinion or different interests. Conflict is a situation where one party's actions result in blocking, obstructing, or otherwise interfering with the actions of others (Johnson, 1981: 27). Robbins et.al (2007: 31) explain that conflict is a process of interaction that occurs due to a mismatch between two opinions (point of view) that affect the parties involved both positive and negative influences. Meanwhile, Luthans (1981: 227) defines conflict as a condition caused by the existence of conflicting power. These forces are based on human desire.

Conflict occurs because of the interaction called communication. Most conflicts are due to miscommunication or communication gap, but not all conflicts are rooted in poor communication. The myths of conflict are understood in terms of two perspectives, both traditional and contemporary. In the traditional view, conflict is considered a bad thing to be avoided. In fact, conflict is often associated with anger, aggression, and opposition physically and harshly. In contrast, contemporary views of conflict are based on the assumption that conflict is something that is inevitable as a logical consequence of human interaction. Luthans (1981) claims that if communication is a transactional process, which seeks to bring together individual differences together to find common grounds, in the process there must be a conflict. Conflict may be expressed not only verbally but also nonverbally as in the form of facial expression, gestures, or actions which express opposition.

2.1. Types of conflict

According to Stoner and Wankel (1986: 43), there are five types of conflicts: intrapersonal conflict, conflict between individuals and groups, conflict between groups, conflict between organizations, and interpersonal conflict. Intrapersonal conflict is a person's conflict with itself. Conflict occurs when at the same time a person has two wishes that cannot be fulfilled at once. Conflict between individuals and groups is often related to the way individuals face pressures to achieve conformity, which is emphasized to them by their working groups. For example it can be said that an individual can be punished by his working group because he cannot achieve the norms of group productivity in which he is located. Conflict between groups generally happens within the same organization. Inter-line and staff conflicts are examples of inter-group conflict. Conflict between organizations is usually called competition. But based on experience, this conflict has led to the development of new products, new technologies and new services, lower prices and more efficient use of resources.

2.2. Interpersonal conflict

Interpersonal conflict is a conflict between a person and another person because of a conflict of interest or desire. This often happens between two people of different status, position, field of work and others. Most of the serious conflicts in your life probably involve people you are closely connected to, such as your friends and family, your romantic partners and the people you work with. If a conflict is not resolved or is allowed to escalate too far, it can damage the relationship. If you can handle the

conflict successfully, you can make your relationship with the other person stronger and more resilient by improving your understanding of each other.

Conflict happens when two people want different things and can neither come to an agreement nor get what they want without the other person. For example, if you want to go out for Japanese food while your friend wants to go out for Italian food, you cannot both get what you want and still go out to dinner together. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2011), the authors of *Interpersonal Conflict*, he claims that such interpersonal conflicts are considered trivial issues and frequently regarded as 'pseudo-conflicts', minor disagreements that mask a deeper conflict in the relationship, functioning as an invitation to have an argument about the underlying issues. Over the issues, it is then categorized the aspects of interpersonal conflicts as expressed struggle, interdependence, perceived incompatible goal, perceived scarce resources, and interference.

2.3. Expressed struggle

Persons involved in conflicts have perceptions of their own thoughts and feelings and also of others. Conflict comes as they communicate perceptions about their own thoughts and feelings and also of others. Communication can occur verbally and non-verbally. Communicative behaviour often easily causes a conflict, such as when one party openly disagrees with the other. However, interpersonal conflicts can occur at the level of communication. Communication is a key element to avoid conflicts.

2.4. Interdependence

Conflicting parties are generally engaged in a struggle and feel annoyed with each other because they are interdependent. A person who is not dependent on another has no special interest in behaviour or things so that others do not have a conflict with that person (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011: 27). The choice of each person affects other's because the choice will create conflict if the person has different ways to achieve the same goal or activity. Conflicting parties are never really hostile and should have mutual interests, even if they only exist during the conflict. Interdependence explains that conflict occurs on interdependent parties characterized by mutual activity and mutual interest.

2.5. Perceived incompatible goal

People are usually involved in conflicts because of the goal which is considered important for them. These objectives are deemed unsuitable because conflicting parties want the same or different things. The conflicting parties may want the same or different goals. They are fighting for unsuitable choices. Regardless of whether the conflicting persons see the same or different goals, inappropriate goals are felt to be crucial for all conflicts. The perceived incompatible goal explains that conflicts occur because of objectives which mismatch the conflicting parties.

2.6. Perceived scarce resources

Resources can be defined as "things that are perceived positively both physically, economically and socially" (Wilmot and Hocker, 2011: 28). Resources may be objectively real or perceived as real by people. Likewise, scarcity or restriction may be visible or actual. Money, natural resources such as oil or land, and jobs may indeed be scarce or limited resources. Intangible commodities such as love, appreciation, attention, and caring can also be regarded as rare resources. In the interpersonal struggle, two resources that are often considered rare are power and self-esteem. Regardless of the particular issue involved, people in conflict usually feel that they have too little power and self-esteem and that the other side has too much power and self-esteem. Perceived scarce resources explain that conflict occurs when a person feels the scarcity or lack of resources such as love, respect, attention, caring, power and self-esteem.

2.7. Interference

Disturbance or perception of disturbance constitutes another factor that may evoke a conflict. One's interference to another person's activities is also potential to create a conflict. Conflict is usually caused by disturbance, hindrance, or interference of one party to the other because those things will cause anger. Interference explains that conflict occurs when a person feels disturbed by the actions of others and feels his interests are blocked by others.

3. Research Method

This study applies a descriptive qualitative research method. Creswell (2007: 45) states that qualitative research is based on an interpretative epistemology, meaning that

knowledge is generated and shaped through interaction between those involved in the research process. Qualitative methods are concerned with how the researcher can explore and analyze whatever he believes can be revealed based upon prior epistemological assumptions. The data themselves are divided into primary data and secondary data (or supporting data). The primary or main data of this study are in the forms of quotations obtained from Setiawan's film scripts *Toba Dreams*, whereas the supporting data are taken from various sources or references including books and articles in the internet.

4. Discussion

This study focuses on the aspects of interpersonal conflicts among the members of a family Father, mother, and the son depicted in the film scripts. The interpersonal conflicts which are analyzed in this study are expressed struggle, interdependence, perceived incompatible goal, perceived scarce resources and interference; meanwhile other conflicts which are not related to the subject matter of this study are not analyzed.

4.1. Expressed struggle

People who are involved in conflicts have perceptions of their own thoughts and feelings about the other sides. Perception happens in communication either verbally and non-verbally. Communicative behaviour often easily arouses conflict when one party openly disagrees with the other. However, interpersonal conflicts can occur at the levels of communication. Communication is a key to harmony and miscommunication leads to interpersonal conflicts.

The conflict related to an expressed struggle portrayed in Setiawan's film scripts *Toba Dreams* happens to Sergeant Mayor Tebe who is retired from the Army Cavalry Corps and he is an exemplary soldier who has outstanding dedication and integrity. The conflicts arise when he faces his family members who do not want to accept his decision to move to the village. The conflict occurs when his eldest son frankly opposes his ideas. Mr. Tebe is strict and discipline not only in his family environment but also in the environment of his office as a military officer. He even remains an example for his junior soldiers in his unit. All the soldiers who know him hail him. His attitude is carried away when returning to his hometown and does many useful things for the people in his village. Kristin, Tebe's wife, can understand what her husband wants. Their children Sumurung and Taruli are obedient to their parents but Ronggur, their

eldest son, never follows his father's wishes. Tebe was even quite disappointed with Ronggur. After being retired from the army, Tebe decides to move to his village near Toba Lake because he knows that he cannot afford to live in Jakarta with his pension that barely covers the living cost in the city. He cannot suffice his family needs as everything is very expensive there so that he decides to leave the troops' headquarter.

The conflict begins when Ronggur complains about his father's idea to leave the headquarters after being retired from the army. Ronggur blames him because he gets nothing from his pension except just a piece of paper of certificate whereas he has worked for decades. When Ronggur states this idea to him, their neighbours hear his voice. Unlike their neighbours who still can stay in the headquarters even they have been retired, Tebe wants to go back to his village while Ronggur still wants to stay in Jakarta. This different idea triggers an interpersonal conflict between Mr. Tebe and his son Ronggur so that the situation gets worse and worse. Since Ronggur says to his father in front of all members of the family about what Tebe gets in his retirement, he gets angry with Ronggur and says a high tone explaining that the headquarters are allotted to active soldiers but Ronggur does not care about it. For him the most important thing is just to take care of the family who have to leave the headquarters. Ronggur then replies his father's words in bad words by saying some words which make him offended.

Sumurung, his younger sister, is disappointed to listen to his words to his father as he has said something inappropriate to his idealistic father. He does not respect his father who obeys the government regulations. Tebe does not want to live in Jakarta because he and his family have no more right to stay in the headquarters. The conflict reaches to its climax when he scolds Ronggur for his bad behaviour as he is always in contact with unemployed people and likes to quarrel with his friends and to oppose his own father. Tebe is quite disappointed with his son's behaviour. Finally, Tebe tells his wife badly by saying that there is no need to take care of that child who is different from his brother and sister. He does not need a son like Ronggur who always challenge him and even he does not respect his father anymore.

Another conflict is between Ronggur and his mother. It happens when he says something bad to her. He offers some facilities like apartment and a car for Uli, his younger brother. He loves his brother Uli as he is the youngest brother that he should take care of. Ronggur thinks that Uli needs facilities to support his life in Bandung. By this reason, Ronggur buys him an apartment and a car. However, his mother thinks that what Ronggur does for Uli is an exaggeration. His mother thinks that Uli can stay with his aunty in Bandung because she needs someone to accompany her. She is a widow who needs a shelter from her nephew. Besides, his mother thinks that the

money Ronggur earns is from an illegal job but he convinces her that he really runs a business.

Now Ronggur has much money, property, stock investment and various kinds of wealth but his father is not happy with what his son achieves. He says to his wife that he hates Ronggur very much. His father is envious that his son is far more successful than he but his wife does not accept what her husband says because it is not relevant to say that. One day Ronggur says to his mother that if his father does not like him, he will not respect his father either. His words make her mother angry and she says that all parents must love their children; but on the other hand, parents want to be respected by all their children.

4.2. Interdependence

Human being is a social creature who cannot live without community and among the members of the community they are interdependent to one another. They are in need of one another. Conflict generally happens when one's interest is not fulfilled because of another person who has the same interest. A person who is not dependent on another and has no special interest in behaviour or things will not have a conflict. Interdependence explains that conflict occurs on interdependent parties characterized by mutual activity and mutual interest.

Conflict of interdependence depicted in the film scripts *Toba Dreams* happens because Tebe always decides his children's future directly based on what he wants without asking their wish. He educates his children by applying the type of military discipline, especially for his eldest son Sumurung. He wants Samurung to be a military officer. His daughter Taruli will be sent to an outstanding high school to gain what her father could not achieve when he was young. But, both the children cannot fulfil what he wants. Sumurung knows himself that he is not strong enough to be a military officer and Taruli is afraid that she cannot understand the lesson in such a high level school. Interpersonal conflict between Tebe and his son Ronggur gets worse. He feels confused how he can guide him who is so stubborn that he decides to send him to a pastoral school to be a priest but he disagrees to his father's decision. Ronggur has chosen his way of life to become a business man. Taruli actually wants to refuse her father's idea but as a girl she cannot say frankly to him. Like her mother, she chooses to keep silent.

4.3. Perceived incompatible goal

People are usually involved in conflicts because of some goals which are considered important as their target. The perceived incompatible goal explains that conflicts occur because of the objectives which do not match all parties. In the film scripts *Toba Dreams* such a conflict happens when Tebe is confused about the way how to deal with his eldest son Ronggur when he refuses to study in a pastoral school to become a priest to continue his family tradition. Ronggur and his father have the same traits. Their common trait is that they are both equally harsh in defending their respective ego. Tebe wants his son to follow everything he suggests while his son wants something that he believes it is good for him.

Another case of such a conflict happens at midnight when Ronggur gets on a cab along with his friend Togar and they make noisy voice so that many people go out of their houses to know what happens. Suddenly Mr. Tebe comes and scolds them and Ronggur mocks his father as he feels ashamed to be scolded in front of his friend. Mr. Tebe is not only angry with Ronggur, but also with Togar. Mr. Tebe regards that Togar has a bad influence on his son and he considers Togar as the one who makes the conflict happen. Ronggur, on the other hand, does not like his father's attitude as he directly scolds and curses Togar, his friend.

4.4. Perceived scarce resources

Resources can be defined as things which are perceived positively, physically, economically and socially. Resources may be objectively real or perceived as real by people. Likewise, scarcity or restriction may be visible or actual. Money and natural resources such as oil, land, and jobs may indeed be scarce or limited resources. Intangible commodities such as love, appreciation, attention, and care can also be regarded as something rare. In the interpersonal struggle, two resources that are often considered rare are power and self-esteem. Regardless of the particular issue involved, people in conflict usually feel that they have too little power and self-esteem and that the other side has too much power and self-esteem. Perceived scarce resources explain that conflict occurs when a person feels the scarcity or lack of resources such as love, respect, attention, care, power and self-esteem.

In the film scripts it is told that when Mr. Tebe has retired from the army, he does not have enough money to support his family to live in Jakarta so he decides to move to his village in Lake Toba where the living cost is relatively cheaper. He can survive there as he can do fish farming and grow various plants to get additional income to

support his family. At the day when they just arrive at the village, Taruli complains all the facilities there including the bedroom, the bathroom and other things at the house. She is confused about the place where she can sleep because there is no bedroom at all in the house whereas she used to sleep in one room with a clean bathroom. She actually refuses to stay in the village but she does not want to hurt his father. Furthermore, Taruli is not accustomed to bathing in the lake and when she does it she will feel itching all over her body because the water is dirty and contaminated with rubbish and waste. She also feels uncomfortable stay in the village because of the shortage of facilities and amenities.

Because of the lack of attention given by their father Mr. Tebe, his children Ronggur, Sumurung and Taruli want to get success in the city. When he works as an army, he just focuses on dedicating himself to the country. He rarely comes home till he does not realize that his children have grown up so that his children never feel the affection from his father.

Another conflict happens when Ronggur becomes a taxi driver who has passengers to take them to Kemang Antasari road. One of the passengers makes a problem by smoking inside the car and Ronggur does not allow him to do so. Suddenly, the other passengers threatened to bust him with a gun on his head. In fact, they are narcotic agents who look for a new candidate to take the forbidden drug. By then, they offer him a business that can make him very rich. They try to influence Ronggur to work together with him to be a drug agent in order that he can be a very rich man. Ronggur tries to refuse the offer but finally he is trapped. They use a cunning way to trap him so that he cannot reject the offer any more. After joining the narcotic agent, Ronggur really becomes a rich man. Unluckily, his illegal business does not last long and he is caught and arrested by the policemen.

4.5. Interference

Interference of one's business may also cause a conflict. To disturb or to be disturbed may lead someone to get angry. Interference causes a conflict when someone feels disturbed by the action that the other person does or when he feels his interest is blocked by the other.

In the film scripts *Toba Dreams* Ronggur regards his father as preventing him from doing what he wants. Tebe always arranges everything for his children's future without considering their own ideals and he never asks his children about their obsession. He manages his family as it is in the military headquarters. On the other hand, Ronggur considers his father interfere his future ideal as he wants to be a business man whereas

his father wants him to be a priest and this interference triggers an interpersonal conflict between them. Then, Ronggur leaves the village and returns to Jakarta because he feels his ideal is prevented by his father. He feels very sure that he can achieve his ideal. He does to his utmost to work hard to get what he wants. But, Ronggur is trapped in his job as part of the drug mafia in order to meet the needs of his family.

5. Conclusion

Setiawan's film scripts *Toba Dreams* tells about interpersonal conflicts in a family. The main characters of the film scripts undergo various conflicts in their lives. The aspects of interpersonal conflicts involve the main characters of the film scripts covering an expressed struggle, interdependence, perceived incompatible goal, perceived scarce resources and interference. The main aspect which triggers the conflicts is an express struggle which is related to the communication in a family. The communication between the father and the first son is not harmonious as the father is rarely at home because he is a soldier whose life is fully dedicated to the country. He must be ready day and night when demanded to go anywhere as ordered by the Commander. Conflict of interdependence happens because Tebe always decides his children's future directly based on what he wants without asking their wish. He wants his first son to be a military officer and his daughter Taruli to study at an outstanding high school. But, both the children do not fulfil what he wants whereas they still expect everything from him. Perceived scarce resources also trigger a conflict where the family can live happily in the headquarters in Jakarta but suddenly they have to live in a village with lack of facilities. They feel shocked living in a small village which is far away from the city. Another aspect which triggers a conflict is perceived incompatible goal which happens when Ronggur has a different ideal from his Father. He wants to be a business man whereas his father wants him to be a priest. Interference is the last thing which triggers conflict in which Tebe arranges all related to his children's future without considering their respective ideals. Such conflicts teach some lessons that good communication in the family, having the same aims, sufficing the basic needs and not interfering the children's ideals can avoid conflicts which always happen in a family as illustrated in the film scripts, which can consequently be adopted as lessons for the readers in real life.

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