

REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT IN POPPI PERTIWI'S NOVEL *SEPTIHAN*: IAN WATT'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the representation of social conflict in Poppi Pertiwi's novel *Septihan* using Ian Watt's sociological approach to literature. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, utilizing data in the form of dialogue and narrative excerpts that represent social conflict within the novel. Data collection was conducted through literature review using the read-and-note technique. Data analysis focused on three concepts of Ian Watt's literary sociology: the author's social context, literature as a reflection of societal life, and the social function of literature. The research findings reveal family conflicts reflected in Septian's strained relationship with his parents, stemming from family pressure and a lack of attention. Interpersonal conflicts are evident in Septian's relationships with his school friends, particularly those influenced by misunderstandings, bullying, and adolescent social competition. Meanwhile, the different treatment received by some characters due to their economic backgrounds and popularity within the school environment highlights the social status conflict. These findings suggest that this novel not only depicts adolescent social dynamics but also contains social criticism of patterns of family relationships, social circles, and social inequality in society.

Keywords: *social conflict, sociology of literature, the novel Septihan*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a personal expression of human experience, thoughts, feelings, ideas, spirit, and beliefs in a concrete form that evokes charm through the use of language (Saragih et al., 2021). Literature is nothing more than a depiction of ordinary life in nature, but in a relatively concise form because it is compressed. Literature is a human creative activity that produces written and printed works of art (Pratiwi et al., 2019). Literary works do not fall from the sky and immediately become works of art but are created by writers to be enjoyed, appreciated, understood, and utilized by society (Maemunah & Puryono, 2025). Here, literature functions not only as entertainment but also as a form of communication and a reminder of social issues (Rahmawati & Purwanto, 2025).

Conflict and humans are two things that are always inseparable, because throughout their lives, humans will encounter conflicts, both with themselves and with other humans (Suryahandini et al., 2023). Conflict has the potential to shape social identity. Assuming that conflict serves a similar purpose in narrative fiction, it plays a role in shaping the literary representation of groups of characters (Smeets et al., 2021). Social conflict is a phenomenon in society that commonly arises when differences between individuals or groups cannot be reconciled and cause conflict (Khomsatun & Riadi, 2023).

Social conflicts depicted in literary works can be analyzed using a sociological approach because literature often reflects the social realities of human life. Sociology is subjective rather than objective, so authors are free to write down their thoughts and assumptions to express their work (Nurhapidah & Sobari, 2019). Literary sociology is research that focuses on issues of human life. Literary sociology cannot be separated from individuals and groups who use literary works as material for discussion. Like sociology, literature studies humans within a social framework, individuals' efforts to develop themselves and influence society, as well as human relationships with family, the surrounding environment, government, the state, etc. (Febriani & Efendi, 2022). Literature often reveals human struggles in determining their future based on imagination, feelings, and intuition. Literary sociology is a work of literature that considers the involvement of its social structure (Rahmawati & Sulanjari, 2022). The literary sociology

approach was chosen because this study focuses on the relationship between literary works and social reality as reflected through conflicts between characters.

The novel *Septian* tells a story of romance and friendship among teenagers. *Septian*, the main character, is the smartest student at Ganesha High School. However, he has a cold and quiet personality. In addition, *Septian* also serves as the treasurer of a delinquent gang called *Ravispa*. Then there is another character named *Jihan*, who is very expressive and active. She is the stubborn type. This is evident in her relentless efforts to win *Septian*'s heart over the course of three years. Broadly speaking, the novel *Septian* tells the story of *Jihan*'s active and expressive efforts to win the heart of a teenage boy named *Septian*, who is known for being very cold, indifferent, and also gruff. *Septian*, who is being pursued like this, always tries to avoid *Jihan*. But that's not all; the novel also explores various social conflicts, including those stemming from *Septian*'s broken home; the relationships between *Septian*, *Jihan*, and their school friends; and *Septian*'s status as a quiet school star, a role that often sparks social jealousy and conflicts among peers, including verbal and physical bullying that colors the teenage environment.

This study expands on previous research. First, *Arezha et al. (2024)* focused on issues of environmental exploitation and social inequality resulting from mining activities. The study emphasizes the relationship between literary works and the reality of environmental degradation as well as social criticism of capitalism and power. Second, *Bagaskara and Septiana (2024)* places greater emphasis on the representation of social values, such as concern, compassion, and interpersonal relationships within society. The focus of this study is the social values reflected in the characters' behavior. Third, *Sya'baan and Tike (2022)* examines various social issues in the realms of politics, economics, corruption, and power that occur in modern society. The study is oriented toward social critique of the socio-political conditions of society.

Meanwhile, research on *Septian*'s novel focuses more on social conflicts between characters in adolescent life, such as family conflicts, friendship conflicts, romantic conflicts, and social pressures within educational settings. Thus, this research does not focus on ecosocial issues, the environment, the political sphere, the economy, corruption, or power. Based on these differences, studies on social conflict in the novel *Septian* by *Poppi Pertiwi* present novelty in their focus, namely the analysis of adolescent social conflict through *Ian Watt's* literary sociology perspective, which

encompasses the relationship between literary works and the social realities of society as well as the social function of literature in depicting the social life of characters.

This study uses Ian Watt's sociological approach to literature, which emphasizes literary works as reflections of society (Watt, 2001). A novel is a work of fiction that presents a story with various issues so that there is a hidden message that the author wants to convey through writing. Novels are literary works made up of intrinsic and extrinsic elements that relate to each other. The novel *Septihan* by Poppi Pertiwi is one of the Indonesian literary works that depicts social conflict through the relationships between characters and the social setting that surrounds them. The conflicts that arise are not only personal in nature but also reflect value conflicts, differences in interests, and the social pressures faced by the characters. Through these conflicts, the author presents a picture of social reality that is close to the lives of readers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous research has focused on analyzing the intrinsic elements in Poppi Pertiwi's novel *Septihan*. Sulaiman et al. (2022) explores the components of the novel, such as theme, setting, plot, characters and characterization, perspective, writing style, and message, with findings showing that character elements and characterization are the most influential in constructing the narrative. In contrast to this study, which emphasizes structural aspects in literature, this study broadens its focus by examining the representation of social conflict in the novel *Septihan* using a sociological approach to literature. Therefore, this study not only evaluates the internal framework of the work but also highlights how the interactions between characters reflect various types of social conflict that exist in the society represented in the novel.

The second previous study, Praditasari and Sabardila (2022), investigated Poppi Pertiwi's novel *Septihan* from a linguistic perspective, specifically regarding the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing found in conversations between characters. This study found that the novel *Septihan* displays various forms of code-switching and code-mixing, including the insertion of words, phrases, and mixed forms, which are important for analyzing both the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel. This research focuses more on the phenomenon of language use in literary works (Praditasari & Sabardila, 2022). On the other hand, this article pays attention to a different

aspect, namely examining the social conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel *Septihan*. This study uses a sociological approach to literature to understand how interactions between characters, differences in background, and social relationship dynamics give rise to various forms of conflict in the narrative. In this way, this study complements previous research by expanding the study from the linguistic dimension to the social aspects depicted in the novel.

An analysis of social conflict in the novel *Septihan*, written by Poppi Pertiwi, is crucial because, to date, studies examining this novel have been limited to specific aspects, such as intrinsic elements and linguistic analysis. Previous studies have focused more on the structure of the story or linguistic phenomena that emerge through dialogue between characters, so an analysis of the social conflicts experienced by the characters has not been thoroughly researched. In fact, literary works can be studied for both internal and social conflicts (Andriyana & Mubarak, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the social conflicts in the novel *Septihan* to identify the various forms of conflict experienced by the characters and to understand how these conflicts reflect the social conditions raised in the narrative. Thus, this study is expected to contribute new insights to literary studies, especially in adding to the understanding of the social aspects found in the novel *Septihan*.

The sociological approach to literature is a study that examines the interactions within society as depicted in literary works (Azhima et al., 2023). The object of study in literary sociology is none other than humans in society. In this case, literary sociology attempts to understand interpersonal relationships and the reciprocal processes of those relationships (Pramesthi et al., 2023). This approach uses Ian Watt's theory, which outlines three main dimensions of literary sociology: (a) the social context of the author, an analysis of the author's social context encompasses several factors, such as the author's social status, profession, economic circumstances, worldview, and the state of society at the time the work was written. By understanding the author's social context, researchers can identify the reasons behind the emergence of certain themes, conflicts, and values in literary works. For example, an author living in an environment rife with social conflict tends to present stories that depict conflicts between characters, social injustice, or societal pressures. (b) Literature as a reflection of social life, in research on social conflict, this dimension is used to analyze how conflicts between characters in a novel reflect

conflicts occurring in society. These conflicts can take the form of interpersonal conflicts, family conflicts, economic conflicts, educational conflicts, or conflicts between social groups. Thus, literary works serve as a medium for depicting social reality in a more profound and emotional way. (c) the social function of literature: the social function aspect is used to examine the benefits of literary works for both readers and society. For example, a novel that addresses social conflict can teach us about the importance of tolerance, communication, and wise conflict resolution. Thus, literary works are enjoyed as reading material and contribute to building social awareness within society (Waluyo et al., 2025).

METHOD

This study employs qualitative descriptive research, which emphasizes documentation analysis by examining written sources related to the research objects (Putri et al., 2022). The qualitative descriptive method was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the hidden meanings in the language study found in Poppi Pertiwi's novel *Septihan* in a deep and systematic manner (Zakaria et al., 2025). This method also provides flexibility in exploring the nuances of the text without imposing predetermined analytical structures, allowing the description to emerge directly from the characteristics of the narrative. Through this approach, the study maintains its focus on portraying the phenomena found in the novel as they appear, emphasizing contextual interpretation and detailed depiction consistent with qualitative traditions.

The primary data source for this study is the novel itself, namely *Septihan* by Poppi Pertiwi, while secondary sources are taken from articles, books, and scientific journals relevant to the sociological approach to literature. The first-stage techniques for data collection were carried out using read-and-record. Data analysis was carried out by utilizing theories used as the basis for research by classifying data based on types of social conflict, interpreting the meaning of the conflict, and relating it to the social context behind the story (Rokhmansyah et al., 2018). The second stage was the data presentation stage, which produced a product in the form of quotations taken from the novel as the data sources. The third stage was the conclusion stage. The results of the analysis are then presented descriptively in the form of an explanation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the social conflicts in the novel *Septihan*.

This study includes a table of instruments (Table 1) that help reveal the meaning behind textual quotations in Poppi Pertiwi's novel *Septihan*. The focus of the study lies on literary works as a reflection of society; these conflicts can take the form of interpersonal conflicts (KS), family conflicts (KK), economic conflicts (KE), educational conflicts (KP), or conflicts between social groups (KG).

Table 1. Research Instrument Table

Literature as A Reflection of Social Life	Code
Interpersonal Conflict	KS
Family Conflict	KK
Economic Conflict	KE
Educational Conflict	KP
Conflict Between Social Groups	KG

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the novel *Septihan* by Pertiwi (2020) through the lens of Ian Watt's sociology of literature, which examines the relationship between literary works and the social realities in which they are produced. Sociology of literature views literature not merely as the creative product of individual imagination but as a social document reflecting the values, norms, conflicts, and structures present in the society surrounding the author. By applying this theoretical framework, this study investigates three interconnected aspects: the author's social context, the extent to which the novel functions as a reflection of social life, and the social function the work serves for its readers. Through close reading of particular sections of the novel, this study reveals how *Septihan* portrays the social dynamics of adolescents, including family conflict, interpersonal relationships, social hierarchies, and moral norms as representations of broader social realities in Indonesian society.

The Social Context of the Author

Based on the perspective of literary sociology proposed by Ian Watt, the author's social context encompasses the interplay between social background, personal experience, and the social environment surrounding the author during the process of creating literary works. The author's social context includes the author's social standing as well as their interactions with the community (Wachyudin & Deliani, 2023). Literary works do not emerge in isolation from social realities but are influenced by the social,

cultural, and value systems present in the community where the author resides. Therefore, it is essential to understand the author's social context to discern how these social realities are portrayed in the literary work.

In the novel titled *Septihan*, the author presents a portrayal of the lives of teenagers within the formal education system, particularly within the social context of a school filled with the dynamics of interactions among characters. This depiction of teenage life is illustrated through various events involving friendships, romance, interpersonal conflicts, and social background differences that influence interpersonal relationships. The portrayal of characters with specific family backgrounds, levels of popularity at school, and diverse economic situations reflects the social structures that shape individuals' positions and roles within their communities.

Relating it to the matters, the portrayal of adolescent life in the novel *Septihan* indirectly reflects the social realities present in society. Ian Watt believes that literature closely reflects the social conditions that shape the author's life. Through literary works, authors not only express their creative imagination but also reflect on social experiences, cultural values, and the dynamics of community life, all of which form part of the social context in which the work was created.

Literature as a Reflection of Social Life

In the study of literary sociology, literary works are viewed as depictions of social life that reflect the various realities present in society. Ian Watt's theory of literary sociology emphasizes that literature is not merely the product of the individual author but also a reflection of the social, cultural, and historical conditions prevailing at the time the work was created (Watt, 2001). This view aligns with Ian Watt's perspective, which asserts that literary works have a close relationship with society whether in terms of social values, social structures, or the changes occurring within them. Through their literary works, authors often depict various social phenomena emerging around them, such as social conflicts; interactions between individuals; imbalances within society; as well as the norms and values prevailing in the community.

"Apa karena gue ini anak Ravispa? Apa karena nama keluarga gue? Apa karena temen-temen gue yang terkenal di sekolah? Apa karena gue pintar atau karena gue berduit? Kalau lo incar gue karena itu, berarti lo sama aja kayak cewek-cewek yang gue kenal. Nggak akan ada artinya. Lebih baik lo pergi, gue nggak butuh orang kayak gitu" (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 51).

Translation:

“Is it because I am a member of the Ravispa family? Is it because of my family name? Is it because my friends are well-known at school? Is it because I am intelligent or financially well-off? If those are the reasons you are interested in me, then you are no different from the other girls I have known. It would be meaningless. You should leave, because I do not need someone like that.” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 51)

This quote reveals a character’s suspicion and rejection of the possibility that there might be a specific motive behind another character’s closeness to them. The character questions various elements related to their social identity, such as family background, a well-known social circle at school, intelligence, and financial status. The rhetorical questions posed reflect the character’s awareness of the possibility that social relationships might be based on self-interest. The statement emphasizing that the relationship “*Nggak akan ada artinya*” (“It would be meaningless”) if based on those aspects illustrates a rejection of insincere relationships. Thus, the statement reflects the tension in the relationship between the characters, related to views on social status and the goals of social interaction.

“Kapan Mama bakal sadar kalau Mama tau itu salah? Kenapa masih Mama lakukan ini? Apa, sih, yang ada di kepala Mama sampe berhubungan sejauh itu sama Om Martin? Papa bahkan nggak mau ngomong sama Mama lagi. Kenapa Ma?” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 38)

Translation:

“When are you going to realize that you know this is wrong? Why are you still doing this? What on earth is going through your head that you’ve let things go so far with Uncle Martin? Dad doesn’t even want to talk to you anymore. Why, Mom?” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 38)

The quote expresses a child’s disappointment and anger toward his mother for being involved with another man, Uncle Martin. The mother’s behavior, perceived as a breach of her marriage vows, creates tension within the family, as reflected in the questions asked. The quote above shows that this behavior has caused serious problems in the marriage and has affected the family atmosphere. The conversation also highlights the child’s position of being caught in the middle of their parents’ conflict, leading them to express confusion and disappointment over their mother’s actions. Thus, the quote underscores the presence of family conflict stemming from a breach of marital fidelity.

“Waktu kecil, gue sering lihat Kakek gue pukuli Nenek. Dulu gue cuma bisa diam, mengintip dari kamar. Gue pikir keluarga gue baik-baik aja. Ternyata enggak sama sekali.” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 91)

Translation:

“When I was little, I often saw my grandfather hitting my grandmother. Back then, all I could do was stay silent and peek from my room. I thought my family was fine. Turns out, that wasn’t the case at all.” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 91)

The quote above indicates recurring domestic violence within the protagonist’s family and reveals the protagonist’s position as a child who lacks the strength or courage to stop the conflicts occurring among family members. This silence reflects the fear and helplessness the character feels when facing this situation. The quote also reflects the character’s initial perception that their family appears normal, just like any other family. However, it reveals the character’s realization that the family situation they are experiencing is actually filled with conflict and disharmony.

“Gue udah tolak lo berkali-kali. Di mana rasa malu lo? Urat malu lo putus?”
(Pertiwi, 2020, p. 13)

Translation:

“I’ve turned you down over and over again. Where’s your sense of shame? Have you lost all sense of shame?” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 13)

The quote depicts one character’s anger toward another who persistently tries to impose his will despite having been rejected repeatedly. The expression reflects a negative view of the character’s behavior, which is considered shameless and disrespectful of others’ decisions. This incident highlights the tension in the relationship between the characters arising from actions that violate social norms in interpersonal interactions.

Based on the literary sociology perspective outlined by Ian Watt, literary works reflect the social reality present in society. This discussion highlights the social values that make shame an integral part of the norms guiding individual behavior when interacting with others (Watt, 2001). If a character attempts to persist in imposing their will despite having been rejected, this action is considered a violation of etiquette and respect for others. Therefore, the conflict depicted in this excerpt can be considered a representation of social conflict stemming from violations of values and norms in interpersonal relationships within society.

“Septian! Katanya nggak boleh cueki orang yang lagi ngomong, loh. Nggak baik tau! Dosa! Pamali!” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 13)

Translation:

“Septian! They say you shouldn’t ignore someone who’s talking to you. It’s not nice, you know! It’s a sin! It’s bad luck!” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 13)

This quote depicts someone reprimanding Septian for his indifference while others are speaking. The statement reflects an unwritten social norm that requires people to respect those they are speaking with. Furthermore, the quote highlights that ignoring others is considered a violation of accepted norms of politeness and moral values. This conversation demonstrates another character’s effort to remind and emphasize the importance of ethics in interpersonal interactions.

The conversation in the excerpt reflects the social values present in society, particularly those related to communication etiquette and respecting others during dialogue. The reprimand directed at the character Septian indicates that society has certain behavioral norms that every individual must follow. Violating these rules will lead to social judgment, manifested as criticism or reprimands from others. Thus, this excerpt demonstrates how characters in literary works embody societal norms of politeness and moral values through their interactions.

“Itu udah penolakan terang-terangan supaya lo nggak deket-deket dia lagi. Karena Septian nggak mungkin suka sama cewek bego kayak lo. Lo tau? Bahkan kakeknya Septian suruh gue untuk awasi dia. Keluarganya percaya sama gue. Sementara lo? Lo cuma orang asing di hidupnya Septian.” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 59)

Translation:

“That was a clear rejection meant to keep you from getting close to him again. Because there’s no way Septian would like a dumb girl like you. You know what? Even Septian’s grandfather advised me to monitor him closely. His family trusts me. As for you? You’re just a stranger in Septian’s life.” (Pertiwi, 2020, p. 59)

This quote highlights the use of specific vocabulary that depicts interpersonal conflict among the characters. Septian’s rejection is expressed clearly and without any attempt to hide his intentions. The statement in the quote indicates the existence of social boundaries imposed on other characters to prevent them from forming close relationships with Septian. Additionally, there is a form of verbal insult that reflects a condescending attitude and highlights the tension in the relationships between the characters. Meanwhile, Septian’s family trusts the speaking character to oversee his life, granting them social legitimacy.

From the perspective of literary sociology as proposed by Ian Watt, the use of such diction represents the dynamics of social relationships involving competition, the assertion of status, and individuals' efforts to maintain their social position within a social circle. One of the most notable elements of literature as a reflection of society is the notion that literary genres often reveal the social perspectives of specific groups rather than reflecting the overall social attitudes of society (Tyas & Parmin, 2023). Thus, the excerpt not only depicts conflict between characters but also reflects the social reality regarding the formation of hierarchies and recognition within social relationships.

The Social Function of Literature

In addition to serving as a reflection of and commentary on society, literary works also play a role as tools for education and humanitarianism. Literature teaches readers to understand life from a more empathetic perspective and makes them aware of systemic injustices (Kadir et al., 2025). The *Septihan* novel serves a social function in literature. The social function of literature can be seen through the representation of various events, conflicts, and interactions between characters in literary works that reflect the values, norms, and social issues occurring in society. Through the narratives presented, authors can express criticism of certain social behaviors, affirm moral values deemed important, or depict the consequences of an action within a social context. Therefore, literary works can serve as a tool to raise readers' awareness of various social issues in their surroundings.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, which employs Ian Watt's sociological perspective on literature, it was found that Poppi Pertiwi's novel *Septihan* depicts various forms of social conflict arising from interactions among characters, particularly interpersonal conflicts, family conflicts, and conflicts caused by differences in social status, moral values, and the balance of power. These findings indicate that the conflicts in the novel are not merely personal in nature but are also closely tied to the social conditions that form the foundation of the characters' lives. This study contributes to enriching the field of literary sociology, particularly the application of Ian Watt's perspective in analyzing the interconnection between literary works and social reality,

while also affirming that the novel *Septihan* can be understood as a reflection of various social issues in society. The implications of this study suggest that literary works serve a broader function than mere entertainment. They act as a means of social reflection that can help readers understand the dynamics of human relationships, family issues, and the influence of social structures on individual lives. Thus, the results of this study should serve as a reference for future literary studies and be utilized in literature education to enhance sensitivity and understanding of various social phenomena developing in society.

Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, the examination of social conflict in literary works can be used as a means of understanding the relationship between literary writing and its underlying social context. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a guide for readers, students, and researchers in analyzing social issues in literature through a sociological approach, thereby enhancing understanding of how literature reflects various dynamics in social life.

Furthermore, this study can serve as a starting point for subsequent studies that seek to explore literature with varied objects or approaches. By utilizing the findings of this study, it is hoped that the analysis of social conflict in literature will continue to advance, thereby contributing to the enrichment of studies in the field of literature, particularly those related to the relationship between literary works and the social life of society.

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