

**THE FAMILY CONFLICT
IN ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMEN***



THESIS

*Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University
in Partial Fulfillment of Requirement to Thesis
in English*

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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
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THESIS
The Family Conflict in Alcott's Little Women

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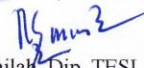
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The Family Conflict in Alcott's Little Women,

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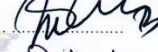

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With reference to the letter of the Dean of Cultural Sciences Number 1433/UN4.9.1/KEP/2020 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the thesis draft by **Mentari Pratiwi** (F041171020) to be examined at the English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences.

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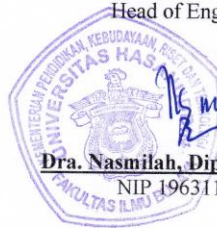
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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by herself. This thesis does not contain any materials which have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except the quotations and references.

Makassar, 22 October 2021

The Writer

Mentari Pratiwi



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All praise and gratitude to Allah SWT who always bestows all His graces and gifts so that the writer can complete this thesis. I also do not forget to say shalawat and greetings to the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

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May Allah SWT always bestow His mercy and grace on them for all their service given. The writer realizes that the preparation of this thesis still has many shortcomings and is far from perfect. The author hopes that this thesis can be useful for readers and become material for thought, as well as in the development of further research. Amen.

Makassar, 27th August 2021
The writer,

Mentari Pratiwi

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ABSTRAK

Mentari Pratiwi.2021.*The Family Conflict in Alcott's Little Women*. (Dibimbing oleh **Abbas** dan **A.St.Aldilah Khaerana**)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis konflik keluarga yang terjadi dalam novel *Little Women* karya Louisa May Alcott. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini merupakan pendekatan struktural, pendekatan ini berfungsi untuk mengetahui keterkaitan unsur-unsur yang saling berhubungan yang terdapat dalam novel. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini merupakan teori konflik menurut perspektif Ursula. Metode yang digunakan merupakan metode kajian pustaka yang dilakukan dengan mengumpulkan data-data dengan membaca keseluruhan objek penelitian kemudian mengidentifikasi masalah dan cara menyelesaikan masalah.

Hasil penelitian ini menggambarkan kehidupan masa remaja keempat bersaudara March, yaitu Meg, Jo, Beth dan Amy. Perbedaan karakter yang mereka miliki sering kali mengakibatkan konflik terjadi diantara mereka dan lingkungan sekitarnya, baik itu konflik terhadap diri sendiri, sanak saudara, dan orang lain. Konflik yang terjadi dalam novel *Little Women* sering kali kita temukan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Selain itu, perkembangan alur sangat mempengaruhi karakter dalam novel.

Kata Kunci: *Konflik Keluarga, Pendekatan Struktural, Novel Little Women*

ABSTRACT

Mentari Pratiwi. 2021. *The Family Conflict in Alcott's Little Women* (Supervised by **Abbas** and **A.St. Aldilah Khaerana**)

This study aims to describe and analyze family conflicts that occur in the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. The approach used in this research is a structuralism approach that serves to determine the interrelationships of the interrelated elements contained in the novel. The theory used in this study is a conflict theory according to Ursula's perspective. The method used is a library research method which is done by collecting data by reading the entire object of research and then identifying the problem and how to solve the problem.

The results of this study describe the teenage lives of the four March brothers, namely Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. The differences in their character often result in conflicts occurring between them and their surroundings, such as conflicts with themselves, between siblings, and others. We often find conflicts that occur in the novel *Little Women* in everyday life. In addition, the development of the plot greatly affects the characters in the novel.

Keywords: *Family Conflict, Structural Approach, Novel Little Women*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Humans are creatures that cannot live alone, both in the family environment and in the community environment because humans always need interaction with each other. Basically, humans have social characteristics that bring someone to interact well with one another. A good interaction is determined by the character, attitude, and nature of a person who is able to adapt to the people around them. Harmonization in social interactions is absolutely necessary in order to fulfill one's desires, both personal and collective.

Humans have a desire to channel their wants and needs, including sexual desire legally through marriage. Living together between men and women is a space for the breeding process in one family. A family institution is a household as the smallest unit of society consisting of the head of the family and several people who gather and live in a place under one roof in a state of interdependence. The gathering of several people in one family is a communal integration that creates an atmosphere of harmony. On the other hand, the family also has the potential to become an arena for conflict because it is a gathering place for many interests. According to Wellek & Werren (in Nurgiyantoro, 2015: 179), conflict is something dramatic, referring to a fight between two balanced forces and implies action and retaliation. Conflicts often occur between children and parents and even between children and children (siblings). Conflicts that often occur in the family can be viewed as disputes that can make the relationship unharmonious

because of misunderstandings, differences of opinion, or incompatibility between one another.

Humans and conflict are two social facts that are interrelated in various environments such as in the family environment and in the community environment. These two social facts become a separate space that inspires artists and writers in documenting their imaginary world. One of the writers named Louisa May Alcott poured her imagination about family conflicts in a novel entitled *Little Women*, written in 1832-1888. This novel tells the story of the March family life which consists of four siblings, namely Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. Their lives are simple and always beset by conflicts triggered by problems of love, injustice, disappointment, and character sentiments. The four siblings each have different characters. March always strives to create harmony in family life, Meg is a mature and motherly person, Jo is honest and has high temperament, Beth is shy and quiet, Amy is a spoiled and immature little artist. This diversity of characters is a source of differences that create conflict between them.

Meg and Jo were about to go with Laurie, curious Amy asked where they were going and wanted to come with her two sisters, but Jo did not tell her because she was still considered a child. Meg then proposes to Jo to invite Amy, but Jo won't go if her sister comes. Jo then tells Amy that she is pushing herself too much to participate even though Laurie did not invite her to. Annoyed by Jo's words, Amy hurriedly put on her boots and insisted on sticking with them. At the same time Laurie comes calling Meg and Jo to leave, annoyed Amy tells Jo that she will regret it threateningly. Jo, who felt that she did not care anymore about

her younger sister's childish attitude, replied by slamming the door. Meg and Jo enjoy the show they attend with Laurie, but Jo continues to think about Amy's threats that will make her regret it. Thus, several incidents that become problems in this family are the relationships between siblings who have personalities and incompatibilities with each other and result in family conflicts.

The various events experienced by the four siblings in the March family caused conflict in the family and social environment around them. The family conflict experienced by the March family requires a solution as a moral message in fostering a harmonious family in the form of advice, tenderness, affection, and so on. Based on the reality related to the March family conflict which consists of four siblings, namely Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy, the author wants to further research this phenomenon by assigning the research title to *The Family Conflict in Alcott's Little Women*.

1.2 Identification of Problem

One of the issues raised in the *Little Women* novel by Louisa May Alcott is the family conflict experienced by the March Family. The author identifies a number of problem in this novel related to the issue of family conflict as follows :

1. The March Family life is filled with love from each other but there are also many trials they face in the novel.
2. Some of the main characters in the novel make self-sacrifice for their families.
3. The characters in the novel have different personalities that can make conflicts occur between themselves.

4. *Little Women* novel tells the life of the March family, which consist of four siblings, namely Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy.
5. Various events experienced by the four siblings in the March family caused conflict in the family and social environment around them.

1.3 Scope Of Study

To make the research appropriate the objectives of the study, the writer makes a limitation to the study. The writer only focuses on the problem of family conflict that occur in Alcott's *Little Women*.

1.4 The Research Question

The writer finds several aspects that can be determined as the questions for this research as follows:

1. What is the background that ignite to the family conflict in the novel *Little Women*?
2. How do the fictional characters in the story resolve the family conflicts among them in the novel?

1.5 Objective of Study

Based on the research questions, the writer formulates the purpose of this study as follows:

1. To describe the background that ignite to the family conflict in the novel *Little Women*.
2. To explain the way of the fictional characters in the story resolve the family conflicts among them in the novel.

1.6 Sequence of Writing

This writing consists of five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction that consists of background of writing, identification of problems, research of questions, objectives of problem, and sequence of the chapter. Chapter two is literature review that consists of previous study, structuralism approach, and the concept of conflict. Chapter three consists of research methodology that explains the way of the writer conduct the thesis analysis.

The chapter four consists of finding and discussion. The writer makes an analysis of what has been found in the novel and makes connection with the underlying theory. The last chapter consists of conclusion and suggestion. The writer makes a conclusion and suggestion for readers to do analysis further for the relevant study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Previous Study

Louisa May Alcott has several novels that are popular today. These novels contain several valuable aspects that attract readers to know more deeply. This research is not the first to use Louisa May Alcott's novel as an object of analysis. The writer found several previous studies that have used Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* novel as the object of this research, including Liana (2006) from the University of North Sumatra, Pristiana (2014) from the University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta, and Heni (2018) from the University of North Sumatra.

Liana (2006) has analyzed the novel *Little Women* related to feminism in America with the title 'An Analysis of Feminism as Reflected in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*'. In this research, the author used descriptive analysis methods to write research and used a feminist approach. The purpose of this research is to analyze the lives of women in the 19th century, which is the origin of feminism in the novel *Little Women*. This research shows the ability of women who have feminine characteristics by showing strong self-confidence, facing many types of problems that should not be experienced by women, and being able to make the right decisions for their lives without interference from others.

The second research was conducted by Pristiana (2014) regarding the meaning of family and happiness in fictional characters in the novel entitled 'The Meaning of Family and Happiness in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868): Feminist Approach'. In this study the authors used a feminist approach. The

purpose of this research is to analyze women's lives without men around them. The March family shows how the meaning of family and happiness in the novel *Little Women*, even though they are in a bad financial condition because of their father who is in the battlefield, they never stop showing love and have a happy life because togetherness in the family is a very precious thing or time, whether in a state of poor or rich, difficult or happy, complete or not.

Heni (2018) has analyzed the novel *Little Women* related to the struggle of the main character in realizing her dream with the title 'An Analysis of Woman Struggle in Louisa May Alcott's Novel *Little Women*'. The main character in this novel is Jo, Jo, who questions the limits of women's movement which greatly disturbs her life and is in the process of realizing her dreams. This study aims to find a picture of the women's struggles that occurred in the 19th century in Jo's life with her three sisters and her mother. Jo who has a strong, brave and tough character, and the closest people who always support her in realizing her dreams. The method used by the writer in this research is descriptive qualitative.

Based on the descriptions of the three studies above, the writer has a different perspective to analyze the novel *Little Women*. These three studies have several relationships that can support the author's research. Thus having the same object but a different approach. The first research has the same object, but this research focuses on analyzing the lives of women in the 19th century using a feminist approach. Meanwhile, the author's research focuses on family conflict using a structuralism approach and conflict theory. Likewise with the second study, using a different approach, namely the feminist approach, but has the same

object. The third research has the same object, but this research focuses on the analysis of women's struggles that occurred in the 19th century in Alcott's *Little Women*. Meanwhile, the author's research focuses on family conflicts that occur in Alcott's *Little Women*.

2.2. Structuralism Approach

Structuralism was developed in the early 1900s by Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics, and then evolved from Russian Formalism and Prague Structuralism. Russian Formalism and Prague Structuralism pioneered the structural approach and were influenced by Saussure's theory which changed linguistic studies from a diachronic to a synchronic approach. According to Mukarovsky (in Ratna, 2015:88), the structuralism introduced in 1934 did not use methods or theories, because on the one hand, theory means a specific field of science, and on the other hand, method means a relatively standard scientific procedure. Term structure is not only used in language and linguistics, but also in other fields, such as sociology, anthropology, history, literature, etc.

Structuralism can be seen as an approach in literature that examines the relationship between elements that build literature. Structuralism approach is an approach that describes the interrelationships between elements of a literary work that produces the overall meaning and pays attention to literary works regardless of the extrinsic aspects of a literary work. If the object of research is a prose, then what being examined are the aspects that build a short story or novel such as characterizations, setting, plot, and theme. The relationship between the elements in the story is important in this approach.

Every text in a literary work has a structure. The structure of the text organizes various elements to be connected to one another. The structure is what makes the text meaningful, reasonable and easy to understand. When reading a fictional story, the reader will meet several characters and various events carried out by the characters, the place, time, and socio-cultural background where the story takes place and all of them go hand in hand and support each other. For example, how the characters relate to each other, each of the events are connected and how the socio-cultural background to form characters and others. According to Abrams (1981: 68), the structure of literary works can be regarded as arrangement, firmness, and depiction of all elements and materials which shaping a unity.

The structuralism approach in literary research aims to analyze the relationship between elements of literary works as a whole. This analysis can be done by describing, studying and identifying the intrinsic elements of the related literary works. Structural analysis is not only carried out by simply listing certain elements of a literary work such as plot, theme, character, setting and others, but shows how the relationship between these elements can produce the overall meaning to be achieved. According to Eagleton (1996: 107), structural is teaching and studying is not so much 'literary works' but the 'literary system' - the whole system of codes, genres and conventions by which we identify and interpret literary works in the first place.

Based on the previous explanation regarding the structuralism approach, the writer understands that this approach focuses on the intrinsic elements of

literary works regardless of the extrinsic aspects. Structural analysis aims to analyze interrelated intrinsic elements so as to produce the meaning of the whole story. Intrinsic elements contained in literary works are characters and characterizations, plot, setting, themes, points of view and others. These elements are called the structure of the story text.

2.2.1. Character

Character in literature is a story actor who is related to all the events that take place in the story. Characters are created by authors who experience events in the story based on the author's imagination, without characters or actors in the story, a story will not be formed and has no movement power. According to Bennet & Royle (2004: 60), character is the life of literature: they are object of our curiosity and fascination, affection and dislike, admiration and condemnation. Indeed, so intense is our relationship with literary characters that they often cease to be simply 'objects'.

In a novel, the reader is usually faced with several characters in it. However, each character usually does not have the same relationship in the story. It can be seen from the importance of the role of characters in a story, there are characters who dominate the story more, and some are only raised a few times. A character in a story has its own function, for example, a character who opens the story at the beginning of the story, which creates story conflicts, and brings about the resolution of story conflicts. When viewed from the roles of the characters in the development of the plot, it can be distinguished by the presence of the main character and supporting or additional characters.

The main character is usually told the most and the conflict in the story usually starts with the main character and ends with the main character. Because they are most often told, the main character really determines the development of the plot in the whole story. In addition to the main character, there are also supporting or additional characters, supporting character are characters who do not have an important role, they only appear to support the role of the main character.

In addition to the main character and supporting character, the character can be divided into two types when viewed from the function of the appearance of the character, namely the protagonist and the antagonist. The protagonist is a character that is most admired by readers because it displays something according to the readers' expectations and describes a good and positive character. According to Nurgiyantoro (2015: 261), the protagonist shows something that meets our expectations, the expectations of the readers. Therefore, we often see it as our common ground and the problems it faces as our own.

Meanwhile, the antagonist is the opponent of the protagonist. The antagonist becomes the person who causes conflict in the story. For novel lovers and readers, this character is highly disliked, because it presents a negative and evil character which can make the reader feel annoyed with this character. In a story, the antagonist has an important role and the author often appears in the story to attract the attention of the reader. According to Nurgiyantoro (2015: 261), an antagonist is a role that is directly or indirectly, physically or mentally in the

position of the protagonist. It is the antagonist who causes the conflict and tension that makes the story interesting.

The writer understands that the characters in the story are people who become actors of the story who have an important role in developing the plot of the whole story. Character is an important element in a literary work, especially in novels, the antagonist and protagonist have their own appearance function for the characters which can make the development of the storyline interesting, so that the readers can feel the emotions and tension of the story. In addition, when viewed from the roles of the characters, there are main and supporting characters. The function of the characters in the story is to provide an overview of how the characters live in the author's imagination.

2.2.2. Plot

Plot is the structure of a series of events that occur in a story. The events in a story occur because of cause and effect. The plot regulates how the actions of events in a story must be related, such as how one event is related to another event, how the characters who play a role are related to events from time to time as the plot develops. According to Forster (1927: 130), a plot is a narrative of events the emphasis falling on causality. The king died and the queen died of grief is not plot, the time sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it.

In a story, plot is an important element. Plot functions to regulate the course of a story and explain how events that occur are related to one another. The events that occur in the story can be described through the actions, behavior and

attitudes of the characters. From the incident, the character's actions or behavior will contain an element of conflict, so that it is interesting to tell because it is dramatic. Creating an interesting or mysterious plot will attract readers curiosity.

According to Nurgiyantoro (2015:173), there are three elements that build the development of the story plot, namely:

1. Event

In a literary work, it is often found the use of the terms actions or events that occur alternately or simultaneously. The causes of events arise because of actions such as hitting, berating and others. The events that are portrayed in a story happen because of something that is done or experienced by the story characters who contain conflicts. There are many events that appear in a story, but not all events support the plot. There are events that do not affect or relate to the development of the plot, but are related to other elements, such as the relationship with the atmosphere or character traits.

2. Conflict

Conflict is a very important element in plot development. Conflicts usually occur and are experienced by characters in a story. One of the things that can attract the reader's attention is when the conflict reaches a climax until it finds a solution. The author's ability to choose and build a plot through each event will determine whether the story will be interesting or not. The conflicts that we often find in a story are revenge, betrayal, and others.

3. *Climax*

Conflict and climax are very important in plot structure. The climax is likely to occur only in the presence of conflict. A conflict can be a climax or not, can be resolved or not, it depends on the willingness and purpose of the author in creating the conflict. After the story has reached its climax, it will determine the fate of the characters who experience conflict, whether the character will get a solution in resolving the conflict experienced and ending happily or not.

Based on the description above, the writer concludes that the plot is one of the important elements in a story. Plots function to organize the course of the story and explain how events are related to one another. The storyline will be interesting because the actions and behavior of the characters contain elements of conflict. Events, conflict and climax are three elements that build plot development.

2.2.3. Setting

In addition to explaining the function of the background as a depiction of the place (space) and time, the setting is also very closely related to the characters, because of it can express the character of the perpetrator (Wellek & Warren, 1956: 221).

At the beginning of the story in a work of fiction, it usually contains an introduction to various things. For example, the introduction of various things to be told, such as character introduction, environmental conditions, place, atmosphere, time, and so on. This introduction can provide and invite readers to know the situation of the story. But not all of these introductions are at the

beginning of the story, they may be found at another stage such as in the middle or at the end of the story. The setting is created by the author to give the reader a realistic impression, as if it really existed and happened. Settings can be divided into three types, namely:

1. Setting of Place

The setting of the place is the location of the events that are told in a work of fictions. The place elements used are places with a specific name, initials or location. In a place called a place that is found in the real world, such as, Makassar, Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Aceh, Medan and others. In the setting of a place in a novel usually includes various locations, will move from one place to another according to the development of the plot.

2. Setting of Time

Setting of time has a relationship with the problem that asks when the events told in a story occur. Time setting is usually related to place setting because they are related to one another. The state of a location or place that is told will certainly refer to a certain time, for example events that occurred in the past, present and future, it also describes the situation at night, afternoon, morning or evening.

3. Socio-Culture Background

The socio-cultural background leads to things that are related to the behavior of the social life of the community which is told in a fictional work in a certain place. For example, the language or dialect used in a certain area, life habits, livelihoods and others. According to Nugiyantoro (2015: 322), social and

cultural backgrounds can be expressed as living habits, customs, traditions, beliefs, views of life, ways of thinking, and behavior. Socio-cultural background can also be in the form of the use of a particular language or dialect.

From the explanation above, the writer understands that the setting is the place, time and atmosphere of the occurrence of an event that is told in a fictional work. The division of background in literature has three elements, namely the setting of time, place, and socio-culture.

2.2.4. Theme

Theme one of the important elements in the formation of literary works. Theme is the main idea of a story that is created by the author before making a story. The presence or absence of certain conflict situations is related to the theme, including its relation to other intrinsic elements because these elements will support the clarity of the theme that the author wants to convey.

To find a theme in a literary work, it must be inferred from the whole story, not based only on certain parts of the story. A central meaning of this sort corresponds to what, in a story, we call the "theme" or "central idea". Like the central meaning of our experience, the theme of a story is both particular and universal in its value: it lends force and unity to the events described, and it tells us something about life in general. A theme may take the form of a generalization about life, a generalization that may or may not imply a moral judgement (Stanton, 1965: 5).

Based on the description above, the writer understands that theme is the main idea created by the author in a work of fiction and is the most important

element in the formation of a story and is seen as the basis of the story, the idea of a work of fiction.

2.3. Theory of Conflict

Conflict theory is a view that sees society as a social system that includes different individual interests where there will be attempts to set aside other members to fulfill personal interests. The emergence of conflict theory as a reaction to the theory of structural functionalism which pays attention to the existence of conflicts that occur in society. Basically, conflict theory about society is not different from structural functionalism theory because they both see society as a system consisting of parts (Raho, 2021: 95). The thought that became the main contribution and was very influential or became the basis of this conflict theory was the thought of Karl Marx.

Conflict is a process to achieve a goal by making the opponent weak without maintaining attitudes and behavior. If seen, of course, conflict has a negative impact because it is a conflict between one individual and another which will weaken the relationship. However, Coser considered that the occurrence of conflict also had a positive impact, because according to Coser, conflict could make the relationship between individuals in a group even tighter. Conflict can be a process that is instrumental in the formation, integration and maintenance of social structures. Conflict with other groups can reinforce group identity and protect it from dissolving into the social world around it (Kasim & Nurdin, 2015: 59).

There are several factors that cause conflicts to occur, including political, economic, religious, cultural and social factors. One of the conflict factors that we often find in society is social conflict. In social life, social conflict is not separated because of differences between individuals or groups, be it differences in race, opinion, culture and others.

Conflict as a form of social interaction has various types, namely conflicts between individuals, groups, and even between nations. According to Kenney (1996: 19), a story may deal with a conflict within a single man, a conflict between man, a conflict between man and society, a conflict between man and natural.

One of the social conflicts that often occurs can be found in a family. It is not uncommon for conflicts in the family to often occur because of conflicts, disagreements and differences of opinion between individuals and this causes emotions such as anger, fear and others. Conflicts that occur in the family are usually conflicts between siblings, parents and children, and husband and wife which are carried out by attacking each other through words and physical attacks that will cause hostility, silent behavior, tensions and broken family relationships. This type of conflict in the family also arises between uncles and aunts, son-in-law and in-laws and others.

Family relationships are eternal, because parents will always be parents as well as siblings. There is no such thing as a former parent or ex-sibling, and therefore usually impact of family conflict are usually more complex, because of family conflict more often and deeper than other conflicts as social conflicts.

Many factors cause family conflicts, such as jealousy, differences of opinion, selfishness, economic problems and others.

According to Lehr (in Solih, 1994: 18), there are several types of conflict in the family:

1. Conflict with self or person. This conflict occurs because of a person's struggle against themselves, so that they can determine and overcome whatever they will do without any help from others. This conflict is caused by themselves, the feeling of pressure experienced by individuals because they have to achieve the goals that must be achieved.
2. Conflict with a person or group. The emergence of this conflict occurs in relationships between neighbors, friends and other people. This type of conflict occurs because there are differences of opinion about something with the same goal.
3. Conflict between siblings. This conflict is very often found in family conflicts. Conflicts that occur between siblings are usually due to disagreements because of different opinions, being selfish about something and that will trigger fights.

The occurrence of conflict in society is essential, in order to form a social change. In society, social changes always occur, if it is seen that these changes are caused by conflicts of self-interest. However, at some points, they are able to come to a mutual agreement to resolve the conflict. Likewise in the family, although in a family experiencing conflict is not a comfortable thing, not all

conflicts have a negative impact. Conflicts in the family also need to occur so that there is openness to one another.