

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of The Study

Film is recognized as a unique and powerful art form (painting art, sculpture, music, literature, and drama) which can be savored by almost our sense of humanity (Boggs, 2000). By watching films viewers can see the illusion of movement and can exactly reproduce the original movement when the film was shot. Since viewers watch the movie (motion picture) and follow the plot at the same time, it makes them easy to understand the story. The viewers can be carried away by watching films. They can feel sad, happy, even very upset.

The viewers know film as an art form, but the important thing the viewers should know is that film is unlimited, not only in its choice of subject but also in its approach to that material. So, if the viewers look in point of view, a film can cover the full spectrum from the purely objective to the intensely subjective; in depth, it can focus on the surface realities and the purely sexual or it can delve into the intellectual and philosophical (Boggs, 2000). In other words film can also as a medium, media for other knowledge which is social as an approach to explain or know something we do not know in films.

The idea that power can lead to corruption has been present in literature for centuries, with works such as Machiavelli's *"The Prince"* and Shakespeare's *"Julius Caesar"* exploring the corrupting influence of power. In modern times, research on power and corruption has been particularly focused on the behavior of individuals in positions of authority, such as politicians, corporate leaders, and law

enforcement officials. Studies have shown that individuals in positions of power are more likely to engage in unethical behavior, such as lying, cheating, and breaking the law, than individuals with less power.

Psychologists have also explored the psychological mechanisms that can contribute to this behavior, such as the "*power paradox*," which suggests that the more power an individual has, the more likely they are to lose touch with the feelings and perspectives of others, and the "deindividuation theory," which suggests that individuals in positions of power may feel less accountable for their actions and more likely to engage in unethical behavior.

In addition to individual-level factors, researchers have also studied the role of institutional and societal factors in shaping the relationship between power and corruption. For example, studies have shown that countries with higher levels of corruption tend to have weaker institutions and less democratic governance structures. Research on power and corruption has important implications for understanding the behavior of individuals in positions of authority and for developing strategies to prevent and mitigate corruption in society. In this research, the main focus will be on analyzing the representation of power and corruption that appear in the movie "*The Wolf of Wall Street*" by using Marxist Theory by Karl Marx to analyze the characters, the dialogue and the scenes of the movie.

"*The Wolf of Wall Street*" was to create a satirical and darkly comedic exploration of the excesses, greed, and moral decay within the world of finance and corporate culture. The film is based on the real-life story of Jordan Belfort, a

stockbroker who engaged in fraudulent activities and unethical behavior during the 1990s.

Marxist theory is a political, social, and economic philosophy developed by the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx. Marx's theory is based on the idea that societies progress through class struggle, with the ruling class exploiting the working class for their own benefit. He argued that this exploitation is inherent in capitalist societies, which prioritize profits over the needs of workers.

Marx also believed that capitalism would eventually lead to its own downfall, as the contradictions between the working and ruling classes become more pronounced. He predicted that the working class would eventually overthrow the ruling class in a revolution, leading to the establishment of a socialist society where the means of production are owned and controlled by the workers. Marx's theory had a significant impact on the development of socialism and communism, as well as on labor movements and political activism around the world. His ideas continue to be studied and debated in academic and political circles today.

Previous research was conducted by Wang, F., & Sun, X. (2015) in their research entitled "*Absolute power leads to absolute corruption? Impact of power on corruption depending on the concepts of power one holds.*" This previous research was conducted to explore the effect of the personalized power concept and socialized power concept by using descriptive quantitative methodology.

In his paper, Akmalsyah (2010) demonstrates that a series of symbols in films can convey a more profound message than a single symbol. The series of symbols and their meaning are subjected to further analysis and inference in order

to arrive at a comprehensive conclusion. In Michael Winterbottom's *A Mighty Heart*, the director attempts to convey a message about the importance of patience, perseverance, and wholeheartedness in the face of adversity and the inevitable loss of loved ones. The message is effectively conveyed through the use of symbols and signs.

Ridho (2020) examines the hedonism practices evident in the dialogues of the main characters in the film *The Wolf of Wall Street*. These dialogues are based on Weijers's theory of hedonism and happiness, which posits six distinct types of hedonism. The six types of hedonism identified by the author are folk hedonism, value and prudential hedonism, motivational hedonism, normative hedonism, hedonistic egoism and hedonistic utilitarianism. The descriptive qualitative method was employed to analyze the data.

Salek, T. A. (2017) posits that Scorsese's film and the rhetoric employed by the real Jordan Belfort serve to exemplify the ambivalent attitude that pervades American society with regard to the hegemonic power of money and celebrity. By drawing upon the concept of rhetorical homologies and situating it within the theoretical framework of Raymond Williams's structure of feeling, the article demonstrates how personal and public attitudes are shaped by the form and content of a text.

Referencing Widiastuti, D. (2019) This study aims to provide an overview of white-collar crime as depicted in the film *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which portrays the life of one of the stockbrokers who played a significant role in the economic landscape of the 1990s. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, this

research analyzes texts featuring the character Jordan Belfort, who is portrayed as a perpetrator of white-collar crime.

In this research, the author was inspired by Widiastuti's writing to examine the portrayal of power and corruption in the film "*The Wolf of Wall Street*". The *Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) is an interesting film that discusses the relationship between power and corruption in a way that fits the real-life scenario. From its setting, which reflects the backdrop of the financial world, to its storyline, which touches on similar themes, the film offers an interesting lens to examine these complex issues. Therefore, the author will analyze the film with the help of semiotics, examining the symbols and signs embedded in the film's visuals, with the aim to explain the concept of power and corruption in the implementation of Michel Foucault's power relations theory, Karl Marx's marxist theory, with the intention of fostering public awareness.

1.2. Research Question

The research questions are these three following questions:

1. How is power portrayed in the movie "*The Wolf of Wall Street*" ?
2. How is corruption portrayed in the movie "*The Wolf of Wall Street*" ?

1.3. Purpose of The Study

By conducting this research, the researcher would like to show to the reader how power and corruption are represented in the movie by using Marx Criticism, Power Relations Theory, and Semiotics Theory. Moreover, the researcher would also like to convey how power can make an impact for individuals to do what they please.

1.4. Scope of The Study

This research focuses on analyzing the characters, the dialogue, scenes, and the movie itself. This research also focuses on the depiction of power and corruption in the movie *“The Wolf of Wall Street”* through an analysis of characters actions and their consequences by using Marx Criticism, Power Relations Theory, and Semiotics Theory. The scope of the study will include an examination of characters’ use of illegal and unethical practices to gain wealth and power, as well as the impact of his actions on the lives of his employees, clients, and society at large. Additionally, this research will analyze how the film portrays the broader systemic issues in the financial industry that enable corruption and abuse of power. The study will not cover other movies or TV shows that address similar themes or issues outside the context of *“The Wolf of Wall Street”*.

1.5. Significance of Study

This research is significant because it sheds light on the issue of power and corruption in the financial industry, which has important implications for society as a whole. By examining the portrayal of the characters actions in *“The Wolf of Wall Street,”* this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of how individuals in positions of power can abuse that power and the impact of their actions on others. Additionally, this research can help to raise awareness of the systemic issues that enable corruption and abuse of power in the financial industry, and contribute to a broader discussion about potential solutions or reforms.