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## Social Injustice as Reflected in Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist

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### Abstract

*Social injustice is a phenomenon which occurred since long time ago and it still becomes a social problem nowadays, it is also depicted in many literary works, especially in the 19th century literary tradition in England. This research aims to find out the kinds of social injustice depicted along the plot story in Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist and to know how the main characters react and solve such social injustice they encounter in their daily communal life. The research is categorized as a descriptive qualitative research, using the sociological approach. The data are collected from primary data and secondary data. The primary data are taken from Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist through the description of events and characterizations, while the secondary data are from various books, journals, articles and some sources from internet. The research reveals that among many kinds of social injustice, poverty, social stratification and child labor are the most common issues depicted in Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist. The researcher also finds that most of characters that experience social injustice are those who come from the lower class. They suffer poverty and cannot do anything to change the condition. In order to stay alive, most of the characters who experience such kind of social injustice prefer to conduct criminal. In relation to the application of sociology of literature theory, it is found that social injustice like poverty, social stratification and child labor depicted in the novel are the representation of the real condition at the time the novel was written.*

**Keywords:** social injustice, nineteenth century, England

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### 1. Introduction

Discussion about literature could never exist if there is no author who produces and writes it. So that is why undeniably if an author plays an important role in literature. It can be stated that an author is like a mother who gives birth to her child. For an author, his or her child is not a human being but a literary work. As a member of a society, an author depicts the life, such as social problem around him in his or her works. De Bonald in Wellek and Warren (1956: 95) states that "literature is an expression of society". It may represent what actually happened in the society. Thus, as an expression of society, literature cannot be separated from all the problems occurred and happened at the time it was written. Literature is a form of creative writing which contains ideas, feeling, spirit, ideology and belief of it's author.

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From the very moment it existed, literary works take an important part in people's life. Besides giving pleasure in reading it, literature also contains educational values and some information in relation to social reality of the society. Literature can also be used as social and cultural documents which record social reality in a particular period of time.

In England, during the early years of the Nineteenth Century, novel especially the social novel was the most popular and successful works because at the time reading novel seems to be an addiction. It was influenced by the prosperity of the society. For them who had money, reading novel became a primary source of entertainment beside going to the theatre (McDonnell, *et.al.*, 1985: 361). The social novel which is also known as the social problem novel is a work of fiction which depicts the social problems which occurs in the societies, such as gender inequalities, crimes, poverty, race, class prejudice, child labor, violence against women, crime and the like.

One of the famous writers in the English literary tradition is Charles Dickens. He is considered by many critics to be a "realist" writer. In most of his novels, he depicted the real condition around him. Furthermore, by many critics, most of Dickens' works are categorized as the social novel because the main concern of his novel was the social problem such as poverty and unhealthy condition associated with it; crime, the exploitation of ordinary people by the extraordinary one, corruption, social stratification, and etc.

According to some readings, the Nineteenth Century was a period when England became a great country. During this era, in England, life was transformed by Industrial Revolution. It was a period of significant social, economical and technological changes. At first half of the century, those significant changes caused much suffering to some people. Many people who moved from the countryside to the big city including children lived in slum areas, experienced injustice, such as poverty, discrimination, and so on. The words "all men are created equal" were just words, because the rights of some individuals and groups of people had been abused, and not all people were treated fairly and equally.

*Oliver Twist* is a novel written by Charles Dickens which originally entitled *Oliver Twist: the Parish Boy's Progress*. It was published in twenty-four monthly installment from 1837-1839 in Bentley's Miscellany. It is considered by many critics as one of the great and successful novel of Dickens. Briefly, the novel is the story of a young orphan called Oliver Twist who was born in a workhouse. His mother died a moment after giving birth to baby Oliver, while his father was unknown. Young Oliver spent his early childhood in a workhouse as a labor in a factory. One day, after facing unpleasant treatment from the beadle in the workhouse where he lived, he decided to escape. After escaping from the dark and dismal workhouse where he was born, Oliver found himself on the mean streets of London and he was unwillingly recruited into a gang of pickpocket under the leadership of Fagin. After facing and finally being able to overcome some troubles and problems, young Oliver found happiness in the rest of his life. Through this novel Dickens criticized the hypocrisies during the Nineteenth Century, including poverty, child labor as well as the recruitment of children in crime.

Social injustice is a phenomenon which has occurred in the society since long time ago (Dogra, 2014: 1); it happens in almost every country in the world, especially in England during the Nineteenth Century. For some authors, this condition is an interesting thing to be depicted in literary works.

The main problem of this research is the social injustice during the Nineteenth Century in England depicted in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. In order to be able to

explore the problem, the writer formulates the following research questions (1) What kinds of social injustice depicted along the plot of story in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*? (2) How do the main characters react and solve such social injustices he encounters in his daily communal life?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Sociology of Literature

In defining sociological approach, it is needed to explain first the meaning of Sociology. Talking about human social life, it is a very expansive term, human social life including the condition of economy, religion, education, language, law, etc. According to Cragun (2006:7), sociology is the study of human social life; it shows us how the people interact with each other, how groups and societies differ, and how social affects human's behaviors. Swingewood in Faruk (1994: 3) defines that sociology is a scientific and objective study about human being in society, a study of social institutions where they live in and also a study of the social process within the society. From Swingewood's statement, it can be said that sociology is a study about human being as the member of the society and all of the activities happen in it. Weber in Indianto (2004: 11) states that sociology is a science which tries to understand the social actions. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that sociology deals with the relationship between human being and social process, including the social change.

Like sociology, literature also deals with the human relation in a society, their attempt to match themselves to the society where they live in, and their attempt to change the society. Thus, novel as one of genres of literature is considered as an attempt to recreate the social world. It means that like sociology, novel also relates to the condition of social, economy and politic (Damono, 2013: 9).

Literature is an attempt to make sense of our lives. Sociology is an attempt to make sense of the ways in which we live our lives (Burns, 1973: 9). Sociology and literature are two different things, but both of them have the same capacity which can give explanation about the meaning of literary text. Sociology implies the science of human relationship occurred in the society and the society itself is widely the central factor which influences the literary work. Furthermore, according to Laurenson and Swingewood in Endraswara (2013: 78), the object of study in sociology and literature is human being, therefore they can complete each other. It is in line with Levin's statement in Endraswara (2013: 79). He states that literature is not only the effect of social causes but also the cause of social effect. Thus, the study of the relationship between society and literary work is called sociology of literature.

In the perspective of sociology of literature, a literary work is not autonomous. It is always related to the society. It is considered as a socio-cultural phenomenon and a product of society. Madame de Stael is credited with the first explicit attempt to treat literature sociologically in her proposal to examine the influence of religions, customs and law on literature and the influence of literature on religions, customs and law (Burns, 1973: 10-11). The study of sociology of literature cannot be separated from the society, because the author is a member of society, and what is presented in the literary work is mostly about the social phenomenon within the society itself. on the one hand, it explores the relationship among artists especially author with the society.

## 2.2. Social injustice

Social injustice is related to unfair or unequal treatment experienced by the people who are considered to fit into one or more marginalized group. The marginalized group meant here can be the poor, an adopted, left-handed, aboriginal, female child, disabled, and so on. It means that social injustice can occur in a society as long as there is a group which is marginalized rather than another group.

In a place where social injustice happens, the people who have power cannot be questioned and they are believed to be right while those who are considered to be inferior should keep silent about what they feel and think. They have no right to express what on their mind is, they do not have any right to question the situation and condition around them. Simply, the marginalized group could not do anything to change the situation they faced. The only thing they can do is to stay silent and let the dominant group act as they want.

Injustice tends to vary among societies in the level of intensity, from very low to very high. This variation reflects the differences in values and in degrees of inequality with respect to the key institutions of social life in particular society at particular time (Gil, 2013: 16-17). There are a lot of examples of social injustice, such as poverty, lack of freedom, hate crimes, bullying, high rates of unemployment or poverty among certain ethnic groups, ageism, etc.

Based on the explanation about the meaning of social injustice, it can be concluded that basically social injustice is the form of the violation of the human right. It deals with:

- a. The unfair distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities;
- b. Oppression of any form; and
- c. Anything that prevents people from exercising self-determination and realizing their full potential.

Dogra (2013: 1-2) in her online article entitled *Social Injustice* has written about some kinds of social injustice such as (1) unequal distribution of wealth, (2) casteism, (3) racial discrimination, (4) sexism—discrimination on the basis of sex, (5) ableism—discrimination on the basis of physical prosperity, (6) child labor, and (7) homophobia—discrimination towards gay, lesbians and transgender.

Furthermore, in relation to the types of social injustice, in his book *Confronting Injustice and Oppression*, Gil (2013: 29) states that contemporary manifestations of injustice and oppression within societies, as well as in worldwide relations, are typically experienced, perceived and challenged as supposedly discrete, unrelated phenomena, such as racism, sexism, ageism, and discrimination by sexual orientation, disabilities, religions and so on

### **Poverty**

Poverty is the antonym of wealthy. It exists in every nation in this world, even if the nation is the richest one. The division between the rich and the poor exists in all societies. The rich has more opportunities rather than the poor. The poor are lacking of basic needs, for instance food, education, housing, and employment. They are also limited on the access of having means and resources and they cannot do anything about that. This situation then leads the rich getting richer and the poor becomes poorer.

Poverty refers to the condition of having little or no money, goods, and means of support. According to Soekanto (2010: 320), poverty is a condition where a man cannot take care of himself in the respect of the living standard of the group where he lives in and he cannot take benefit from his ability in his group. From Soekanto's point of view, it can be said that poverty depends on how people can make the best use of their ability as well as their power. When they can do their best in benefitting their potential, automatically they will not fall into poverty.

### **Social Stratification or Casteism**

Social stratification or casteism is largely a condition that builds a community after a certain level of development. According to Dobriner (1994: 214) social stratification is essentially the organization of inequalities within society, the distribution of rewards, the allocation of scarcities and the formalization of positions in some hierarcichal order. Simply, social stratification divides the societies into the different sections. The higher class dominates the people of the lower class and they do not provide the lower class an opportunity to grow.

According to Soekanto (2013: 197), every society has certain respect on a particular thing. It then caused the social stratification. Social stratification is the distinction of a person or a group based on their position in the society. Furthermore, according to Cody in his online article entitled *Social Class* (2002) different social class can be distinguished by inequalities in power, authority, wealth, life style, working and living conditions, life span, life span, education, religion, and culture.

In the Nineteenth Century especially during the Victorian era, there were some changes in social class system as compared to the traditional class system of England. Based on the researcher's reading on history, here are the divisions of class system in England.

#### **a. The Upper class**

This is the very high category in the division of class in a society. Upperclass people did not work manually yet their routine works were handled by their servants whom usually from the lower class people. Their income usually came from their investments or from their parents' inheritance. This class consisted of three subdivisions.

The first is royal class. This class deal with the people from royal family and the spiritual lords of that time. The second is middle upper class; this class consists of great officers of England, the baronet along with temporal lords. The third is lower upper class. It includes country wealthy gentleman and large scale bussiness men who had made their way with the immense wealthy they had.

#### **b. The Middle class**

They were the people who had jobs to do. They made their life from the job they did. There were two subdivisions of this class. The first is high level middle class. They were the people who had high salaries and high social status rather than the lower middle class people. It consists of professionals with a college education, and more often with professional or academic postgraduate degrees like doctors, engineers, dentists, lawyers, bankers, corporate executives, school principals and superintendents, head teachers, university professors, scientists, pharmacists, airline pilots, ship captains, accountants, actuaries, high level civil servants, politicians, and military officers,

architects, artists, writers, poets, and musicians.

The second is lower level middle class. In terms of the salary they got from the job they did, they were lower than the high level middle class because they did their job based on the order given by the high level middle class. It consists of lower-paid professionals (white collar workers), but not manual laborers. They often hold Associates or Bachelor degrees, such as police officers, firefighters, primary and high school teachers, nurses, municipal office workers and low to mid-level civil servants, clergy, technicians, small business owners.

#### c. The Working class

In the Nineteenth Century class divisions in England, the working class was the group of laborers. It was divided into two categories. The first is skilled class. They had unskilled laborers under their supervisions. The second is unskilled class. They were the lowest category of labor. The lower class was distinguished from the upper one in terms of having less education, no pretensions to gentility, fewer resources or opportunities, and in some cases, simply less luck. Their occupations usually deal with working in the upper and middle class, miscellaneous occupations, seamstresses, milliners, farm, factory and mine workers, washerwomen, and domestic servants.

#### d. The Under class

This class was firstly introduced and being incorporated in England's social system during the Victorian era. The people who belong to this group were the sort of helpless people and they depended on others. This class was divided into two subdivisions. The first is the poor. They were the poor people and orphans who relied on the charity of others. They could not live their life without depending their life on other people's help. And the second division is the prostitutes. They were the women who were considered to be at the bottom of the society.

### **2.3. Child Labor**

Child labor is one of examples of social injustice. It refers to the employment of children in any work field that makes children unable to enjoy their childhood (Dogra, 2014: 3). Working on an industry or any work field has a big impact in the development of the children. It will influence the way they behave in the society. Furthermore, child labor will also take away the children's opportunity to attend school and have a nice childhood. In the most extreme form, child labor makes the children to be the slave, separates them from the family and perhaps exposes them to into a serious illness. The form of child labor actually varied from one place to another, the situation and the condition around it also plays a big role in the existing of child labor.

Having the explanation about some kinds of social injustice above, the researcher will give limitation on what issues that will be analyzed, because the concept of social injustice is too broad. This research will only be focused on analyzing the depiction of poverty, casteism or social stratification and child labor.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Type of Research

In this research, the researcher will use descriptive qualitative research. This method is chosen because the data presented in the form of descriptions or words. The data collected in the form of words rather than numbers. Thus, qualitative research is a research that describes written data, reveal problems, circumstances and facts. The data are collected based on the facts then the data is described, analyzed and be concluded.

#### 3.2. Source of Data

This research is written based on primary and secondary data. Primary data is taken from the novel *Oliver Twist* which published by Barnes and Noble Classic in 2003. The researcher reads the novel and quotes some important fragments of the story—words, phrases and sentences which show the form of social injustice—in which the injustices exist along with the daily life of society that are related to the topic of this research.

The secondary data are taken from various books, articles, journals, and online sources. Through this secondary data, the researcher combines with the obtainable data to see how they are all supporting the later analysis.

#### 3.3. Method of Collecting Data

This research is a library research. In collecting the data of this research, the researcher applies some steps below:

1. Reading the novel carefully and comprehensively.
2. Taking notes of the data in accordance to the problem questioned in the research question. By this way, the researcher notes some events and quotations which related to social injustice phenomenon.
3. Dividing the related fragments of the story—words, phrases and sentences which show the form of social injustice.
4. Combining the obtainable data to suit the research questions.

#### 3.4. Procedure of Analyzing Data

In analyzing the data, the writer applies some steps as follow:

1. After having the complete data, the researcher then reads the data comprehensively.
2. Classifying the data into the types of social injustice which have been explained in the chapter two.
3. Analyzing the data through reading strategies by using sociological approach initiated by Rene Wellek and Austen Warren which focuses on literature as the source of social events and history or the documents of social phenomenon.

### 4. Findings

#### The Kinds of Social Injustice in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*

Based on some readings, basically, social injustice is in the form of violation of the human rights. It deals with the unfair distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; oppression of any form; and anything that prevents people from exercising self-determination and realizing their full potential.

Actually there are many kinds of social injustice, but in this research the researcher only focuses on analysis on poverty, social stratification (casteism), and child labor.

## Poverty

As already explained in chapter two, the concept of poverty in this research is mostly about having no money, no house to sleep, lack of food, and the like. In *Oliver Twist*, poverty is revealed through some descriptions, such as financial, physical, and environmental condition of the characters.

As everybody knows that a house refers to a building in which people live. Ideally, as a place to take a rest after doing some works outside, a house should be comfortable. It does not need to be large, but at least it could make the inmates who live inside it feel pleasant. At the early part of the novel, Dickens shows the readers the condition of the houses in a slum area which look old and decayed.

*The houses on either side were high and large, but very old, and tenanted by people of the poorest class: as their neglected appearance would have sufficiently denoted, without the concurrent testimony afforded by the squalid looks of the few men and women who, with folded arms and bodies half doubled, occasionally skulked along. (Dickens, 2003: 63-64)*

The quotation above portrays the environmental condition where the people from the very poor class live. They live in a slum area where the houses there are not good to be inhabited anymore. The words “denoted” and “squalid” strengthen this idea. The words “with folded arms and bodies half doubled” may indicate that because of suffering starvation, the poor fold their arms and bodies as a way to restrain hunger.

*Some houses which had become insecure from age and decay, were prevented from falling into the street, by huge beams of wood reared against the walls, and firmly planted in the road; [...] (Dickens, 2003: 64)*

Based on the description in the quotation above, it can be stated that the living condition of the poor in slum area is very bad. They have to live in some aged houses which can fall into the street at any time. In order to prevent those houses from falling, the inmate should put “huge beams of wood” behind the walls and plant them in the road. Dickens describes the houses in slum area almost like the people who are tottering and crazy, supporting themselves on canes. Actually the inmates of the houses realize that the houses they live in are not good to be inhabited at all, but they have no other places to go.

Another description about poverty can be seen in the quotation below:

*The man's face was thin and very pale; his hair and beard were grizzly; his eyes were bloodshot. The old woman's face was wrinkled; her two remaining teeth protruded over her under lip; and her eyes were bright and piercing. Oliver was afraid to look at either her or the man. They seemed so like the rats he had seen outside. (Dickens, 2003: 64)*

The quotation above shows the living condition of a poor family in a slum area. The bad financial condition affects this family members' physical condition. The narrator uses the word “thin”, “pale”, and “bloodshot” to describe their physical appearance which indicate that they do not eat properly. In addition, another impact of having no money or means of support makes them look like “the rat”. All these words underline the poor condition of this family.

## Social Stratification

Social stratification differs the member of the society whether they are the upper class or the middle class or the lower class. After reading the novel comprehensively, the researcher presents the data in accordance to social stratification depicted in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. The researcher finds that there four class divisions in the novel; (1) the upper middle class, (2) the lower middle class, (3) the working class, and (4) the under class. The upper class family is excluded because Dickens in this novel does not portray the upper class. He only portrays the condition of the under class, which is surrounded by and related to the people in the upper middle class, the lower middle class, and the working class.

The following data are the data found in relation to the term social stratification in the novel *Oliver Twist*.

*'He may have worse, I say,' repeated Mr. Grimwig. 'Where does he come from! Who is he? What is he? He has had a fever. What of that? Fevers are not peculiar to good people; are they? Bad people have fevers sometimes; haven't they, eh? I knew a man who was hung in Jamaica for murdering his master. He had had a fever six times; he wasn't recommended to mercy on that account. Pooh! nonsense!'* (Dickens, 2003: 134)

The quotation above shows that Mr. Grimwig is not an easy man. He does not accept someone without knowing where he comes from, what kind of person he is, and the like. He relates "bad people" with "fever". It means that in Mr. Grimwig's point of few the bad thing must be come along with the bad people. He is afraid of being contaminated with the bad thing if he has relation with the bad people so that is why he seems to be selective in having relation to the new people.

*Not having a very clearly defined notion of what a live board was, Oliver was rather astounded by this intelligence, and was not quite certain whether he ought to laugh or cry. He had no time to think about the matter, however; for Mr. Bumble gave him a tap on the head, with his cane, to wake him up: and another on the back to make him lively: and bidding him to follow, conducted him into a large whitewashed room, where eight or ten fat gentlemen were sitting round a table.* (Dickens, 2003: 35-36)

The quotation above shows that as a poor orphan, Oliver again experiences unpleasant treatment from the beadle of workhouse. Mr. Bumble gives two "taps" on Oliver's head and back. Eventhough the aims of giving taps on Oliver are "to wake him up" and "to make him lively" but it is a quite harsh for a child. No matter what the aim behind it, violence toward children —physically and mentally— is not good for them. It can influence their way of life and their point of view upon something.

The following quotation is another kind of Noah' bad treatment toward Oliver Twist.

*'He has likewise attempted, sir, to murder the female servant,' said Mr. Bumble, with a face of ashy paleness.*

*'And his missis,' interposed Mr. Claypole.*

*'And his master, too, I think you said, Noah?'* added Mr. Bumble.

*'No! he's out, or he would have murdered him,' replied Noah. 'He said he wanted to.'*

*'Ah! Said he wanted to, did he, my boy?'* inquired the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

*'Yes, sir,' replied Noah. 'And please, sir, missis wants to know whether Mr. Bumble can spare time to step up there, directly, and flog him— 'cause master's out.'* (Dickens, 2003: 75)

The quotation above is the conversation between Noah Claypole and the workhouse officials. After having fought with Oliver, Noah runs over the town to the workhouse where Oliver lives before taken as an apprentice by Mr. Sowerberry. Noah is sent by Mrs. Sowerberry to inform the workhouse officials that Oliver is getting mad and wants to murder anybody in his master's house. For additional information, basically Noah does not like Oliver because his master, Mr. Sowerberry treats Oliver very good rather than him.

*'Get up!' murmured Sikes, trembling with rage, and drawing the pistol from his pocket; 'Get up, or I'll strew your brains upon the grass.'* (Dickens, 2003: 197)

The quotation above is related to Bill Sikes and Oliver Twist when they are on their mission to conduct a burglary. Here, when Bill Sikes asks Oliver to wake up, he threatens Oliver with his pistol and saying "I'll strew your brains upon the grass." It strengthens the idea that Bill Sikes has rough manner toward Oliver Twist.

### **Child Labor**

Child labor unables children to enjoy their childhood. It will also take away the children's opportunity to attend school and to have a nice childhood. In some cases, children do not receive payment for the works they do, yet they only receive food and a place to sleep. the concept of child labor in the research is related to the involvement of children at any work field, such as chimney sweep, apprenticeship, shop-boy, picking oakum, juvenile crime, and the like. Oliver Twist, the protagonist of the novel, is taken to a branch of a workhouse to do some works there and one of the is "picking oakum.". "Picking oakum" here means stripping old ropes from ships so that the fibers might be recycle.

*'So you'll begin to pick oakum tomorrow morning at six o'clock,' added the surly one in the white waistcoat.* (Dickens, 2003: 37)

The quotation above tells the reader that when Oliver firstly arrives in workhouse, one of the workhouse authorities tells Oliver that he will begin to pick oakum at six o'clock. Being the part of the workhouse makes Oliver Twist in his young age should spend several hours in a day to pick oakum. He has to start working on six o'clock so that is why he has no chance to attend school. This condition limits Oliver's chance to grow better than he could be.

Another evidence of child labor issue in terms of apprenticeship can be seen in the following quotation.

*'Well,' said Mr. Sowerberry, taking up his hat. 'the sooner this job is done, the better. Noah, look after the shop. Oliver, put on your cap, and come with me.'* Oliver obeyed, and followed his master on his professional mission. (Dickens, 2003: 63)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that with Mr. Sowerberry, Oliver usually follows his master on his professional mission. As an apprentice, young Oliver does have a chance to attend school or enjoying his childhood yet he has to spend several hours of his days by helping his master's works.

### **Oliver's Reaction against Social Injustice**

In some cases, most of the characters that encounter social injustice just let the things happen without doing anything. It can be caused by their awareness that anything they do will not bring significant impact to their life. Hence, in order to fulfill their standard

needs, some people from the under-class prefer to enter into the workhouses while some others prefer to turn into crime. It is because they realize that the life in the workhouse is so terrible.

Oliver Twist as the main character of the novel for instance sometimes just let the unfairness happen to him but in some cases he could also do something to solve such kind of injustices he encounters. Dickens characterizes his main character as a good and innocent young boy.

In his ninth birthday, Mr. Bumble a parish beadle removes him from the baby farm where he grows up and put him to work picking and weaving oakum at the workhouse. In the workhouse, he lives with very little food. One day, one of Oliver's friends in the workhouse is very hungry and he decides to draw a lot. The loser must ask for another additional portion of gruel. The task falls to Oliver, so at the next meal he comes forward with a bowl in hand and asks Mr. Bumble for some more gruel.

*"Please, sir, I want some more."* (Dickens, 2003: 39)

The quotation above indicates that Oliver as the inmate of a workhouse experiences and desperates because of starvation. As a victim of such kind of injustices, Oliver tries to solve it by asking for some additional gruel to the workhouse authority. In the workhouse, the orphans are underfed, and for a meal Oliver and his friends are given a single scoop of gruel whereas they should work for some hours in exchange with food.

The quotation below is also related to Oliver's reaction toward injustice he experiences in his life.

*"It wasn't me indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was the other boys," said Oliver, clasping his hands passionately, and looking round. "They are here somewhere."* (Dickens, 2003: 100)

The quotation above deals with the time when Oliver is sent on a mission to pickpocket in a street in London. His two companion, Jack Dawkins and Charley Bates are actually the persons who take the old gentleman's handkerchief, but no one notice them. Oliver who runs in a panicity is considered to be the stealer. The people on the street then hit him without listening to Oliver's words. They do not believe Oliver.

## 5. Discussion

### Poverty

As explained in the chapter two, poverty refers to the condition of having little or no money, goods, and means to support. According to Soekanto (2010: 320), poverty is a condition where a man cannot take care of himself in the respect of the living standard of the group where he lives in and he cannot take benefit from his ability in his group. Poverty is a kind of social problems which occurs in society since long time ago.

Dickens in *Oliver Twist* portrays this condition vividly as a critics towards system at that time. Many people who fall on poverty are those who do not have a chance to explore their capability to grow in his society.

During the Nineteenth Century in England, poverty is one of the serious social and economic problems of English society. It was influenced by the Industrial Revolution which led many unskilled people moved to the big cities to look for a fortune or a better life. To

handle this condition the government established workhouses. As the government institution, workhouses provided relief for the poor.

In order to fulfill their standard or basic needs, most of the poor during the Nineteenth Century entered the workhouses while some others turned into crimes, because the living condition in workhouses was actually very harsh and terrible. The people were provided food and clothes but they had to work manually in industries and mines.

### **Social Stratification**

Social stratification differs the member of the society, whether they include in the upper class, or in the middle class or in the lower class.

After reading the novel, the researcher finds that there are four class divisions Dickens puts on his novel *Oliver Twist*, such as upper middle class, lower middle class, lower class and under-class. In the novel, the middle class is represented by the existence of some characters, such as Mr. Brownlow, Mr. Grimwig, the Maylies, and Mr. Losberne. The lower middle class is represented by the presence of the characters such as Mr. Bumble, Mr. Gamfield, Mr. Sowerberry, Mr. Fang, and Blatters and Duff. The working class is represented by the existence of the characters like Mrs. Maan, Mrs. Corney and Mrs. Bedwin, and Mr. Giles. The under class is represented by Oliver Twist, Noah Claypole, Charlotte, Fagin and his gang of pickpocket, Bill Sikes, and Nancy.

In the late eighteen-century, different social class can be distinguished by inequalities in such areas as power, authority, wealth, working, and living conditions, lifestyles, life span, education, religion, and culture. Early in the nineteenth century, “working classes” and “middle classes were already coming in the society. The basic hierarchical structure formed the “upper class”, “middle class”, “the lower middle class”, “the working class”, and “the under-class”. On the other words, during the Nineteenth Century England, especially during the Victorian Era, social class divisions were a major part of people’s daily lives. They divided people based on the money they earned, the job they did, the environment they lived and the like.

### **Child Labor**

Child means a person who has not completed his or her fourteenth years of age. Any child engaged for wages whether in case or kind is a child worker. Furthermore, child labor refers to the employment of children in any work field—such as working on industry, agriculture, manufacturing, business and so on—that make children unable to enjoy their childhood. It will also take away the children’s opportunity to attend school and have a nice childhood. In some cases, children do not receive payment for the works they do yet they only receive food and a place to sleep.

In Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*, it is found that there several forms of job which take children as the labor; chimney sweeper, cabin-boy, picking oakum, apprenticeship, shop boy. Involving children in some work fields is actually one of the forms of violation of the human right, because it takes away the children’s opportunity to get education, to socialize within the society they live in, and to enjoy their childhood. Children who are in charge with child labor are those who come from the lower class. In order to support their life, they have no other choice rather than become child labor. Simply, it can be said that poverty is the main root of child labor.

Based on the researcher's reading on history, during the Nineteenth Century in England, child labor is one of social problem faced by the society. It was also a time when child labor reached new extreme. Children often worked long hours in dangerous factory conditions for very little money. Children were useful as laborers because their size allowed them to move in small spaces in factories or mines where adults couldn't fit, children were easier to manage and control and perhaps most importantly, children could be paid less than adults. Charles Dickens, the author of *Oliver Twist* had ever been experienced the hars living and working condition in a workhouse. It was in 1824, young Charles was withdrawn from school and forced to work at a boot-blackening factory when his father, mother and siblings was sentenced to three months in Marshalsea Debtors' Prison under the Insolvent Debtors Act of 1813. Child laborers often worked to help support their families, but were forced to forgo an education.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concludes that all the kinds of social injustice, in terms of poverty, social stratification and child labor, presented in *Oliver Twist* are actually the reflection of what actually happened during the Nineteenth Century in England. In relation to sociology of literature approach, it can be stated that Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is a kind of social documents which records the social reality during the Nineteenth Century in England.

## 6. Conclusion

This research aims to show the kinds of social injustices depicted in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and how the characters react and solve such kinds of social injustice they encounter in their daily communal life. In this research, the researcher only examines three kinds of social injustice—poverty, social stratification and child labor—from so many kinds of social injustice as explained in the chapter two of this research.

As has been mentioned in previously in this research that the term social injustice refers to the unfairness treatment experienced by people who are considered to be marginalized group. In this research, the researcher finds that in the novel, the marginalized group refers to the poor. They suffer poverty and it influences their way of life. In order stay alive, instead of entering workhouses which is known as a government institution which provides help for the poor, some of the poor turn into crimes, while some others become prostitute. Furthermore, the researcher also finds that through the novel Dickens portrays four class divisions; the upper middle class, the lower middle class, the working class and the under class. This division of class differs the society based on the job they do, the money they have and the society they live in. In terms of child labor, it is found that there several forms of job which take children as the labor; chimney sweeper, cabin-boy, picking oakum, apprenticeship, shop boy. Involving children in some work fields is actually one of the forms of violation of the human right, because it takes away the children's opportunity to get education, to socialize within the society they live in, and to enjoy their childhood. Children who are in charge with child labor are those who come from the lower class. In order to support their life, they have no other choice rather than become child labor.

In relation to sociological approach initiated by Wellek and Warren, it can be stated that Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is a kind of social documents which records the social reality during the Nineteenth Century in England. Through the novel *Oliver Twist*, Dickens speaks to his readers about the real condition of the society where he lived in.

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