

Incestuous Behavior In Virginia Cleo Andrews' *Flowers In The Attic* And Tabitha Suzuma's *Forbidden*

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Abstract- *This study aims to give more understanding about incestuous behaviour especially in Virginia Cleo Andrews' Flowers in the Attic and Tabitha Suzuma's Forbidden. There are three focuses of the study; they are (1) how incest described in those novels, (2) what the causing factors of incest, and (3) what the impact of it. In answering the first question, incest on its features can be classified into three types; they are based on the offenders, the motivation, and the way of treating. For the second question, this study is analysed through two parts. The first part is based on the condition before that incest happened and for the second part is based on the psychoanalysis theory by Karen Horney. In her theory, she explains about the childhood experience and neurotic needs that are related in finding the possible causing factors of incest as the focus of this study. Then, for the third question, the possible effects of sibling incest such as; trauma, isolated on social sanction, sexual aversion disorder, and other psychological problems. The result of this study has been found that sibling incest which is happened in those novels is driven by both sides of the offenders. What they do are on their mutual desire and willingness. And the dysfunctional family that they face also really influences their psychology. In Forbidden, it is found that there are two motivations that influence Lochan and Maya to do sibling incest, they are; affection and aggression while in Flowers in the Attic, there are three motivations that are found, they are; affection, eroticism and aggression. For the second question, this research reveals that there are three causing factors of sibling incest that are happened in both novels, they are; dysfunctional family, between age peers, and law of homogamy. Not only that, from the findings, it is also found that all of the offenders experienced the child abuse and neglect in their childhood. They also get the emotional maltreatment from their parents. Their childhood experiences then shape their personality and it deals with the psychological problems which are influenced by the neurotic needs that they seek. The third question is about the impact of sibling incest towards the offenders' life. And it is found that all of the offenders blame themselves for everything that has happened in their lives, even one of those offenders Lochan decides to commit suicide.*

Keywords- *Incestuous behavior, childhood experience, neurotic needs, psychological problems.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Always getting love from people around is the most beautiful thing that is felt by everyone in the world, especially love from family who is the closest person in everyone's life. That is because some people think that having a perfect family will bring happiness in their lives. But what if someone lives in a broken family, where the role of loving parents and always protecting their children starts to cease to exist. Surely, there will be many things that happen in that family's life. It is like what happened in the novel by Virginia Cleo Andrews' *Flowers in the Attic* and *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma, which tell about a broken or dysfunctional family life and has a bad effect on children who live without supervision from their parents. And the worst thing that happened in both novels was the occurrence of sibling incest, which is still considered taboo by most people in the world. As stated by Kluff (2011) [6] that incest is one of the behaviors or a deviant relationship

that is prohibited in society. that is because the relationship contains sexual elements in it that violates society's most sacred and guarded taboos.

Not many people know about what incest is, how it can happen, and what the impacts or effects of incest itself. As was once viral and talked about in a social media around August 2016, where a mother named Mares and her son Caleb Peterson who declared their forbidden relationship on a social media. At first the boy only wanted to protect his mother by marrying her, but they did not know that not only legally on the community but also medically that this could have a negative effect on their offspring in the future. So that's why this research really needs to be done. That is because this research aims to provide more knowledge about incest, how to prevent it and provide education also for adolescents so as not to do things that are prohibited in a regulation in the community.

This research will have three focuses of the study that will be discussed, they are:

- 1) How is incest described in *Flowers in the Attic* by Virginia Cleo Andrews and *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma?
- 2) What are the possible causing factors of incest in *Flowers in the Attic* by Virginia Cleo Andrews and *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma?
- 3) How does the incest give impact to the main characters' life in *Flowers in the Attic* by Virginia Cleo Andrews and *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma?

This research will apply the psychoanalysis theory by Karen Horney and also some other theories related to the focuses of the study.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research is not the first study that discusses about incest. Previously the same topic had also been done by several researchers. One of them is Mattheus M. Oliveira (2017) [10], in his research he examined four modern works such as; George Lucas's *Star Wars* movie franchise, George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* novels and television adaptation by David Benioff, both the 1987 and 2014 film adaptations of V.C. Andrews's novel *Flowers in the Attic*, and Joao Emanuel Carneiro's recent Brazilian novella *A Regra do Jogo*. In examining those works, he looked to understand how portrayals of incest differ between standalone films and film franchises, and between genres as it performs before an imagined audience.

Then the other researcher is Kokkola and Valovirta (2016) [7], in their research they compared three novels. Those novels are *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma (2010), *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt (1992), and *The Ventriloquist's Tale* by Pauline Melville (1997). Their research compared the discourse of sibling incest in a corpus of fiction with discourse found in clinical, sociological and criminal literature. From those two previous studies, there is a similarity and difference with this present study. The similarity is this present study use two novels that had been used by both previous studies. They are *Flowers in the Attic* by Virginia Cleo Andrews and *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma. And the difference is based on the theory. This present study applies some theories related to the research problem such as psychoanalysis theory by Karen Horney while both previous studies applied the other theories.

In answering the first question, incest on its features can be classified into three types; they are based on the offenders, the motivation, and the way of treating. It is supported by Shepher's statement (1983:29) [11] of incest in which it is divided based on the different dyads of the family members like between mother and her son, father and his daughter or between sibling. While according to Maddock and Larson in Kluff (2011) [6], they categorized incest based on the motivation that can influence the offenders to do incest. And those categories such as; based on affection, eroticism, aggression, and based on the rage. And the next is based on the way of treating which is divided into two types like abusive and non-abusive incest.

For the second question, this study is analyzed through two parts. The first part is based on the situations and conditions before that incest happened. Those conditions such as; dysfunctional family, between age peers, and law of homogamy. According to Hudson (1992:1) [4] that "siblings have the ability to recollect experiences common to both and retrace each former pain and pleasure together." While Leavitt (2013:48) [8] stated that "the age differences between generations, spacing of siblings, and the difference in gender among siblings would moderate the number of incest cases." Then law of homogamy is mentioned by "Westermarck's in his argument (Shepher, 1983:46) [11] to argue people tend to marry or mate among people who resemble them culturally, ethnically, religiously, and in class or caste membership." Borrowing that concept, "Kalmijn (1998:395) [5] describes that Law of Homogamy is the tendency to marry within social group or a person who close in status possibly addressed to between family members." Then for the second part the possible causing factors of incest is also analyzed based on the psychoanalysis theory by Karen Horney. In her theory, she explains about the childhood experience and neurotic needs that are related in finding the causing factors of incest as the focus of this study. Horney (1997:5) [3] stated that all of the people in the world will be anxious and worried if their needs are not fulfilled. Then she listed ten neurotic needs, those are: affection or approval, partner, power, exploitation, prestige, admiration, achievement, self-sufficiency, perfection, and narrow limit to life. Then, for the third question, the possible effects of sibling incest such as; trauma, isolated on social sanction, sexual aversion disorder, and other psychological problems.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is analyzing four characters from both novels, they are: Christopher Dollanganger and Cathy Dollanganger in *Flowers in the Attic* by Virginia Cleo Andrews (1979) [1] and Lochan Whitely and Maya Whitely in *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma (2010) [12]. The sources of the data are both two novels and the data are from the dialogues, utterances, thoughts, and also the behaviors carried out by the characters. This research is a qualitative research model with interpretative perspective using author oriented approach which concerns the psychoanalytic literary criticism. Then finally for the finding, it is analyzed by presenting the answers of the focuses of the study.

4. DISCUSSION

There are three parts that will be discussed. The first part is the description of sibling incest in the novel *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma and *Flowers in the Attic* by V. C. Andrews. Fortune (1932) [2] defined that "incest is illicit sexual relationship between persons within degrees of consanguinity excluded from such relationship by socially determined regulation" (p. 620). Which was then also argued by "Shepher (1983:26) [11] that the notion

‘relationship’ is considered inappropriate since the incest should involve into such an intercourse.” He also described that relationship can be like kissing, hugging, and touching that all family members usually do in their everyday activities. It will be intended to achieve the first objective that is describing how sibling incest is depicted in the two novels. Then the second part is the causing factors of sibling incest that motivates all of the main characters, or all of the offenders in doing it as the next objective of this study.

In finding the causing factors, this study is dealt with the psychological conditions of the characters which are analyzed by using the theory of psychoanalysis by Karen Horney. It is like “Meighs and Barlow (2002:40) [9] stated that for anthropologists, psychoanalytic perspective has the advantage of considering incest itself, not just the taboo”. It means that analyzing incest from the psychology aspect carries advantages to consider the incest. Hence, theory of psychoanalysis is used to analyze the sibling incest in this research.

In the case of sibling incest, the social and cultural condition is very important to be analyzed, especially the childhood experiences that are largely responsible for shaping person’s personality. Why this research has to analyze from the childhood experiences, it is because of the offenders on this research is siblings in a family and they are still young, so it is needed. The children who do not get love and affection from their parents or people around them, they will tend to develop the basic hostility and as the impact of it, the basic anxiety will developed. As Horney (1997) [3] stated that “the basic anxiety emerges when the person’s needs are not met which the condition can lead to neurotic problem” (p. 4). From her statement, it can be concluded that there are two concerns that will be analyzed. The first is childhood experience that causes the emergence of neurotic problem and the second is the neurotic needs that are not met because of the childhood experiences. It is because those are interrelated with the causing factors. Then the third part of this chapter is the effect of sibling incest that is happened in both novels which is answering the third objective of the study. And it will describe how sibling incest impacts the main characters’ life in their future.

4.1 Description of Sibling Incest in *Forbidden* and *Flowers in the Attic*

Forbidden and *Flowers in the Attic* are novels that tell about sibling incest which is experienced by a brother and a sister. *Forbidden* is set in London where the incest taboo is enacted while *Flowers in the Attic* is set in United States. Sibling incest can be described through three features which show what and how the sibling incest is happened. The first is sibling incest based on the offenders. From the two novels, it is clearly depicted that the offenders are siblings. *Forbidden* has an older brother named Lochan and his younger sister Maya, while *Flowers in the Attic* has Chris as an older brother and his younger

sister Cathy. So, it is clear that the older offenders in both novels are the brothers.

Both in *Forbidden* and in *Flowers in the Attic*, all of the offenders are involved into sibling incest on mutual willingness. They love each other, and there is no any coercion or violence that they get from the other offenders. Nevertheless the beginning of their story is almost the same and the change appears afterwards.

The first novel is *Forbidden*, the story is started by showing the confusion of strange feeling that are faced by the offenders. In this novel the offenders are Lochan as older brother and Maya as his younger sister. Lochan as the older brother actually has known that his feeling towards Maya is wrong and he wants to avoid it, but it is failed by Maya’s aggressiveness. Lochan has told her that what they feel is wrong, but she does not want to care about that. And finally that forbidden relationship is happened. They do the sexual intercourse which is called sibling incest.

While in the second novel *Flowers in the Attic*, is also started by the confusion of strange feeling that are felt by both the offenders Chris and Cathy. They are still teenagers at that time, and they also need someone to tell about the changes of their body. But, no one can tell about that. It is because they are locked in the attic and their grandmother forbids them to show their presence in that house to the other people outside. So, when they have a desire towards the opposite sex, and they cannot go outside the attic finally they lead into sibling incest.

From the description of sibling incest based on the offenders above, it shows that Maya in *Forbidden* is more aggressive than her older brother Lochan, while in *Flowers in the Attic* Chris as older brother is bolder to show his feeling toward Cathy and more aggressive than her. Beside that, it shows the difference of the two Characters Lochan and Cathy in surviving not to be the offenders of sibling incest. And both of them fail to avoid it.

The next is sibling incest based on its motivation. The result shows that the lack of affection from the offenders’ parents and also the other people around them has motivated them to be involved into sibling incest. It is clearly proven that the closeness between the offenders which is intertwined since childhood has turned into sexual desire. Not only the lack of affection that leads them into sibling incest, but there are eroticism and aggression that has motivated them in doing that forbidden relationship.

Changing clothes in front of the opposite sex is a form of eroticism. And it is done by Cathy towards Chris. What she does at that time has caused him to have sexual desire bigger than before. They are also locked in the attic together and forbidden to go outside the attic. And it is happened since their childhood until they are in puberty. This condition is different with Lochan who decides to have a small bedroom for him since he realizes the impact of sharing the same bedroom with his siblings. It shows the fact that even though both Lochan and Maya are on mutual desire to have passionate incestuous relationship; they are not motivated by eroticism but only affection.

The last motivation shows that aggressive actions that are done by Maya in *Forbidden* and Chris in *Flowers in the Attic* has influenced them to be closer with the other offenders and finally leads them into sibling incest. Actually they can avoid the sibling incest if they can control their emotion and their feeling toward their siblings. But it is difficult for them to do that. All of them are as the offenders since there is no a perpetrator and the victim. It is because the sexual activities are done without feeling pain of physically or mentally, precisely they are happy.

The finding of the description of sibling incest in this study clearly shows the similarities and the differences of both two novels. There are five similarities that can be seen. The first is based on the offenders. The offenders of each novel are siblings who are involved a brother and a sister. Then the second is based on their age that the brothers are older than the sisters. In *Forbidden* Lochan is older than his younger sister Maya, while in *Flowers in the Attic* their position is also the same in which Chris is older than his younger sister Cathy.

The third is based on the lack of affection. In this case, all of the offenders of sibling incest in those two novels feel the lack of affection from their parent and the people around them. Then the fourth is based on aggression. One of the offenders of each novel is more aggressive than the other. In *Forbidden* Maya is more aggressive than her brother, while in *Flowers in the Attic* Chris is more aggressive than his sister Cathy. And the last is based on the way of treating. The sibling incest that is happened in the two novels is not involved in non-abusive incest. It is because there is no coercion or violence in doing that sibling incest.

4.2. Causing Factors of Sibling Incest in *Forbidden* and *Flowers in the Attic*

Dysfunctional family is one of four causing factors which are emphasized to dysfunctional parenting. Neglectful or even abusive parents will set their children lack of affection and finally send them to deep closeness with their siblings. It fits with the finding of Hudson (1992) [4] that "siblings have the ability to recollect experiences common to both and retrace each former pain and pleasure together" (p. 1). It is because they live with the same pair of dysfunctional family. It happens to Lochan, Maya, Chris, and Cathy as the offenders of sibling incest. They recollect experiences and retrace each former pain and pleasure together and take care of each other. Moreover, their closeness is supported by the age peers. All of the offenders of each novel are more like friends than siblings. Thus, between age peers is also included to be the causing factors of sibling incest. As Stated by Leavitt (2013) [8] that "while the age differences between generations, spacing of siblings, and the difference in gender among siblings would moderate the number of incest cases" (p.48).

The closeness that are felt by all of the offenders is influenced by the same experiences and burden of

dysfunctional family, while the age peers also builds the compatibility and similarity between Lochan and Maya or Chris and Cathy that they tend to seek in each other. They often share everything that disturbing their mind which is included their responsibility as parents' role for their other siblings. Besides that, Lochan feels only with Maya he can release his burden, and so does Maya to Lochan. That feeling is also felt by Chris towards Cathy and vice versa. It shows that law of homogamy also causes the sibling incest between them. As argued by Kalmijn (1998) [5] that "Law of Homogamy is the tendency to marry within social group or a person who close in status possibly addressed to between family members" (p.395).

The causing factors of sibling incest in both novels have been revealed but those have not answered yet. Why they cause the offenders involved into sibling incest whereas commonly people also live in those condition but they do not do that forbidden relationship as they did. To answer that question, this research also applies the psychoanalysis theory. It is because the psychological condition of the offenders will be the key of the causing factors whether they work or fail in leading them into sibling incest.

Based on Karen Horney's theory, she stated that people's personality is shaped by their childhood experiences. Then, the people who lack of affection, approval, and love from their parents will tend to develop the basic hostility, and because of it also will develop the basic anxiety unconsciously. So, it can be said that the basic anxiety arise as a result of the people's needs which are not met and it can lead them to neurotic problem.

The childhood experiences of Chris and Cathy are worse than Lochan's and Maya's childhood experiences. It is because both Chris and Cathy have faced the physical abuse, while Lochan and Maya do not get it. Both Chris and Cathy, they are locked in the attic and always get the punishment from their grandmother. They are not allowed to show their presence in their grandmother's house where they locked. Not only that punishment, they also lack of affection from their mother.

The lack of affection is also faced by Lochan and Maya. So, all of the offenders in those two novels have the same experience which lack of affection and love from their parents and the people around them. And it hurts them mentally. The moment when they really need the affection from their parents, they passed it under the conditions that they shouldn't feel. It also a form of emotional maltreatment because that condition and the treatments they get hurting them mentally.

As the explanations above which states that all of them are unwanted children in their family, it also hurts them. They are still really young and they need their parents or other people around them to love them but they do not get it. Lochan and Maya do not get it because they are born as unexpected children. It means that their mother married with their father because she was pregnant first or it can be called married by accident. So that's why when they were born, they do not get enough attention or affection from their parents. Their father prefers to go away with his new

wife and neglect them, while their mother becomes alcoholic and does not care anymore with her children. It is also happened to Chris and Cathy. After the death of their father, they are taken to their grandmother's house. They do not get enough attention and love in that place. But instead they get a lot of mental and physical violence from their grandmother and their mother. The lack of affection and approval influence them to hate their parents. So that's why that condition forces them to look for the other person that can fulfill their need. They need a partner in their life to share everything with.

Actually all of them can have a partner who is not their family because they can communicate and face the other people. But it is difficult for Lochan, he cannot make a good interaction with the other people except his family. He needs self-sufficiency because the most important thing in his life is only his family. So, he needs to be independent person from people other than his family. Because of that reason, he tends to move away from people. And it is influenced by the need of narrow limit to life.

4.3. The Impact of Sibling Incest towards the Characters' Lives

All of the offenders have different impact in their life because of that sibling incest. It is because they have different psychological condition in facing their problem in their life. Lochan is more suffer than the other offenders. Actually Lochan does not feel comfortable with his feeling toward Maya and also with what he did. He is more suffers than Maya. He was very sorry after doing that forbidden thing with his younger sister Maya. He cannot forget it. He cannot forget the feeling of Maya's touch on his skin, even though that self-disgust finally disappears, but it must be truly disturbing his mind.

In addition, he also feels anxious about the consequences or the impact of that forbidden act. It is because he knows that what he did with his younger sister Maya is really forbidden to be happened based on the rules in his society and especially in his country. This anxiety makes him feels depression. And he blames himself because of this condition. Not only Lochan who blame himself, but all of the offenders from those two novels also blame themselves.

The end of those two novels are really different. In *Forbidden*, The climax of the story is when Lochan and Maya are caught by their mother while having sexual intercourse in their bedroom. The incident takes the journey of their incestuous relationship to end. Lochan is prosecuted by the police on sexual offences act and threatened him into prison. It is as stated by the police that investigates Lochan. The police say that not only him that will get the punishment because of sibling incest, but his younger sister Maya will also get the same punishment as Lochan got. That statement really influences Lochan's psychology, so he decides to suicide. This is the worst impact of the sibling incest that occurred between Lochan and Maya.

Not only Lochan who decides to suicide, but Maya also wants to do the same act actually. Her desire to commit suicide as if it can't be stopped anymore, but fortunately, her

love and affection for her younger siblings prevent her from suicide. After all, she decides to survive for her siblings. It is because she does not see that Lochan's death changes her mother's neglect. So, she is the only one who care and love her younger siblings, and no one else. And this is the end of the story in which Lochan died and Maya continues her life by keeping her younger siblings as good as possible, even though at first she got a lot of depression. While in *Flowers in the Attic*, the only effect of sibling incest in this novel is self-blame. Even it leads to the worst effects. In this case, the feeling of regret influences Chris to blame himself. He blames himself because of what he did. Actually if he could stop and avoid his feeling toward his younger sister Cathy, the worst think will not be happened in his family especially for his own life. But in fact he could not control his feeling. That feeling is also felt by Cathy. She feels that what they have done is not Chris' fault only, but also her fault. She realizes that the prohibited act would not occur if she could control her feelings and make Chris aware of it. So, he thought that the incident was the fault of both parties. In this case there is no such thing as a criminal and victim of a crime, because they both do it consciously and without coercion. The guilt they feel also affects their thoughts. And finally this guilt becomes the effect of the sibling incest they have done. In the end of this story is, Cathy, Chris and their younger sister run away from their grandmother's house and try to start their new life. And their little sister also assumes that Chris and Cathy are her parents. After all, it is important to underline that sibling incest is dealing with mental illness and psychological problems which emerge from parental neglect and abuse. Actually Lochan, Maya, Chris, and Cathy will not do that bad behavior if their family can love and care of them. But in fact, that is not happened. They live in dysfunctional family in which lead them into sibling incest. So it can be said that all of them are actually the victim from the dysfunctional parents. They are the victims in this condition.

5. CONCLUSION

Sibling incest is the major theme for those two novels. That bad things should not have happened even more to fellow siblings. But what has happened in their childhood and their neurotic need which are not fulfilled finally lead them into sibling incest.

The researcher is aware that there are still many shortcomings in this study. Although in this study, it has been found that dysfunctional families and some forms of neurotic needs that are not fulfilled are the causes of incestuous behavior between the characters, but according to researcher of this study several other studies that have the same topic are really needed. Especially if further research can reveal the cause of an incest by applying another theory that might be more relevant to this topic. Like the theory of sexual disorders or something else. In addition, further research is also needed because one of the novels, *Flowers*

in the Attic, is a novel that still has a continuation of the story. And that is told in the next novel.

So it can be said that further research can examine the continued story of the novels *Flowers in the Attic* to find out the impact they experience after the occurrence of sibling incest.

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Author's Biography

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Siti Muhalimah was born in Gresik, East Java in Indonesia, on February 20, 1991. She completed her elementary school up to high school in Gresik. After that in 2010 she was accepted at ADI BUANA SURABAYA University in an English language education program. Then after completing her education at that university she continued her studies at State University of Surabaya (UNESA) in the department of language and literature education.

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Prof. Budi Darma, M. A., Ph.D was born on April 25, 1937 in Rembang, he was a professor at FPBS in Surabaya state university. He completed his education at the Department of Western Literature, Faculty of Letters UGM (1963) and at that time also received the Star of Graduation Ceremony, had studied knowledge at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, USA (1970-1971), then earned his MA from Indiana University, Bloomington, USA (1976), and earned a Ph.D. from the same university (1980). The title of Visiting Research Associate was once at Indiana University. In several sources on Wikipedia explains that he is one of the most influential writers in Indonesia.

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Prof. Dr. Fabiola Dharmawanti Kurnia, M.Pd. was born in Surabaya in September 1945. She has been a lecturer in State University of Surabaya since March 1st 1979. Her last position is professor and her last education is Doctoral program of Science of Literature in University of Indonesia which was finished in 2006. She has been an advisor for many students of undergraduate, post graduate, and doctoral program. One of her works is a review of a great writer, Prof. Budi Darma's novel entitled *Laki-Laki Lain dalam Secarik Surat* (2008) which then she gave the title *Laki-Laki Basah Budi Darma*. It was written in January, 2009. Prof. Budi Darma is her fellow lecturer in State University of Surabaya.