THE CRISIS OF TRUST IN THE LEADERSHIP SYSTEM PORTRAYED IN INDONESIAN SHORT STORIES: A SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE STUDY

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Abstract: The *Antologi Cerpen Indonesia-Malaysia* is a collection of works by writers who share a common linguistic background: the Malay language. In addition to linguistic similarities, the social life of the communities also exhibits commonalities. This is reflected in the three short stories featured in the anthology: *Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar*, *Dialog Dua Generasi*, and *Mencuri Perahu.* This study aims to describe the reflection of the world of ideas and concepts in relation to the reality of societal life, considering that the writers share a historical background of having experienced colonization. A prominent discourse in each story is the crisis of trust, which is vividly portrayed in the characters' debates. The research method used is descriptive-analytical, with a sociological approach to literature. The analysis goes beyond merely explaining the narratives; it also seeks to provide an understanding that aligns with the study's focus. The findings of this research reveal the reality of the crisis of trust in leadership within society, the representation of this crisis in the three short stories, and the connection between the literary works and the social realities of the communities they reflect.

Keywords: Public Trust, Distrust, Sociological Literature, Indonesia-Malay Anthology.

INTRODUCTION

Perception of public officials today has generally tended to shift in a negative direction. This shift is influenced by several factors, the lack of transparency and honesty towards the public, and the difficulty that the people face in obtaining or accessing information. Although it has to be noted that several institutions and the motto for public officials today has echoed transparency and easy access of information as part of their slogan. However, it is still far from ideal even though transparency is the most crucial aspect of earning public trust (Ngatikoh et al., 2020; Sabani, 2021).

This trust crisis has happened on the national level. Many people have begun questioning the credibility of political leaders at various levels of government. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by numerous corruption scandals revealed in the media, further tarnishing the image of officials. When leaders fail to demonstrate integrity and accountability, the public increasingly feels that their hopes have been betrayed. This creates a widening gap between the people and their leaders, fostering skepticism about the government's ability to fulfill its responsibilities (Tambunan, 2023).

Not only occurring on the national level, the trust crisis in society also has trickled down to the level of village government (Zulchairiyah & Zikwan, 2023). People's perception about this crisis has almost been affected even in the election of village officials. Village traditions still strongly adhere to a hereditary leadership system (Siregar et al., 2021). However, people have begun to think critically about the governance system in villages, which predominantly follows a lineage-based approach (Berenschot et al., 2021; Meliala & Permana, 2023). This shift is driven by the frequent occurrence of irregularities in leadership practices. As a result, the community aspires to see leadership elections in villages conducted democratically. This, on the other hand, may affect the traditions that have been passed down through generations if the elected leader is not following the traditions. This skepticism towards this phenomenon within the society is also reflected in literary works.

Literature plays an important role as a reflection of social and political unrest, one of which is the discourse of distrust that emerges in literary works (Griswold, 1981). As a form of cultural expression, literature has the power to capture and voice the social dynamics of its time. Literary works often serve not only as entertainment but also as a medium to critique power and social structures. In the tradition of Indonesian literature, many writers have used short stories, poetry, and novels as tools to express their unease with injustice, including the crisis of trust in leadership, three examples of literary work that express these concerns are "Bendera Yang

Kembali Berkibar", "Dialog Dua Generasi", dan "Mencuri Perahu".

This phenomenon is also connected to the role of readers in interpreting those three literary works as a representation of reality (Griswold, 1993). As a multivocal medium, literature allows for various perspectives on the crisis of trust. Readers can identify their personal experiences with the stories presented, fostering a deep emotional connection. This illustrates that literature not only reflects reality but also shapes new understandings of social issues, including those related to leadership and democracy.

Through the analysis of short stories such as "Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar" (The Flag That Flies Again), "Dialog Dua Generasi" (A Dialogue Between Two Generations), and "Mencuri Perahu" (Stealing the Boat), the crisis of trust in leadership can be seen as a central theme uniquely represented. These stories not only provide social criticism but also portray the moral dilemmas faced by society. The short story "Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar" highlights the symbolism of the flag as a representation of neglected hope. In this narrative, the conflict between traditional values and modern realities creates tensions that reflect a crisis of trust in leaders who are perceived as no longer fighting for the people's interests. "Dialog Dua Generasi" presents a debate between the older and younger generations regarding the shifting values in society. This narrative reveals how the younger generation begins to question the legitimacy of old traditions that are seen as irrelevant to current social conditions. Meanwhile, "Mencuri Perahu" depicts an act of symbolic rebellion against perceived injustices in society. This story illustrates collective dissatisfaction that culminates in a critique of leaders deemed incapable of addressing the people's problems. Based on the aforementioned issues and phenomena, this article will explore the discourse on the crisis of trust toward individuals as reflected in the three short stories: "Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar", "Dialog Dua Generasi", and "Mencuri Perahu".

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive-analytical method. Ratna(2022) explains that the descriptive-analytical method involves describing facts, followed by analysis. The analysis not only elaborates but also provides sufficient understanding in line with the research focus.

The research adopts a sociological approach. The basic assumption of sociological research is that the creation of literary works is not autonomous; rather, social life serves as a trigger for the emergence of literature. Sociological literary studies can position literature as a sociocultural document that records the social and cultural realities of a society at a particular time (Junus, 1986:3). This study explores how the image of the trust crisis in leadership systems is represented in three short stories.

Based on the research, at least the three fictional works address the discourse of a trust crisis in leadership systems. These works explore the leadership systems in government, leadership systems between the younger and older generations, and leadership systems within families. These include: (1) "Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar" (by Ruhaini Matdarin), (2) "Dialog Dua Generasi by Free Hearty, and (3) "Mencuri Perahu" by Ilham Q. Moehiddin.

ANALYSIS AND FINDING

Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar, Dialog Dua Generasi, and Mencuri Perahu tries to subtly expresses the distrust towards the leadership in their works, the table below highlights the similarities and differences of the stories on the context of distrust.

NO	JUDUL	PENULIS	TAHUN	KISAH
1.	"Bendera yang kembali berkibar"	Ruhaini Matdarin	1970-an	The crisis of trust among people toward party officials: A party leader aspires to become a mayor and strives to convince his followers of the city's potential progress. However, after gaining

				the trust of the community, the individual switches allegiance to another party, betraying the people's expectations.
2.	"Dialog dua generasi"	Free Hearty	1990-an	The crisis of trust between two generations: A dialogue unfolds between a father and his child. The father often shares stories of his struggles during the colonial resistance era but feels doubtful about the younger generation, whom he perceives as lacking commitment to upholding and contributing to the nation's independence.
3	"Mencuri perahu"	Ilham Q. Moehiddin	2011	The crisis of trust between a child and a father: A child loses trust in their father due to feelings of inadequacy tied to their physical disability, believing they do not belong in what they perceive as a perfect family.

The Political and Social Crisis of Trust

The crisis of trust is observed on multiple levels, starting broadly within governance, impacting social interactions across generations, and ultimately influencing individual relationships within families. The reality of this crisis is particularly evident in the public image of officials(Riyadi, 2024; Wulandari et al., 2024).

In the realm of politics, candidates for public office employ various strategies to win over the people's trust, often resorting to material incentives to buy votes. However, gaining the people's trust is not as simple as it seems. As exemplified by studies before, citizens have grown skeptical of candidates who make false promises solely to serve their own interests (Berenschot et al., 2021; Srirejeki & Putri, 2023; Zulchairiyah & Zikwan, 2023). This distrust is further evidenced by candidates who, despite significant financial expenditure, fail to secure office due to the people's wariness of their intentions. Although, there are still political-clientele relationships found in regional head election which highlight the transactional politics and undercuts the integrity of democratic election (Noak, 2024).

The trust crisis in governance extends to social interactions between generations. For example, younger generations often squander educational opportunities and fail to address character flaws. This is evident in the growing number of school dropouts who prioritize leisure over meaningful pursuits. Such behaviors undermine the sacrifice es made by the older generation, who fought for the nation's independence, creating a growing mistrust from the older generation toward the youth.

On a more specific level, the crisis of trust is also prevalent within family life. Children increasingly lose trust in their parents due to limited access to information or differing perspectives on issues they consider important. This lack of communication and understanding further deepens the divide within family relationships.

Crisis of Trust in Three Short Stories

The discourse on the crisis of trust is portrayed in the short story *"Bendera yang Kembali Berkibar"* (The Flag That Rose Again) by Ruhaini Matdarin, written in the 1970s. The story revolves around a political candidate who promises progress for his country, along with the preservation of regional customs, arts, and culture. With fervent enthusiasm, the candidate delivers speeches filled with promises to the people. However, when offered more lucrative prospects by another political party, he betrays the trust of the community and switches allegiance for personal gain.

This betrayal reflects the erosion of trust between leaders and the people they are meant to serve. It demonstrates how political ambitions and material incentives can overshadow the ethical responsibilities of leadership. The following excerpt from the story illustrates the behavior of the character Tuan Razak, the political aspirant, and his eventual betrayal of the community's expectations.

> *"Bekemungkinan besar Tuan Razak telah keluar dari parti dan membawa haluan sendiri. Tidak perlu pula di ketahui apakah dia telah menyertai parti lain"*
> (*"It is highly likely that Tuan Razak has left the party and pursued his own path. It is unnecessary to know whether he has joined another party."*)

As a leader, when interpreted through the lens of Hindu theology, one can refer to the concept of *Asta Bratha*, the eight principles of leadership. One of these, *Surya Bratha*, emphasizes that a leader should embody the qualities of the sun, which shines indiscriminately upon the earth (Jatiyasa et al., 2023). Similarly, a leader should avoid favoritism, just like the sun which gives its light and heat towards all, a leader should provide equal care to all citizens, and always prioritize the people's welfare.

The discourse on the crisis of trust is also reflected in the short story *"Dialog Dua Generasi"* (*A Dialogue Between Two Generations*) by Free Hearty, written in the 1990s. This story tells of a father recounting the sacrifices made by the older generation to fight for independence. He hopes that the younger generation will honor these efforts by meaningfully contributing to the country's progress. However, his faith wanes as he observes the younger generation's apathy toward these ideals. Some even support ideas contrary to independence, further deepening his disappointment. The following excerpt captures the father's lament:

> *"Begitu banyak mereka yang bertarung nyawa mempertahankan negeri ini. Sementara itu, tetapi sangat terabaikan. Ungkap bapak dalam kecewa yang semakin jauh menggelayuti tubuhnya yang renta."*
> *(So many sacrificed their lives to defend this nation. Meanwhile, their struggles are increasingly neglected,"* the father said, his disappointment weighing heavily on his frail body.)

The short story "Dialog Dua Generasi" vividly mirrors real-world dynamics, particularly the generational disconnect and shifting values in society. The father's lament about the younger generation's apathy toward the sacrifices of the past parallels the real-world phenomenon of historical disconnection. In many societies, younger generations, immersed in the rapid pace of modern life and exposed to diverse global ideologies, often lose sight of the struggles and values that shaped their nation's identity. This is compounded by inadequate efforts to preserve and pass down historical narratives, cultures, or languages, leading to a growing sense of

detachment (A. Susanto & Alkatiri, 2022; H. Susanto et al., 2021). The father's disappointment reflects the frustration of many older individuals who perceive the younger generation as disengaged from nationalistic ideals and more inclined toward individualistic or foreign perspectives. This interplay between memory, respect for past struggles, and the evolution of societal values underscores a universal crisis of trust and understanding across generations, emphasizing the story's resonance with real-life societal tensions.

Finally, the crisis of trust is portrayed in *"Mencuri Perahu"* (*Stealing a Boat*) by Ilham Q. Moehiddin, written in 2011. This story explores a child's profound doubt about his own origins. The child questions his father's account of his birth, as the father provides vague and inconsistent explanations. Instead, the child is exposed to rumors from the community, which claim that he was born to a mother who was, in fact, a mermaid. This lack of clarity and conflicting information creates a deep sense of mistrust in the child toward his father and his place within the family.

The Relationship Between the Discourse of the Crisis of Trust in Short Stories and Reality

The relationship between the crisis of trust discussed above serves as a critique, urging individuals to start self-improvement as an effort to enhance the nation's character in a positive direction. This way, assumptions or paradigms in society regarding the crisis of trust can gradually improve.

One short story, titled "*Bendera yang Kembali Berkibar",* reflects the political landscape in developing countries. It tells the story of a character who is ambitious to become an official, using various doctrines related to programs aimed at the advancement of the region they intend to lead. Various efforts are made to convince the public to achieve this ambition, such as spreading visualizations of progress and prosperity that the community will experience under their leadership. Some members of the public begin to consider this candidate, not only because the programs seem logical, but also because there is a belief that all the proposed

programs will be realized due to the strong organizational system of the supporting party. However, after gaining public trust, the individual shifts to another party. This is due to the limited leadership quotas in their original party. Similarly, the generational conflict depicted in "*Dialog Dua Generasi*" reflects the struggles in reconciling traditional values with modern realities, a challenge many societies face as they navigate rapid cultural and technological changes. The story portrays the frustration of the older generation with the perceived indifference of the younger generation, resonating with real-world anxieties about shifting values and priorities. Additionally, in "*Mencuri Perahu*", the narrative of a child questioning their origins and dealing with rumors in the community highlights the erosion of familial trust in the face of societal pressure and misinformation. This story underscores the impact of a lack of communication and transparency within families, a phenomenon often mirrored in real-life familial disputes or misunderstandings. The symbolic act of stealing the boat can be interpreted as a rebellion against societal expectations and a search for personal truth, reflecting broader concerns about identity and belonging.

Such phenomena often occur in society during election periods. Before their name becomes well-known, a candidate will join an established and well-known political party. Once they gain popularity, they leave the party that boosted their name for another party in order to secure a position of power. According to Foucault, such strategies are part of the individuals' maneuvers use to justify any means to achieve power, even if it comes at the expense of the public (Haryatmoko, 2016).

To build a positive political image, individuals aspiring to leadership positions should maintain public trust by not demonstrating excessive ambition, especially to the point of leaving their party. Such actions will affect public perceptions of the consistency between their words and deeds. It will lead to assumptions that if they can abandon their party, they can easily neglect the people. Naturally, if they are later elected, the public will not receive the protection or

advancement they deserve. Instead, personal or group interests will likely take precedence over the well-being and prosperity of the community.

By presenting these themes, literature not only acts as a mirror to reality but also invites readers to critically engage with societal issues, fostering awareness and prompting discourse. The connection between the narratives in these short stories and real-life occurrences underscores literature's role as a medium for exploring and understanding the dynamics of trust, power, and morality in human interactions. These stories bridge the gap between fiction and reality, offering a profound critique of societal issues while encouraging reflection and dialogue.

CONCLUSION

The crisis of trust in leadership, reflected in societal realities and literary works, emerges as a central theme in the short stories *Bendera Yang Kembali Berkibar* (The Flag That Flies Again), *Dialog Dua Generasi* (A Dialogue Between Two Generations), and *Mencuri Perahu* (Stealing the Boat). This phenomenon, influenced by a lack of transparency, integrity, and accountability, spans national to local levels, including hereditary leadership systems in villages, where democratic aspirations challenge traditional practices. These short stories critique power structures and moral dilemmas, symbolizing neglected hope, generational debates, and collective dissatisfaction. As a medium of multivocal expression, literature not only mirrors social dynamics but also reshapes understandings of issues like leadership and democracy. Through their narratives, these works emphasize how public disillusionment with leaders permeates various aspects of governance, encapsulating the ongoing discourse on trust and societal values.

Based on the analysis and the discussion above, public distrust or crisis of trust in the governance systems depicted in the three short stories clearly depicts the social reality that occurs in society. The three short stories have shown that distrust towards leaders, in political landscape, intergenerational relationship, or familial relationship, is an important issue in the realities of life. This reinforces the

view that literature serves as a reflection of life, not only capturing social realities but also critiquing and providing new insights into the phenomena occurring in society.

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