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Lana ALSEBAE

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Nahara Reghy Putri NURSYAMSI

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## ***From The Editor***

We're delighted to present to you Volume 12, Issue 1 of *The International Journal of Media, Culture, and Literature* (IJMCL).

*IJMCL*, published biannually (two volumes per year, June and December) by the School of Foreign Languages at Istanbul Aydın University, Istanbul, Turkey, is an international scholarly journal in Turkish, English, Arabic, Russian, Spanish and devoted in its entirety, media, culture, literature, language, and translation.

*The International Journal of Media, Culture and Literature* is committed to the principles of objective scholarship and critical analysis. Submissions and solicited articles are evaluated by international peer referees through a blind review process.

*IJMCL* publishes articles on Turkish, English, Arabic, Russian, Spanish language and linguistics, as well as on general and comparative literary studies including aspects of cultural and literary theory and translation studies. *IJMCL* also aims to create a critical, discursive space for the promotion and exploration of media, culture and their relations with literature.

We want to express our gratitude to everyone involved in bringing this issue to fruition, especially our authors and reviewers who provided invaluable contributions during the evaluation process. We hope the articles in this issue prove to be informative and enriching for our readers.

***Asst. Prof. Dr. Jale COŞKUN***





# ***A Reading Of The Midnight Library And The Dead Fathers Club Through Postmodernism***

Lana ALSEBAE<sup>1</sup>

## **ABSTRACT**

Matt Haig's works contribute significantly to contemporary British literature by engaging with psychological, philosophical, and narrative complexity. In *The Midnight Library* and *The Dead Father's Club*, the protagonists Nora and Philip embody the postmodern subject, caught in the tension of shifting realities and uncertain truths. This article explores how both novels illustrate postmodern themes such as hyperreality, narrative fragmentation, and the breakdown of universal truths. Through a postmodern theoretical lens, particularly drawing on the works of Jean Baudrillard and Linda Hutcheon, the analysis reveals how identity is no longer rooted in internal essence but constructed through memory, perception, and language. Thus, this study examines how these two works reflect key aspects of postmodern literature such as the blending of genres, intertextuality and historiographic metafiction. By focusing on these aspects, we can develop a deeper understanding of how postmodernism introduces new perspectives reshapes the way identity is understood.

**Keywords:** *Matt Haig, The Midnight Library, The Dead Father's Club, Linda Hutcheon*

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## **Gece Yarısı Kütüphanesi ve Ölü Babalar Kulübü'nün Postmodernizm Açısından Okuması**

### **ÖZ**

Matt Haig ve eserleri, psikolojik, felsefi ve anlatımsal karmaşıklıkla etkileşime girerek çağdaş Britanya edebiyatına önemli katkılar sunar. *The Midnight Library* ve *The Dead Fathers Club* adlı romanlarda, başkahramanlar Nora ve Philip, değişken gerçeklikler ve belirsiz hakikatler arasında sıkışıp kalmış postmodern özneyi temsil eder. Bu makale, her iki romanın da hipergerçeklik, anlatının parçalanması ve evrensel doğruların çöküşü gibi postmodern temaları nasıl ortaya koyduğunu incelemektedir. Özellikle Jean Baudrillard ve Linda Hutcheon'ın çalışmaları temel alınarak yapılan bu postmodern kuramsal okuma, kimliğin artık içsel bir özden değil; hafıza, algı ve dil aracılığıyla kurulduğunu ortaya koyar. Bu bağlamda çalışma, türler arası geçiş, metinlerarasılık ve tarihsel-kurgusal metafiksiyon gibi postmodern edebiyatın temel yönlerini ele alarak, postmodernizmin yeni bakış açıları sunduğunu ve kimliğin nasıl yeniden şekillendirildiğini daha derinlemesine anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Keywords:** *Matt Haig, The Midnight Library, The Dead Father's Club, Linda Hutcheon*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's literary world, postmodern fiction often centers on the blurred lines between reality, identity, and storytelling. This article compares Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library* (2020) and his earlier novel *The Dead Fathers Club* (2006), exploring how both books reflect postmodern traits like fragmented narratives, stories that acknowledge their fictional nature, and uncertain realities. While their plots differ, both novels question stable truths and highlight how personal experience shapes our sense of reality. At the heart of *The Midnight Library* is Nora Seed, a woman caught in a grey area between life and death, given the opportunity to step into countless alternate versions of her life. The story's structure challenges the usual way we think about time and chain of events, showing both time and identity as fluid and unresolved. In *The Dead Fathers Club*, we follow Philip, a boy who may be haunted in more than just a metaphorical sense by the ghost of his father, who demands revenge. Drawing on Hamlet, the novel blurs the lines between fiction and reality, sanity and madness, inviting the reader to question whether the ghost is real or a manifestation of trauma. Both novels resist fixed meaning and objective truth. Instead, Haig's novels break apart fixed ideas of identity and time, echoing postmodern themes of doubt and the idea that meaning is never fully stable. The main characters in both stories struggle with having multiple, shifting versions of themselves, the novels challenge the notion of a singular, authoritative narrative, choosing instead to highlight uncertainty on purpose. This approach reflects a broader postmodern sensibility, characterized by skepticism toward fixed meanings and a preference for multiplicity and interpretive openness. This article positions Haig's novels within the broader discourse of postmodern literary theory. Drawing on theorists such as Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale, and Jean-François Lyotard, the analysis explores how postmodern devices such as intertextuality, metafictional self-awareness, narrative play, and the rejection of master narratives are employed to challenge conventional representations of time, memory, and identity. Defining Postmodernism is challenging, as the movement itself resists fixed meanings or definitive explanations. While thinkers have offered influential interpretations, no single definition can fully capture what Postmodernism is. Understanding Postmodernism often begins by focusing on what it challenges, rather than trying to define exactly what it is.

## Literature Review

Analyzing whether a specific novel contains Postmodern elements can be difficult, but identifying those elements through the broader understanding of Postmodernism can help clarify what qualifies as Postmodern and what does not. This study focuses on two notable works, *The Dead Fathers Club* and *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. This topic is significant because it encourages

readers to question how they see reality and pushes back against traditional beliefs about truth and accepted social values. This paper explores a main question: what key Postmodern features define these two novels as works of Postmodern fiction? The book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* by Jean-François Lyotard would be a great first stop in the journey of understanding Postmodernism. Published in 1979, Lyotard explains to his readers how the decline of grand narratives is connected to the role of science. He analyzes the nature of knowledge as well as the impact of computerization on it. According to Jean-François Lyotard, instead of forcing ideas in one metanarrative, Postmodernism embraces the diversity of them (Lyotard, 1979). In addition, Postmodernism deconstruct metanarrative, and it changed the way language is used. So basically, his argumentation is that everyone can have their own perspectives and ideas without having to fit into one frame (Lyotard, 1979). In addition to Lyotard's theories, Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and simulacra, as discussed in *Simulacra and Simulation* suggests that the lines between the reality and fiction are blurry. *Simulacra and Simulation* is an important source for this study because the blurred boundaries between reality and fiction are a key element in the Postmodern literature. Baudrillard's idea of simulation, where reality is replaced by representations, helps make sense of the alternate lives in *The Midnight Library*. Nora's journey is not through real possibilities but imagined versions of life, making her experience feel more like moving through hyperrealities than actual (Baudrillard, 1994). In *The Dead Fathers Club*, the ghost of Philip's father and the unclear divide between delusion and reality reflect a similar collapse. The world becomes a space where signs and symbols blur the difference between what is real and what is imagined. In addition, both novels include cultural references and intertextually. Intertextuality is another Postmodern element that is explored by Linda Hutcheon in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. She also examines Postmodern literary techniques including parody, pastiche, and metafiction. To build on this, Fredric Jameson argues that Postmodernism is a cultural condition that is influenced by the social changes, in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson explains how modern culture has lost its strong sense of history and now relies heavily on imitation and the reuse of past styles (Jameson, 1989). Unlike Fredric Jameson, Hans Bertens the author of *The Idea of The Postmodern* believes that Postmodernism is a concept with multiple meanings that influences both cultural production and identity formation, and that the term Postmodernism when it first came up was problematic because the word "postmodernism" suggests a clean break from modernism, but it does not fully depart from Modernism but rather extends it through new perspectives and approaches. (Bertens, 1995). David Harvey on the other hand focuses on the relationship between Postmodernism and late capitalism. He explores how economic and cultural conditions shape and

influence literature (Harvey, 1990). This literature review demonstrates how *The Dead Father's Club* and *The Midnight Library* contribute to Postmodern literature by presenting complex storytelling. This complex narrative style could be best understood by first having a general idea about the history of Postmodernism and second by examining the elements of Postmodern novels through the theories that many scholars like Linda Hutcheon, Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, David Harvey and Hans Bertens presented.

### **A Brief History Of Postmodernism**

Any movement or any sort of ideas can be seen as a reaction to another. Industrialization and new technologies gave humanity the confidence that they need to see the world using more complex approach, Modernists believed that through science and reason they could establish universal principles. Movements such as symbolism and romanticism laid the groundwork for Modernism by establishing norms and introducing new ways to represent reality and emotions (Eysteinnsson, 1990). The late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the dominance of Modernism, but the devastation of the World War II laid the groundwork to question grand narrative and ideologies which eventually led to Postmodernism. One of the first Postmodernist writers in the 1940s was Jorge Luis Borges, in his book *Fictions*, elements of metafiction and skepticism towards the nature of reality are noticed (Deliu, 2015). Postmodernism started to have a clearer form in the 1960s and 1970s with the presentation of Fragmented narratives in literature, novels such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) includes nonlinear structure which does not present the events of the story chronologically. Fragmented narrative style is still a distinguishing feature of Postmodern novels. After the 1980s it is observed that Postmodernism became more common in literature and theatre. One of the names that contributed to the shift away from Modernism is the poet Charles Olson, he is considered as one of the first poets to apply Postmodern literary elements such as fragmentation. However, he himself never wrote about Postmodernism as a set of ideas, but his rejection of traditional poetic structures can be seen as a reflection of postmodernism. Charles Olson applied Postmodern elements in his poems even though the concept of Postmodernism was not perfectly formed yet during his time. His poet represents a departure from modernist ideology (Bertens, 1995). Postmodernism continues to evolve over time and its change can be noticed by looking at the Postmodern novels and how they are combining different elements in a chaotic way. This development will resume because of the technological influence, in addition to the cultural and social changes. This way of challenging grand narratives keeps introducing new perspective through which to view the world and influencing literature by combining features from different genres and literary devices in an engaging manner.

### **Attempts To Define Postmodernism**

Postmodernism has been defined by many scholars but one of the most essential definitions is Jean-François Lyotard's, in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. He defines Postmodernism as the "incredulity towards metanarratives," (Lyotard, 1979) and he argues that Postmodernism contains disbelief in grand, he questions grand narratives like Enlightenment-era science, highlighting how people once relied on a single overarching idea to explain all aspects of the world around them. He also explores the nature of knowledge and challenges the idea that science holds the only claim to truth, arguing instead that it is just one of many "language games" within Postmodern thought. He believes that the Postmodern artists and writers do not aim to tell a straightforward story but rather they want their readers to look at reality with skepticism. Rather than making a beautiful piece of art, the Postmodern artist can create a chaotic artwork that inspires readers in an authentic way: "The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done." (Lyotard, 1979, p. 81).

What Postmodernism does is not only challenge the Metanarrative, but also it challenges the reality itself and the nature of it, as Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Hyperreality presents. In his theory, Baudrillard explores how thin is the line between what is simulated and what is real, because we are constantly surrounded by representations and copies of reality, it is no surprise that the media plays a significant role in producing these simulations that reshape how we understand and interpret the world (Baudrillard, 1994). In his book *Simulacra and Simulation* Baudrillard uses Disneyland as an example, saying it's not just a theme park. It's made to feel more real than the outside world, hiding the fact that the real world is just as fake (Baudrillard, 1994). Building on this idea of simulation, Linda Hutcheon offers another angle by focusing on how postmodernism challenges traditional narratives through irony, parody, and self-awareness. In her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* Hutcheon talks about the nature of Postmodernism by analyzing specific elements in different fields such as architecture, TV, linguistics and film. Rather than providing a single definition of Postmodernism, she believes that Postmodernism has a contradictory nature, and it challenges the traditional boundaries in literature. Hutcheon focused on the characteristics of Postmodernism such as intertextuality, questioning metanarrative, Historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon 2004). There are some comparable aspects between the two novels and one of these points is the element of intertextuality, as she defines it: "Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context." (Hutcheon 2004, 118). Linda Hutcheon concerns with cultural and political aspects of Postmodernism

unlike David Harvey who focuses on the economical aspect of it. He links Postmodernism to global capitalism by introducing the concept of Flexible Accumulation. In contrast to the past, modern factories are no longer confined to produce the same item repeatedly. With a more flexible approach, they can switch between different categories of products according to the needs of the markets. Also, almost everything that shapes who we are such as music, movies, or experiences is shaped by capitalism and tied to its means of production, which makes personal identity something that can be bought. He also argues that everything someone buys can shape who they are and how others see them. (Harvey, 1990). Many scholars support Harvey's ideas about Postmodernism. Fredric Jameson views Postmodernism as both a cultural and economic phenomenon. He argues that economic conditions play a major role in shaping identity and influencing culture. According to him, Postmodernism reflects a cultural state shaped by the economic shifts of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991). Postmodernism is hard to define. Hans Bertens calls it "problematic." Both he and Hutcheon talk about ideas like metafiction and intertextuality, but they focus on different things. Bertens looks more at how Postmodernism pushes against old styles and genres, while Hutcheon is more interested in how narratives are told as well as the stylistic features of Postmodern literature and film (Bertens, 1995). Literature and media under Postmodernism often reflect these themes through metafiction, intertextuality, and genre-blending, blurring the lines between reality and representation. Works such as *The Midnight Library* and *The Dead Fathers Club* exemplify how fiction navigates uncertainty and questions the coherence of the self. In doing so, they not only illustrate Postmodern ideas but also invite readers to reconsider how they perceive truth and identity. Postmodernism remains a dynamic lens through which to critique culture, revealing how our understanding of the world is shaped not by absolutes, but by shifting, unstable frameworks.

### **Postmodern Visions In *The Dead Father's Club* And *The Midnight Library***

This section examines the postmodern elements in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library* and *The Dead Fathers Club*. Both novels explore questions of identity, reality, and narrative structure through techniques like unreliable narration, intertextuality, and fragmented timelines. Matt Haig's novels give us the chance to explore postmodern narrative techniques. *The Dead Fathers Club* is seen as a postmodern reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where familiar themes of revenge, identity, and grief are filtered through a fragmented, self-questioning narrative. These themes are presented through techniques such as metafiction, intertextuality, and narrative unreliability. The plot of both novels has major similarities, both Hamlet and Philips communicate with their fathers' ghosts, and they are commanded to kill their uncles, both characters struggle with grief and

the absence of their fathers. In both stories, the mother marries the uncle following the father's death. The element of intertextuality can be observed in the following quotes: "I kept looking round the bar and Nan kept talking to me and that is when I saw him. That is when I saw Dads Ghost." (Haig, 2006, p. 13), "And now she's with Uncle Alan. How could she? And why didn't she see what was happening?" (Haig, 2006, p. 16). Here, Philip is expressing his sadness that his mother is marrying his uncle similarly to Hamlet in Act 1, Scene 2; "O, most wicked speed, to post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!" (Shakespeare, 1603, 1.2.65). The themes of death, grief and revenge in Hamlet are also noticed in *The Dead Fathers Club*. Hamlet is not only mentioned in the element of intertextuality, but also the author plays with the readers familiarity with hamlet and deconstructs it. Matt Haig challenged the traditional narrative, by deconstructing the character of Hamlet and Shakespeare's play in general. He constructed the character by introducing Philip as a child protagonist, unlike Hamlet who has princely duties, Philips represents innocence and vulnerability. The last couple of chapters of *The Dead Fathers Club*, the novel departure from Hamlet and introduces the reader to a shocking open ending. Uncle Alan who parallels Claudius is seen as the antagonist from the beginning of the novel, but at the end of the novel, he saves the protagonist's life which makes the reader realize that it was the protagonist's imagination and the reader's familiarity with Hamlet who presented Uncle Alan as the wicked figure.

In Hamlet, the readers are not exposed to Hamlet's emotional side because there are political concerns in the plot. On the other hand, Philip is a kid who is trying to interpret the world around him, there aren't any political conditions, and the focus is on Philip's emotions after losing not only his father but his support system. The narrator of the novel is a kid who is trying to deal with a trauma which makes him unreliable narrator from the perspective of the reader. Unreliable narration leads both the reader and Philip to question what is real and what can be trusted. Philip constantly doubts his own perception, and the novel's ending highlights just how uncertain and unstable his version of reality really is.

The protagonist of *The Dead Father's Club* has a sense of self-awareness which is another Postmodern element, it is best seen in the following quote: "I am 11 so I am not a little brain, and I am not a man" (Haig, 2006, p. 22). This quote captures the postmodern ambiguity of identity by placing Philip in a transitional space between childhood and adulthood. Rather than developing a clear sense of self, he defines his identity through what he is not, reflecting a postmodern rejection of fixed or essentialist categories. His position in this borderline zone, neither child nor adult, underscores the instability of selfhood, shaped less by internal essence than by external forces such as trauma, perception, and narrative. His uncertainty

reflects the unstable subject that lies at the heart of postmodern literature. Also, Phillips interaction with his dad's ghost creates a hyperreal experience for him. The narrative style always makes the readers question what's real and what's not. Philip tries to make sense of his father's command to kill the uncle, but at the same time it is noticed that he is struggling between believing in the supernatural explanations and rationalizing events logically. This element of hyperreality in the novel helps the reader see how personal experiences influence and shape what we understand as reality. The following dialogue between Philip and his mother shows the unrecognizable boundaries of reality and imagination: "I said Neither did I until I saw my dad's ghost. She said Philip. I said Im not making it up. She said I know youre not Philip. Its just after terrible things happen it is sometimes hard to know what is real and what is not." (Haig, 2006, p. 139). The misspellings in the quote are intentionally preserved to capture the narrator's childlike voice and perspective.

Turning to *The Midnight Library*, the book starts with a quote by Sylvia Plath that said: "I can never be all the people I want and live all the lives I want. I can never train myself in all the skills I want. And why do I want? I want to live and feel all the shades, tones and variations of mental and physical experience possible in my life." (Haig, 2020, p. 3) Which shows intertextuality with other works and books from the beginning of the novel. Both in *The Midnight Library*, and in *The Dead Fathers Club*, the protagonists are struggling with their identity, Philip is struggling with his identity because he is moving away from childhood to adulthood. Nora Seed on the other hand is experiencing a fragmentation of identity. In the novel, the protagonist experiences different versions of her life, each life is presented as a book in a library. Every life presents a possibility; in one life she's a swimmer and in another she's an artist. This multiplicity of possibilities creates a chance for fragmented identities. She navigates these new versions of herself through living in different realities.

Just like *The Dead Fathers Club*, in this novel also the boundaries between reality and fiction are not clear because Nora is experiencing the potential lives you could've lived as if they are her reality: "Between life and death there is a library, and within that library, the shelves go on forever. Every book provides a chance to try another life you could have lived." (Haig, 2020, p. 6). Another important feature in this novel is the non-linear narrative, Nora it's experiencing different versions of her life out of chronological order. The narrative structure of the novel suggests that there are multiple storylines or at least more than one plot within the one narrative. Also, the element of metafiction is experienced, the readers are introduced to a set of books within the book that they are reading, the novel is aware of its own fictionality. The *Midnight Library* itself functions as a literal

library of possible lives. This invites the reader to think about their reality and their appreciation for the life that they have. Themes such as depression, anxiety, regret and existential concerns are presented but also a theme of hope in life could be noticed: “You don’t have to understand life. You just have to live it.” (Haig, 2020, p. 248). Jean Baudrillard’s concept of *hyperreality* is subtly present. The many lives Nora experiences begin to feel as real than her original life. The library functions as a bridge between life and death. Nora’s journey captures the essence of postmodern life, moving through carefully crafted versions of herself in search of purpose, much like how people today sift through digital profiles, filtered images, and consumer-driven roles that often feel more authentic than their actual lives. The novel ends without giving the reader a closure or fixed message, but rather it remains open to interpretation showing the value to subjective experience.

### **Conclusion**

By exploring *The Midnight Library* and *The Dead Father’s Club* through the lens of postmodernism, this study has demonstrated that both novels reflect a crisis of identity shaped by narrative instability and blurred realities. The characters’ struggles are not simply personal journeys but expressions of a broader cultural condition in which meaning is no longer fixed. Nora’s shifting lives and Philip’s ghostly encounters reveal how perception, memory, and imagination can challenge the boundaries between the real and the unreal. These texts resist resolution and finality, emphasizing instead the openness of experience and the multiplicity of truths. Both novels critique conventional storytelling by foregrounding ambiguity, metafictional awareness, and the role of language in shaping reality. Through this, they present a powerful argument for understanding contemporary identity as fluid and deeply intertwined with the narratives we create about ourselves. These two novels show how influential the Postmodern narrative style can be. What these novels aim to do is giving the readers a chance to rethink about the concepts that they thought it's constructed and real, it is also an invitation to not have any pre-judging of any character. It is wonderful to see Postmodern literature evolve and mix different elements to create novels that are engaging and inspiring. In a world where identity has many sides and truth is shaped rather than found, the one thing we can count on might be how uncertain the self really is, and how literature reflects that confusion.

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# ***Between Life and Death: The Psychological Dimensions of Yozo in Osamu Dazai's No Longer Human***

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines Osamu Dazai's *No Longer Human* through the lens of Freud's death drive and Bem's self-perception theory, exploring the psychological forces shaping Yozo's life. Freud's death drive highlights Yozo's self-destructive tendencies and pervasive despair, while Bem's theory explains how his understanding of himself and others emerges from observing his own actions. The analysis shows how Yozo's alienation, societal estrangement, and existential crisis intertwine, revealing the complex relationship between identity, perception, and destructive impulses. Dazai's narrative thus provides a profound psychoanalytic portrait of human behaviour, illustrating how distorted self-perception and isolation can culminate in psychological turmoil.

**Key words:** *death drive, Freud, self perception, pain of existence, No Longer Human, Yozo, Osamu Dazai, Bem.*

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## **Yaşam ile Ölüm Arasında: Osamu Dazai'nin İnsanlığını Yitirirken adlı eserindeki Yozo'nun Psikolojik Boyutları**

### **ÖZ**

Bu makale, Osamu Dazai'nin *İnsanlıktan Çıkmış* adlı eserini Freud'un ölüm dürtüsü kuramı ve Bem'in benlik algısı kuramı çerçevesinde inceleyerek Yozo'nun yaşamını şekillendiren psikolojik etmenleri araştırmaktadır. Freud'un ölüm dürtüsü, Yozo'nun öz-yıkıcı eğilimlerini ve derin umutsuzluğunu ortaya koyarken, Bem'in kuramı ise bireyin kendini ve başkalarını nasıl algıladığını, kendi davranışlarını gözlemlemesi yoluyla nasıl yapılandırıldığını açıklar. Analiz, Yozo'nun yabancılaşması, toplumdan kopuşu ve varoluşsal krizi arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri ortaya koyarak kimlik, algı ve yıkıcı dürtüler arasındaki etkileşimi gözler önüne sermektedir. Dazai'nin anlatısı, böylece insan davranışına dair derin bir psikanalitik portre sunmakta; bozulmuş benlik algısının ve yalnızlığın nasıl psikolojik bir çöküşe yol açabileceğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *ölüm dürtüsü, Freud, benlik algısı, varoluşun acısı, İnsanlıktan Çıkmış, Yozo, Osamu Dazai, Bem*

## INTRODUCTION

The most significant interpretive theory among the post-war critical waves, psychoanalytic analysis is rooted in the distinctive premises of the mind, instinct, and sexuality articulated by the nineteenth-century Austrian intellectual Sigmund Freud. Through this framework, Freud emphasises the unconscious forces that underlie human instinctual behaviour, revealing how actions are often governed by drives beyond conscious control. Freud further proposed that the death drive (Thanatos) adequately characterises the motivation behind hazardous, destructive, and self-sabotaging behaviours directed either inward toward the self or outward toward others. As Freud contends, the death instinct represents an innate human predisposition toward repetition, aggression, and ultimately self-destruction, leading him to assert that “the aim of all life is death.” Together with the psychoanalytic approach, there exists a social-psychological approach that provides an alternate way of studying human behaviour. Among these theoretical approaches in social psychology is the self-perception theory offered by psychologist Daryl Bem, postulating a premise on self-discovery through observation of one’s behaviour and identifying the motivations behind these actions, which plays a crucial part in circumstances where there are no clearly defined internal attitudes.

These two theoretical models, although originating from different psychological streams, provide fruitful interpretations upon applying them to literary depictions of shattered identity and self-alienation. In particular, it should prove informative, as shall be demonstrated, in the context of *No Longer Human* (1948), which stands as a prestigious work of modern Japanese Literature, being semi-autobiographical. Written as a series of confessional notebooks, this novel depicts the life story of its main protagonist, Yozo Oba, as one who experiences an intense state of alienation against society and, more importantly, as someone who finds it well-nigh impossible, or indeed as impossible as being human, itself, to perceive his own identity according to this parameter. All these elements present intense synergies, as they replicate Dazai’s own biography. Often interpreted as a literary testament to post-war disillusionment in Japan, *No Longer Human* portrays the psychological consequences of societal expectation, moral collapse, and existential despair. Yozo’s reliance on performative humour to mask his inner emptiness, combined with his gradual descent into self-destructive behaviour, makes him a compelling subject for psychological analysis.

This paper argues that Yozo’s psychological fragmentation can be most effectively understood through a combined application of Freud’s death drive and Bem’s self-perception theory. While Freud’s psychoanalytic framework elucidates the unconscious self-destructive impulses that drive Yozo toward repetition and

annihilation, Bem's theory offers insight into how Yozo constructs his identity through observation of his own behaviour and social roles. Together, these theories illuminate how internal drives and external self-observation intersect to produce Yozo's persistent sense of non-belonging and despair. Having introduced Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and Bem's theory of self-perception, it is now necessary to investigate in greater depth how each theory functions independently before applying them to *No Longer Human*. The first section begins with an examination of Freud's death drive theory, as it forms the foundational framework for understanding the protagonist's relentless self-destructive impulses.

## **DISCUSSION**

The notion of the death drive was first proposed in Sabina Spielrein's 1912 article *Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being*, which Freud later developed in his controversial essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). According to traditional Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the death drive is a desire for death and destruction that frequently manifests as behaviour, aggression, and self-destructiveness (Berne, p. 399-400). Freud's theories in his writings (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *The Uncanny*) also explain the death drive, which suggests people feel encouraged to relive unhappy or traumatic experiences, despite the fact that this type of desire seems to go against our impulse and principle of pleasure: "If we may assume as an experience admitting of no exception that everything living dies from causes within itself, and returns to the inorganic, we can only say '*The goal of all life is death* ', and, casting back, 'The inanimate was there before the animate '" (Freud, p.30)

Freud frequently drew analogical comparisons between the human psyche and processes observed in the natural world, using biological phenomena to illustrate rather than empirically prove his psychoanalytic theories. Central to this approach is the concept of the *death drive*, which Freud theorises as a psychological tendency toward a return to an inorganic state. This notion is not presented as a literal biological mechanism, but as a theoretical model intended to explain patterns of repetition, regression, and self-destructive behaviour within the psyche. According to Freud, instincts are fundamentally conservative, meaning they seek to restore earlier states rather than generate genuine progress. Because life itself emerged from inorganic matter, Freud speculates that instinctual life is oriented toward a prior condition rather than continual advancement. In this framework, repetition in behaviour is understood as a psychological manifestation of this regressive tendency, even when such behaviour appears externally directed toward development or change.

To support this speculative model, Freud draws on illustrative biological analogies, including embryological development and animal migration. He suggests—by

analogy—that the stages of human embryonic growth symbolically reflect a return through earlier forms, rather than representing linear progress. Similarly, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud points to the migratory patterns of birds and fish that return to ancestral breeding grounds, not as empirical evidence of the death drive, but as metaphors for an instinctual pull toward origins. These examples, Freud argues, help conceptualise a fundamental psychological compulsion toward regression and repetition, reinforcing the death drive as a theoretical explanation for self-destructive and repetitive human behaviour (Faulkner, 2005).

To fully appreciate the psychological significance of Yozo's character, it is necessary to situate him within the life and works of Osamu Dazai. Dazai's personal struggles with alienation, substance abuse, and repeated suicide attempts provide an important biographical context that informs his portrayal of Yozo. Understanding Dazai's background allows for a more nuanced reading of the novel's psychological depth.

While Freud's theory of the death drive offers a compelling framework for understanding Yozo's self-destructive impulses as the expression of unconscious instinctual forces, it primarily situates psychological motivation within the depths of the psyche. Such an approach emphasizes internal drives and latent desires that operate beyond conscious awareness. However, this inward-looking model does not fully account for how Yozo's identity is shaped through his observable actions and social interactions. To address this dimension, Bem's self-perception theory provides a complementary perspective by shifting the focus from unconscious motivation to the ways individuals construct their sense of self through the interpretation of their own behaviour.

Self-perception theory is counterintuitive; Common knowledge would have us believe that a person's personality and attitudes determine their behaviour, however, this is not always the case. It demonstrates, to put it simply, "we are what we do, ". This theory states that we interpret our own acts similarly to how we read others' actions, and that, contrary to what we may think, our behaviours are frequently socially influenced rather than the result of our own free will (Bem, 1972). Daryl Bem tested his hypothesis using volunteers who listened to a tape of a man passionately explaining a saddle task. According to one group, the man received \$1 for his testimonial, whereas the other group was informed that he received \$20. In comparison to how much the \$20 group thought he appreciated the job, the \$1 group thought he appreciated it more. The results drawn by the two groups were consistent with the emotions that the performers themselves conveyed. It was determined that the actors must have developed their sentiments by also studying their own behaviour because the participants were able to

accurately anticipate how the actors felt (1972). This experiment served as a prime example for the theory; as it reflected the initial idea of how a human's perception of other behaviours is made by predicting their own behaviours of said actions; reflecting the influence of their own thoughts and experiences on their judgments. This theory is based on the premises that the actors of the object are usually strangers; and serve no emotional bond or relationship to each other. While Bem's self-perception theory is supported by controlled experimental settings involving emotionally detached individuals, the dynamics of identity formation become more complex when applied to a literary character shaped by sustained emotional trauma and social alienation. In order to examine how self-perception operates within such a deeply personal and psychologically charged context, it is essential to consider the life and experiences of Osamu Dazai, whose own struggles profoundly inform the construction of Yozo's character.

To fully understand Yozo's psychological significance, it is necessary to situate him within the life and literary practice of Osamu Dazai. Dazai's personal struggles with alienation, substance abuse, and repeated suicide attempts provide an important biographical context that informs his portrayal of Yozo. These experiences do not merely parallel Yozo's suffering; rather, they are consciously reworked into the novel as psychological patterns of self-alienation, performative behaviour, and inward-directed destruction. Understanding Dazai's background therefore allows for a more nuanced reading of the novel's psychological depth, particularly in relation to Yozo's persistent sense of non-belonging.

Osamu Dazai, born Shūji Tsushima in Japan, was a highly creative yet deeply troubled writer whose confessional, first-person style drew heavily on his own life experiences. Like Yozo, Dazai repeatedly depicted himself as socially estranged and incapable of authentic emotional connection, a theme that recurs across his autobiographical fiction. His association with the *Buraiha* (or "Decadent") literary movement—known for its rejection of social conformity, excessive drinking, and engagement with society's margins—directly informs Yozo's rejection of societal norms and his reliance on alcohol as a means of escape.

Dazai frequently transformed personal crisis into narrative material, using the *shishōsetsu* ("I-novel") form to blur the boundary between lived experience and fictional representation. As a result, the author's persona is recognisable in many of his protagonists, including Yozo, whose emotional fragility and self-loathing echo Dazai's own psychological struggles. Dazai's characteristic use of dark humour, often bordering on self-mockery, is mirrored in Yozo's performative clowning, which functions as a defence mechanism to conceal inner despair.

Furthermore, Dazai's post-war works—*The Setting Sun* (1947), *Biyon no tsuma* (1947), and *No Longer Human* (1948)—adopt an increasingly bleak tone that reflects his intensifying inner turmoil. In *No Longer Human*, this turmoil is crystallised in Yozo's repeated suicide attempts and gradual psychological collapse, which closely parallel Dazai's own experiences in the years leading up to his death. After several earlier failed attempts, Dazai committed suicide in 1948, leaving behind an unfinished manuscript ominously titled *Goodbye*. This biographical endpoint reinforces the interpretation of Yozo as a literary projection of Dazai's sustained engagement with self-destruction, despair, and the limits of selfhood.

Consequently, as Dazai's writings depict his struggle with psychological instability, a negative perception of life and selfhood, and recurring self-destructive thoughts culminating in multiple suicide attempts, the death drive (often referred to as a death wish) emerges as a prominent theme within his literary imagination. Moreover, throughout the novel, Dazai employs a range of perspectives on others, the self, and society to intensify the melancholic tone and articulate the despair experienced by his characters, particularly in relation to solitude, existential crisis, and self-perception. To analyse these elements, this paper adopts Freud's theory of the death drive and Bem's self-perception theory as *theoretical frameworks* through which the text is interpreted, rather than as narrative features of the novel itself. Accordingly, this study examines how self-perception operates as a narrative concern in *No Longer Human*, using these psychological theories as analytical tools to further elucidate Dazai's exploration of despair and self-alienation. Having outlined Dazai's personal history and thematic preoccupations, the next step is to provide a structural and narrative overview of *No Longer Human*. This summary will clarify the key events of Yozo's life and prepare the ground for a focused analysis of his psyche through the lenses of death drive and self-perception.

A prologue, three notebook entries, and an epilogue divide the Japanese I-novel *No Longer Human* into five sections. The I-novel (*shishōsetsu*) is a confessional literary form that emphasises autobiographical truth, first-person narration, and the exploration of the author's inner life, often blurring the boundary between fiction and lived experience. The novel revolves around Oba Yozo, a deeply depressed young man who experiences sexual abuse, poverty, addiction, and repeated suicide attempts, and who perceives himself as fundamentally different from other people. The notebook's author later revealed to be the protagonist himself, Oba Yozo is presented through three images capturing his youth, adolescence, and middle age. The narrative is framed by an unidentified narrator, who recounts and contextualises Yozo's life in the epilogue.

The opening lines suggest that the journals are a form of confessional writing by Yozo, giving the impression that he is foregrounding his most painful and shame-ridden life experiences, as he states, "Mine has been a life of shame; I can't even guess what it must be to live the life of a human being" (Dazai, 18). Each notebook entry guides the reader through fragments of Yozo's life as he personally experienced them, filtered entirely through his own perspective. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that Yozo is profoundly alienated from the outside world, including society, his family, and those around him. His "unique" interpretation of events is repeatedly presented as socially unintelligible, further isolating him and rendering meaningful integration into society impossible.

As a result, Yozo turns to "clowning" as a means of concealing his inner self. This behaviour closely aligns with Erving Goffman's concept of social performance, in which individuals adopt a public "mask" to manage others' perceptions and maintain social acceptance. Yozo's humour functions as a protective façade, allowing him to perform a socially legible role while suppressing his private despair. However, when his classmate Takeichi sees through this performance, the collapse of Yozo's constructed persona precipitates a psychological breakdown marked by loss and existential crisis.

The notebook later shifts to Yozo's adolescence, a period defined by misery stemming from poor decisions, a lack of self-awareness, and escalating substance abuse, alongside a series of emotionally detached relationships with women introduced by a so-called "friend." In the final sections, Yozo's repeated suicide attempts and eventual institutionalisation are depicted before the narrative returns, in the epilogue, to the unidentified narrator, who recounts acquiring Yozo's notebooks and photographs from a bar hostess he once knew.

With the novel's structure and major events in place, it becomes possible to examine Yozo's psychological development in detail. This section utilizes the above theories and applies them on Yozo's worldview, showing how his death drive and self-image combine to decide his tragic fate.

Yozo had a quite distinct sense of who he was even as a young child, which completely transformed how he perceived or interpreted other people. Yozo made a habit of trying to understand things in ways they were never intended to be understood. He gradually fell into a gulf of alienation every time he discovered an object's practical utility and exposed its innate meaninglessness, to the point when even the idea of "hunger" or sharing a meal with family lost all value to him. This detachment is particularly evident in Yozo's recollection of childhood meals, where he mimics socially expected reactions to food despite feeling no genuine hunger, later interpreting his own performance as evidence of his

fundamental difference from others. To expand further, one must understand that self-perception theory contends that individuals form attitudes independently of their internal cognitive or emotional states, instead inferring them by observing their own overt behaviour. In situations of uncertainty, individuals look to their actions as cues for understanding who they are and how they relate to the world (Robak et al., 2005). Yozo's ludicrous perspective on life thus had a significant impact on how he perceived other people's attitudes, making them appear increasingly illogical and inaccessible. By repeatedly observing himself perform social roles without emotional resonance, Yozo comes to perceive himself as inherently inauthentic and disconnected, reinforcing his alienation.

If one were to look intently and honestly at the world, Camus claims that the Absurd "may suddenly spring upon a person 'at any street-corner,'" revealing the pervasive irrationality of existence. When this realisation occurs, everyday life takes on a mechanical and pointless quality, producing a sense of shock and estrangement from previously held meanings (Wicks, 2003). While Camus interprets this confrontation with meaninglessness as an existential awakening, Freud's death drive offers a contrasting psychological explanation, framing Yozo's growing detachment as a manifestation of an unconscious impulse toward withdrawal, repetition, and self-erasure rather than philosophical revolt.

Yozo was raised as an observant child who attempted to understand human hypocrisy, yet these efforts ultimately caused him to distance himself from those around him. This complexity can be understood as a turning point in his perception of reality, as he was unable to recognise or adopt the protective social mechanisms that others rely on to navigate everyday life. Yozo's self-perception became increasingly destabilised when he realised that he did not conform to prevailing social "norms"; instead, he became conscious of what he perceived as his own "absurd" reality. Rather than developing strategies to reconcile this difference, Yozo increasingly adjusted his outward behaviour to align with social expectations, even as his internal sense of self remained fractured.

A person's perspective is often shaped by a variety of factors, including knowledge, society, and culture. In Yozo's case, his understanding of what it means to be human—and of himself—was heavily influenced by the social environment surrounding him. To expand further, belonging to a social group requires adherence to shared standards of behaviour, through which acceptance or rejection is determined. Social groups implicitly demand that individuals learn how to perform appropriate roles, regulate emotional expression, and conceal thoughts deemed socially unacceptable. Every social group therefore requires its members to learn how to "socialise" themselves and perform socially legible identities. As Erving Goffman (1959) argues, individuals develop social

“fronts” to manage impressions and sustain interactional order. In Yozo’s case, “clowning” functions as such a front a performative strategy designed to suppress his authentic perceptions and secure social belonging. However, this performance intensifies his alienation by reinforcing the gap between his public persona and private despair.

Yozo’s attempts to mask himself and adopt a socially acceptable exterior are repeatedly met with situations he is unable to emotionally process. For instance, in his interactions with young women, Yozo fails to interpret their intentions, instead perceiving their shifting behaviour as ridicule or emotional cruelty when others are present, followed by sudden intimacy in private (Dazai, pp. 48–49). Rather than reflecting an inability to comprehend “female thinking,” this misunderstanding reveals Yozo’s difficulty in navigating social cues, intimacy, and performative interaction across gendered expectations. As Goffman’s framework suggests, this breakdown occurs when a performed role no longer aligns with the expectations of the audience (Goffman, 1959). The women respond not to Yozo’s inner self, but to the socially constructed, clownish persona he presents one he neither fully understands nor identifies with. This misalignment between perception and performance further destabilises his sense of self and deepens his psychological isolation.

As a sensitive character, it is evident that Yozo's reactions are based on his own isolated perception of other s, which causes him to feel ‘disqualified from being a human being.’ For example, Yozo's reactions to how his ‘strange’ behaviours are met are rather subdued. His inability to cope with a ‘normal’ reality is clearly presented throughout the novel. He is sensitive to his environment because of society. Yozo’s absurd view of himself immediately results in his utter rejection of the world, hence, as a human being in his perception: “Again, I never once answered back anything said to me by my family. The least word of reproof struck me with the force of a thunderbolt and drove me almost out of my head. Answer back!” (Dazai, 27 )

Being perceived as “strange” fundamentally altered how Yozo experienced ordinary situations, gradually eroding his ability to interpret behaviour according to his own instincts or desires. Although *No Longer Human* does not present Yozo as overtly antisocial, it consistently depicts his estrangement from others, portraying a man marked by chronic isolation and loneliness. While the novel offers no singular cause for Yozo’s withdrawal from society, his inability to perceive the world in socially “normal” ways and to interpret human behaviour with confidence emerges as a central factor in his childhood misfortunes. This persistent misalignment contributes to the development of his death drive as a psychological response to repeated rejection and alienation.

As Yozo matures, the influence of key figures in his life further reinforces his sense of isolation, allowing his “pain of existence” to become a dominant feature of his psyche. From an existential perspective, Jean-Paul Sartre associates such suffering with *bad faith*, which arises from an individual’s refusal to confront their own freedom and responsibility. Sartre defines bad faith as the denial of personal accountability that accompanies the recognition of one’s radical freedom (Wicks, 2003). Yozo exemplifies this condition through his persistent masking and avoidance of authenticity, strategies that prolong his suffering rather than alleviate it. By refusing sincerity, Yozo sustains the very despair he seeks to escape.

This pattern of avoidance also aligns with Freud’s concept of traumatic fixation. In his lecture *Traumatic Fixation: The Unconscious*, Freud suggests that some individuals remain psychologically bound to past trauma, rendering them unable to live fully in the present or orient themselves toward the future. In Yozo’s case, this fixation extends beyond childhood sexual abuse to include a sustained fear of social interaction, which becomes a long-term psychological constraint. His compulsive efforts to conform to an idealised notion of “being human” ultimately prevent him from achieving self-acceptance or freedom. As a result, Yozo’s repeated rejection of his authentic self-strengthens the dominance of the death drive, undermining the possibility of a life-affirming impulse and leaving him unable to envision a viable way to live.

Yozo confesses , as the narrative goes on, that he fled even after realising that he was free or rather, cursed to be free because he was too terrified to face his situation head-on. The depth of Yozo's ill faith was such that he entirely gave the world control of his life. He let his father, who was the most domineering person in his life, dictate his profession and entertainment interests: “When I hated something, I could not pronounce the words, ‘I don't like it.’ When I liked something, I tasted it hesitantly, furtively, as though it were extremely bitter. In either case I was torn by unspeakable fear” (Dazai, 30 ). This confession exemplifies Yozo’s profound state of bad faith, as his fear-driven refusal to articulate his own desires results in the abdication of personal responsibility. By allowing external authority—particularly his father—to dictate his choices, Yozo avoids confronting his freedom, thereby transforming it into a source of terror rather than possibility. His inability to express preference reflects not mere passivity, but an active denial of selfhood.

Furthermore, Yozo implies that he could not find within himself any qualities that could qualify him as a human being; therefore, he engaged in many self-destructive activities and substance abuse, leading to a connected sequence of miserable incidents and, eventually, his suicide attempt. Despite the fact that this

was a major element in channelling his depression, Yozo decided to write a letter to his family in his final days, admitting everything to them “with the exception... of my relations with women” (Dazai, 164). He hunkered down and decided to hide once more. This act of confession, followed immediately by concealment, reflects the persistent tension between Yozo’s desire for authenticity and his inability to sustain it. Perhaps it can be said that Yozo expressed his sincere desires in these two actions: first, through the partial confession that gestures toward honesty, and second, through his death drive, which emerges as the only remaining mode through which he can assert control over his existence and self-perception. Yozo’s death drive, in its essence, is rooted in his inability to exist as a ‘qualified’ human being.

Thus, as per Camus, one is confronted with several responses to the existential crisis: revolt, which Camus defines as the continuous confrontation with the absurd and a commitment to live without appeal; suicide, which Camus explicitly rejects as a solution because it abolishes the very consciousness that recognises the absurd; or philosophical suicide, the act of escaping absurdity through false meaning or blind faith (Camus, 1955/1991). In this light, Yozo’s suicide cannot be understood as a form of Camusian revolt, but rather as its negation. While revolt requires sustained resistance to meaninglessness, Yozo’s act represents a surrender to it, revealing the limits of his capacity to endure existence without illusion (Wicks, 2003).

Consequently, Yozo’s choice of suicide may be interpreted not as liberation in Camus’ sense, but as a final withdrawal from a society in which he cannot locate himself as human, nor maintain the self-awareness necessary for revolt. Therefore, Yozo’s death drive serves as a prominent example of an instinctual attempt to return to an ‘inanimate state’, aligning more closely with Freud’s conception of regression than with Camus’ philosophy of resistance (Freud, 1920/1955), allowing Yozo to escape the illusory identity he constructed in order to survive within society.

The application of Yozo's state of mind through the twin lenses of Freud's death drive and Bem's self-perception theory reveals a cyclical movement of alienation, hiding, and final surrender. These theories reveal how Yozo's distorted self-concept and inability to conform to social expectations increasingly drive him toward self-annihilation. Now that his psychological growth has been traced, these insights can be brought together to explore their broader significance.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Osamu Dazai’s *No Longer Human* offers a striking exploration of psychological despair through the lens of Freud’s death drive and Bem’s self-

perception theory. Yozo's alienation, masking behaviours, and existential crisis reveal how distorted self-perception can intensify feelings of isolation and drive destructive impulses. His growing alienation from society and resulting suicide illustrate the dominance of the death drive over the life force, finally fulfilling Freud's notion of a return to an inanimate state. By integrating these psychological frameworks, this analysis highlights how Dazai's novel presents not only a personal narrative of one man's downfall but also a broader commentary on the human struggle to reconcile identity, belonging, and meaning in the face of an absurd world.

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# ***Failed Speech Acts And The Breakdown Of Communication In A Doll's House***

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## **ABSTRACT**

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* critiques 19th-century gender roles, the patriarchal institution of marriage, and women's limited agency within the domestic sphere, positioning Ibsen's play as an early modern critique of communicative failure. As in any other text, language in the play serves as the primary instrument for constructing and sustaining human relationships, authority, and social values. Yet, in *A Doll's House*, speech functions as more than mere dialogue; it is the very medium whose failed acts lead to the breakdown of communication. Drawing on J.L. Austin's and John Searle's theories of speech acts, this article explores how linguistic exchanges, including promises, requests, confessions, and declarations, fail to achieve the intended illocutionary force in the play. Hence, through close textual analysis, the paper examines how the play's dialogue reveals the complex themes of power dynamics, illustrating a social structure that silences and invalidates female speech. The failed speech acts in the play signal a lack of mutual understanding and shared values between characters, particularly Nora and Helmer, escalating from minor deceptions to profound ruptures and culminating in their marriage's collapse. In other words, this study argues that the systematic performance of failed speech acts in *A Doll's House* is the fundamental mechanism through which Ibsen dramatizes the ideological constraints of 19th-century patriarchal norms. Specifically, the analysis underlines that Nora and Helmer's inability to perform language acts successfully, with roots in their lack of mutual sincerity and unequal institutional authority within the marriage contract, signals more than a marital breakdown but dynamically generates the play's tragic climax. Hence, the paper contributes to showing how Nora's final act of silence and departure reconstitutes agency through the refusal of dialogue. The ultimate goal is to show how the micro-level failure of language functions as a precise diagnostic apparatus for the macro-level collapse of the bourgeois social contract and the patriarchal system it sustains, emphasizing that the collapse of language becomes a precondition for self-realization and autonomy.

**Keywords:** *Ibsen's A Doll's House, Austin and Searle's speech act theory, Illocutionary failure/infelicity, Patriarchal communication, 19th-century gender performance, Theatrical dialogue*

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## ‘Bir Bebek Evi’ nde Başarısız Söylem Edimleri ve İletişimin Çöküşü

### ÖZ

Henrik Ibsen’in Bir Bebek Evi adlı oyunu, 19. yüzyılın toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini, evlilik kurumunun ataerkil yapısını ve kadının ev içi alandaki sınırlı özneselliğini eleştirerek, Ibsen’in eserini erken modern dönemde iletişimsel başarısızlık üzerine bir eleştiri olarak konumlandırır. Tıpkı diğer metinlerde olduğu gibi, oyundaki dil de insan ilişkilerini, otoriteyi ve toplumsal değerleri inşa eden ve sürdüren temel araç işlevini görür. Ne var ki Bir Bebek Evinde, söz yalnızca bir diyalog aracı olarak işlemez; iletişimin çöküşüne yol açan başarısız edimlerin gerçekleştiği temel bir ortam olarak işlev görür. J. L. Austin ve John Searle’ün söz edimleri kuramlarından hareketle bu çalışma, oyunda yer alan vaat, rica, itiraf ve bildirim gibi dilsel alışverişlerin amaçlanan edimsel güce ulaşamadığını incelemektedir. Bu doğrultuda, ayrıntılı bir metin çözümlemesiyle oyunun diyalog yapısının güç ilişkileri, otorite ve kadın söyleminin bastırılışı gibi karmaşık temaları nasıl açığa çıkardığı tartışılmaktadır. Oyundaki başarısız söz edimleri, özellikle Nora ve Helmer arasındaki karşılıklı anlayış ve ortak değer eksikliğini, küçük aldatmalardan derin kopuşlara uzanan bir sürecin sonunda evliliklerinin çöküşünü simgeler. Başka bir deyişle, bu çalışma Bir Bebek Evindeki sistematik başarısız söz edimlerinin, Ibsen’in 19. yüzyıl ataerkil normlarının ideolojik sınırlarını dramatize ettiği temel bir anlatısal mekanizma olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Özellikle Nora ve Helmer’in dilsel edimleri başarıyla gerçekleştirememelerinin, karşılıklı samimiyet yoksunluğu ve evlilik sözleşmesi içindeki kurumsal eşitsizlikten kaynaklandığı; bunun yalnızca bir evlilik krizine değil, aynı zamanda oyunun trajik doruk noktasına da yol açtığı vurgulanmaktadır. Böylece çalışma, Nora’nın sessizlik ve ayrılış eyleminin diyalogun reddi yoluyla özneyi yeniden kurduğunu göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, dilin mikro düzeydeki başarısızlığının, burjuva toplumsal sözleşmesinin ve onun sürdürdüğü ataerkil sistemin makro düzeydeki çöküşünü teşhis eden bir araç işlevi gördüğü; dilin çöküşünün öz-gerçekleştirmenin ve özerkliğin önkoşulu haline geldiği savunulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ibsen’in Bir Bebek Evi, Austin ve Searle’ün söz eylemi kuramı, İloküsyon başarısızlığı / talihsizlik (infelisite), Patriarkal iletişim, 19. yüzyıl toplumsal cinsiyet performansı, Tiyatro diyalogu / dramatik diyalog

## INTRODUCTION

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879/2001) is widely regarded as a foundational work of modern drama. The play is noted for its incisive critique of Victorian social structures, particularly entrenched patriarchy and gender inequality. Central to the narrative is the transformation of Nora Helmer, who evolves from a seemingly compliant wife, confined within marriage to a decorative "doll," into a self-assertive individual. Nora's final departure unsettled nineteenth-century audiences and continues to provoke feminist debate. As Akter (2021) observes, the play's enduring impact lies in its exposure of the severe limitations placed on women's autonomy within domestic life. The work continues to prompt reflection on personal agency and the necessity of social reform.

This analysis explores how failed speech acts in *A Doll's House* highlight communication breakdown and unequal power in Nora and Torvald Helmer's marriage. *Failed speech acts* are utterances that do not achieve their intended illocutionary force or perlocutionary effect. Failures result from hierarchy, misrecognition, or ideological foreclosure. Drawing on Speech Act Theory, this study views language as social action rather than merely a means of meaning. Social action may misfire, fail to gain uptake, or become void in unequal authority relations. Thus, communicative failure is not just individual misunderstanding; it is a symptom of marital power dynamics and gendered silencing.

This article has three aims. First, to analyze moments of communicative failure across the play's acts, treating them as structurally conditioned misfires rather than simple breakdowns. Second, to show how these failed speech acts create and reinforce shifting gendered power within the Helmers' marriage. Third, to argue that these failures drive the play's dramatic logic. The marriage ends not in a sudden rupture, but as the outcome of ongoing linguistic and ideological foreclosure. By blending literary interpretation with pragmatics, the analysis offers fresh insights into Ibsen's craft, extending prior work such as Godbole's (2019) focus on indirect acts and Rahman and Gul's (2023) exploration of conversational patterns. Here, further build on these works to show speech act failures as markers of deepening relational fractures, underscoring the play's commentary on authenticity in human bonds. The approach involves chronological close reading of the acts, weaving in direct references from Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) alongside supporting scholarship, with tables to classify and quantify acts for a structured view of their progression from fragile harmony to irreparable break.

## THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Speech Act Theory was first articulated by J. L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1962). John Searle later systematized this theory in *Speech Acts* (Searle, 1969). The theory challenges the idea that language is mainly a

neutral vehicle for description. Instead, it claims that utterances are forms of social action, shaped by conditions of authority, recognition, and uptake. This shift aids literary analysis, revealing that dramatic dialogue operates at both the level of meaning and the level of power. It asks who is entitled to speak, how some utterances become binding, and what renders others ineffective.

When applied to *A Doll's House*, Speech Act Theory shows that linguistic failure is built into patriarchal discourse. This is not simply a case of miscommunication or psychological insufficiency. Nora's promises, explanations, and appeals fail because the marital and social order denies their felicity, not due to incoherence. In contrast, Torvald's utterances, commands, judgments, and moral pronouncements have force due to his institutional power. He does not rely on mutual recognition. Thus, Speech Act Theory helps show how language in the play acts as an instrument of domination. It also shows how the breakdown of speech acts foreshadows the end of the marriage.

Austin distinguishes between two types of utterances: constatives and performatives. Constative utterances are statements that can be evaluated as true or false; they are assessed based on their correspondence to reality. Performatives, by contrast, are utterances that enact actions simply by being spoken, such as promising, warning, or declaring; these are judged by their success or failure in performing the intended action. Austin argues that this success depends on certain felicity conditions: there must be an appropriate procedure, the speaker must have authority, the circumstances must be suitable, and the speaker must intend to perform the act (Austin, 1962). As he notes, "To say something is in the full normal sense to do something which includes the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain vocables or words... and the uttering of them with a certain 'meaning'" (1962, p. 94).

This study keeps a strict distinction between *misfires* and *abuses*, as defined by Austin. *Misfires* occur when a speech act's conventional procedure fails when an utterance lacks authority, recognition, or suitable circumstances. By contrast, *abuses* happen when a speech act follows convention, but the speaker is dishonest or insincere. This distinction clarifies that structural communicative failures differ from rhetorical strategies like irony, manipulation, or deliberate deception. While these strategies may accompany speech acts in *A Doll's House*, they do not make them failed performatives. Recognizing this distinction allows for a more accurate analysis of why specific utterances in the play fail, framing these failures not as stylistic or psychological issues but as the result of unequal authority and recognition.

John Searle refines Austin's framework by categorizing speech acts into five types: assertives convey beliefs, directives request actions, commissives commit the speaker to future actions, expressives show emotional states, and declaratives enact changes with their utterance (Searle, 1969). The effectiveness of each act depends on factors such as social authority, sincerity, and mutual recognition. Without these, the speech act fails (Searle, 1969, p. 57). Searle also incorporates Grice's argument: violations of communicative norms often point to power dynamics rather than just conversational failure (Searle, 1969, p. 45). This study contends that directives, commissives, and assertives are the most useful categories for examining *A Doll's House*. Searle's taxonomy is comprehensive. Torvald's directives work as intended because he holds institutional authority as husband and moral arbiter. In contrast, Nora's directives are dismissed or seen as childish. This leads to repeated communication failure. Commissives, including promises and assurances, are key to Nora's struggles because her commitments lack stability in a system that restricts her agency. Assertives become sites of ideological conflict. Nora's statements about herself and her marriage remain unacknowledged until the play's end. Expressives and declaratives are less significant, mostly reinforcing emotional states rather than affecting power dynamics.

Building on previous analysis and Bousfield (2023), this study treats speech acts in dramatic dialogue as key to characterization. These acts show social position and authority. Patterns of successful and unsuccessful communication reveal (im)politeness strategies. By mapping these acts throughout the play, the study shows that repeated linguistic failures both reflect and contribute to the relationship's breakdown. These failures help explain why marital dissolution seems understandable and inevitable.

## DISCUSSION

### Act I: Foundations of Deception and Superficial Authority

Table 1

Speech Act Type in Act I	Example	Analysis	Condition Failed
Assertive (Lie)	Nora's macaroon denial	Presents false information as true, masking self-indulgence	Sincerity (Austin, 1962)
Commissive (Promise)	Nora's secrecy vow to Kristine	Commits to silence, but external forces break it	Preparatory (Searle, 1969)

Directive (Command)	Helmer's songbird admonition	Demands behavioral change, ignored in practice	Uptake (Searle, 1969)
Assertive (Irony)	Nora's happiness claim	States joy amid depression, highlighting emotional disconnect	Quality Maxim (Grice via Searle, 1969)

The table format may look quantitative, but it is a heuristic device, not a type of statistical analysis. The classification of speech acts uses clear theoretical criteria from Austin's and Searle's felicity conditions and Grice's maxims. It does not rely on counts or numbers. Each example was chosen for its importance in Act I, showing how types of infelicity failed sincerity, weakened authority, or lack of uptake recur and erode communication. The table's purpose is to clarify analytical distinctions and patterns, not to turn dramatic dialogue into a simple list.

Act I establishes conditions for communicative breakdown, setting the stage for conflict. Within the Helmers' marriage, failed assertives, commissives, and directives expose gendered power dynamics; these align with Speech Act Theory's felicity conditions. Failures occur in different ways: some utterances fail as illocutions, while others succeed as speech acts but falter ethically or relationally. The distinction is significant whether these failures are procedural or contextual; early infelicities foreshadow the intensifying conflicts of later acts. Nora's denial of eating macaroons "No, Torvald, I honestly" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) is a formal assertion, recognized as such at the illocutionary level. However, because Nora knows it is false, it fails Austin's sincerity condition (Austin, 1962, p. 39). Helmer's surveillance pushes Nora to hide her actions, forcing her into self-concealment. The lie is not mere miscommunication; rather, it is her defense within a coercive marriage. By making this statement, Nora conceals her lack of autonomy and hints at deeper secrets.

On the other hand, Nora's vow to Kristine "Nobody must get to know this, Kristine; nobody but you" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) is a commissive that succeeds both locutionarily and illocutionarily, binding her to secrecy in that moment. Later, structural rather than ethical factors cause the promise to fail: external forces, such as patriarchal legal and economic pressures, undermine Searle's preparatory conditions (Searle, 1969, p. 63) and render the promise unsustainable. As a result, this breakdown exposes women's vulnerability within systems that deprive them of the power to uphold their own commitments (Templeton, 1997).

Helmer's directive "My little songbird must never do that again. Songbirds are supposed to have clean beaks to chirrup with; no false notes" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) succeeds at the illocutionary level: it is recognized as a command and gets its authority from Helmer's role as husband. However, the speech act breaks down

not because of any failure in its form or authority, but because Nora resists uptake, maintaining covert defiance. This contrast between Helmer's outward command and Nora's inward resistance exposes the illusion of his power, which relies on surveillance and infantilization rather than genuine recognition (Bjørnson, 1998). In contrast to the prevailing atmosphere of anxiety and despair, Nora's ironic declaration—"Oh! It's a wonderful thing to be alive and happy" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) does not seek uptake in the usual way. While surrounding negativity dominates, she breaks Grice's maxim of quality (as discussed in Searle, 1969) by expressing joy. This utterance functions as irony and signals communicative estrangement, showing that sincerity has collapsed in the marriage.

These communicative failures show a clear pattern that undermines trust. The importance of Helmer's directives lies in their function, not their frequency. These directives assert authority but fail to achieve genuine recognition. This shows that power is performative rather than stable. Previous studies have noted how often Helmer gives directives (Rahman & Gul, 2023). Yet, this analysis sees the dominance of his directives as a sign of discourse focused on control. This goes beyond simply counting how often he gives orders. In this context, Nora's compliance appears as strategic resistance, highlighting Helmer's fragile authority. As Bousfield (2023) notes, infelicitous speech acts reveal relational asymmetries to the audience. Here, such acts show the superficiality of Helmer's control and suggest Nora's resistance is shaped more by structural forces than by personal motivations.

## **Act II: Indirect Expressions and Escalating Tensions**

Act II builds on the illocutionary failures from Act I. It intensifies communicative breakdown by exploiting already weakened felicity conditions through indirect speech acts. The invocation of Gricean pragmatics is not a theoretical expansion. It functions as a *refinement* in the speech-act framework. Grice's cooperative principle is cited only to show how its violation reveals strategic obscuring of illocutionary force, not an overt misfire. Helmer's sarcastic remark, "Ah, I understand. It is recollections of the past that scare you... Naturally, you are thinking of your father" (Ibsen, 1879/2001), acts as both an indirect directive and a veiled accusation. It inverts surface meaning to assert epistemic control. By intentionally flouting cooperative expectations (Grice, via Searle, 1969, p. 45), Helmer preserves authority. He does so without explicitly taking responsibility for the act. This reinforces the asymmetrical power dynamic created by earlier communicative failures.

Rank's rhetorical question "Nora do you think he is the only one? ... The only one who would gladly give his life for your sake" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) is an indirect expression of devotion that withholds direct confession. Rather than mere failed

communication, it uses strategic ambiguity. Without real interrogative content (Austin, 1962, p. 34), Rank can seek emotional recognition without risking full commitment. This tension, caused by vague wording, shows how indirectness can protect a speaker in limiting social settings.

In contrast, Helmer's directives rely on coercive uptake rather than communicative reciprocity. Their frequency has been documented (Aulakh, 2021). Their main analytical significance comes from their cumulative impact. These directives reinforce unilateral authority and inhibit dialogic exchange. This sets the stage for explicit confrontations in Act III. Bousfield (2023) argues that these indirect patterns and imposed uptake highlight impoliteness as a marker of power asymmetry. This dynamic intensifies Helmer's characterization, depicting him as domineering and protected from communicative risk. The accompanying table outlines a qualitative progression, tracing the shift from Act I's overt deception to Act II's strategic indirection and emphasizing changes in communicative *mode* rather than uniform failure.

### **Act III: Hollow Commitments and Transformative Assertions**

Act III marks a key reversal in the play's communication. Earlier insincerity and unbalanced authority are revealed and reshaped. This leads to a moment when speech no longer stabilizes social roles; instead, it breaks them down. Act III does not introduce new failures but instead forces acknowledgment of failures that have always been present.

Helmer's pledge "I could gladly risk my life and blood and everything for your sake" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) initially appears unconditional and a sign of deep devotion. Yet, when Nora's secret is revealed, this promise collapses. Helmer immediately prioritizes his own safety "Now you have destroyed all my happiness. My whole future" (Ibsen, 1879/2001). Searle (1969, p. 62) notes that commissives require both words and real intent to act. Helmer's sudden change shows how bourgeois marital love is conditional and depends on social standing, legality, and patriarchy, not on mutual ethics. As Finney (1994) argues, this moment presents marriage as a contract to protect male authority and respectability not as a mutual obligation.

The failure in this context is ideological, not procedural. Helmer's speech act works only when Nora stays compliant within his symbolic order. When this order is disrupted, sincerity fails. The commissive is revealed as hollow. This exposure allows Nora's final speech acts to succeed. She rejects conditional recognition and transforms communicative breakdown into autonomy and rupture.

**Table 2**

Speech Act Type in Act II	Example	Analysis	Condition Failed
Indirect (Sarcasm)	Helmer's past recollections remark	Jeers at Nora's secret via inversion	Cooperative Principle (Searle, 1969)
Indirect (Rhetorical Question)	Rank's sacrifice query	Asserts love without direct statement	Felicity for Questions (Austin, 1962)
Directive (Dominating)	Helmer's general commands (e.g., on behavior)	Reinforces authority, met with resistance	Uptake (Searle, 1969)

Nora's final declaration "I have other duties equally sacred... my duties to myself... I believe that before all else I am first of all a human being" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) begins as a paradigmatic felicitous declarative, decisively transforming social reality through speech (Austin, 1962, p. 108). However, its significance extends beyond this initial success. Rather than seeking validation within Helmer's marital authority, as earlier statements did, this utterance rejects the supporting conditions of the speech-act system and suspends the former framework once felicity is determined. This shift marks the movement from reliance on uptake to a self-authorizing assertion.

This transformation is underscored by Nora's shift from failed or compromised commissives to assertive self-definition. She no longer needs Helmer's validation. Helmer's counterclaim "But you're my wife, now and wherever you go" (Ibsen, 1879/2001) fails not because of any procedural infelicity. Its authority is simply obsolete. Uptake is not denied; it is actively refused. Drawing on Bousfield's (2023) analysis of power and impoliteness, this reversal marks a clear reconfiguration of communicative power. Nora's speech acts do not negotiate patriarchal norms. They actively depart from them, redefining identity through language. The climax is not a straightforwardly successful speech act, but a metapragmatic rupture that exposes the conditions of felicity as contingent, ideological, and subject to rejection. This culmination is best seen as a qualitative break from the play's communicative economy, not merely an endpoint of escalation.

**Table 3**

Speech Act Type in Act III	Example	Analysis	Condition Failed
Commissive (Promise)	Helmer's risk life vow	Pledges sacrifice, revoked under pressure	Sincerity (Searle, 1969)

Assertive/ Manipulative	Helmer's wife plea	Tries to convince via obligation	Uptake (Searle, 1969)
Declarative (Assertion)	Nora's self-duties statement	Declares independence, fully executed	None ( Successful; Austin, 1962)

## CONCLUSION

In *A Doll's House*, the shift from Act I's insincere assertives and unstable commissives to Act III's hollow promises and coercive pleas shows how speech acts reflect and deepen the emotional, moral, and relational cracks in Nora and Helmer's marriage. When viewed through Austin's and Searle's theories, this progression becomes clear: these recurring infelicities both mirror the marriage's decline and drive the narrative toward rupture, exposing the unstable base of patriarchal authority when it is grounded mainly in linguistic control.

Yet, the play's ending challenges how far Speech Act Theory can explain events. Nora's final words, often seen as successful performative acts, go beyond the system that shaped their effect. Her emancipation comes not from more effective speech within patriarchy, but from leaving the conditions that make speech acts binding. Thus, *A Doll's House* becomes a limit case for the theory. Emancipation may not need a stronger performative force, but a deliberate refusal of uptake, dialogue, and reciprocity. Silence, departure, and non-participation do not fit the ideas of felicity and infelicity. This challenges the belief that liberation can always be found through speech alone.

This study uses quantitative reference points, such as Helmer's predominance of directive speech acts that attempt to get someone else to do something alongside Austin's and Searle's frameworks for categorizing speech acts, which distinguish types such as directives, assertives, and declarations. It shows that failed speech acts in *A Doll's House* function as structuring devices for characterization and ideology, rather than merely as incidental communicative breakdowns. Helmer's directive-heavy discourse is a form of superficial authority, sustained by habitual command rather than ethical reciprocity. In contrast, Nora's progression from compromised assertiveness a speech act type expressing commitment to truth to self-authorizing declarations marks a shift from enforced submissiveness to linguistic self-determination. Quantification here reinforces the patterned asymmetry rather than just counting instances.

The main contribution of this article is its theoretical redefinition of "failed speech acts." It treats them as distinct phenomena: misfires, resisted uptake, strategic ambiguity, and ideological insincerity. They are not just a single category of

communicative breakdown. This analysis clearly distinguishes illocutionary failure, ethical collapse, and refusal of uptake. It advances existing scholarship on *A Doll's House* beyond thematic feminism or psychological realism. It shows that patriarchal power operates through the very conditions of linguistic felicity. The study also clarifies the limitations of Speech Act Theory in addressing emancipatory silence and exit. This positions Ibsen's play as both a strong example and a critical test case for pragmatic literary analysis.

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# *Halkla İlişkilerin Toplumsal Fayda Temelindeki Alanları*

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## **ÖZ**

Halkla İlişkiler faaliyetleri tarihsel açıdan değerlendirildiğinde çok eski dönemlere kadar uzanan bir geçmişe sahiptir. Bununla birlikte modern halkla ilişkiler uygulamaları ile halkla ilişkilerin profesyonel bir meslek alanı ve akademik bir disiplin olması ise yaklaşık olarak yirminci yüzyılın başındadır. Halkla ilişkiler faaliyetleri temeli itibariyle toplumsal faydaya yönelik uygulamaları içerisinde barındıran ve toplumun beklentilerine cevap vermeye odaklanan yaklaşımları içerir. Halkla ilişkiler toplumsal beklentileri araştıran ve bu doğrultuda hareket etme çabası içerisinde olan faaliyetlerin gerçekleştirildiği bir alandır. Özellikle Sanayi Devriminin sonucu ortaya çıkan ekonomik ve toplumsal değişimler, beraberinde birçok yeni gelişmeyi ve sorunları da getirmiştir. Sonraki dönemlerde özellikle yirminci yüzyılın başından itibaren teknoloji alanındaki gelişmelerin üretim ve ulaşım imkânlarını artırması dünyada belirli bir refahın oluşmasına neden olmakla birlikte birtakım sorunların da ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Üretim alanındaki artış, ürün sayı ve çeşitliliği ile birlikte rekabet ortamının da ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu durum büyük ölçekli üretim yapmanın maliyetleri düşürebilme imkânı sunmasından dolayı büyük işletmelerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Büyük işletmeler zaman içinde, teknolojinin ve ulaşım imkânlarının da gelişmesi ile birlikte çok daha büyük ve küresel ölçekli işletmelere dönüşebilme imkânını bulmuşlardır. Bu durum yukarıda da değindiğimiz Sanayi Devrimi sonrasındaki değişimler içerisinde ortaya bir takım olumsuz durumların da çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bunlardan en belirgin olanları arasında; çalışma saatlerindeki artış, üretim alanları oluşturulmasında ve üretim aşamasında çevreye zarar verilmesi sayılabilir. Büyük ölçekli birçok işletme de bu durumun kurumsal itibarlarına olumsuz yönde yansıtılabileceği ihtimaline yönelik olarak insan ve çevre sağlığına yönelik hassasiyet içinde olduklarını belirtme gereği duymuşlardır. Bu şekilde toplum ve çevre ile elde edilen kaynakları ile ilgili topluma olumlu yönde bir mesaj verme gereği içinde olmuşlar ve kurumsal itibarları açısından sorumluluklarının bilincinde olduklarını belirtmek istemişlerdir. Çalışmada, toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik uygulamalar arasında kabul edilebilecek; Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk başlığı altında (Ekonomik Sorumluluk, Yasal Sorumluluk, Etik Sorumluluk ve Filantropik Sorumluluk–

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Hayırseverlik ), Sosyal Pazarlama, Sponsorluk ve Sorun Yönetimi kavramlarının genel çerçevesine açıklık getirilmeye çalışılacaktır. Bu uygulamalar hem toplumsal hem de kurumsal açıdan önemlidir. Toplumsal yaşama yönelik fayda sağlamayı amaçlayan bu uygulamalar, kurumsal düzeyde itibar oluşturma ve koruma işlevi de görürler. Bu çalışmada halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarının toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik uygulamalarının hem toplumsal fayda hem de kurumsal itibar sağlama açısından önemine de açıklık getirilmeye çalışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Halkla İlişkiler, Toplumsal Fayda, Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Filantropik Sorumluluk (Hayırseverlik), Sosyal Pazarlama, Sponsorluk, Sorun Yönetimi.*

## **Areas Of Public Relations Based On Social Benefit**

### **ABSTRACT**

Public relations activities have a very long history, stretching back to ancient times. However, modern public relations practices and the establishment of public relations as a professional field and academic discipline date back to approximately the beginning of the twentieth century. Public relations activities fundamentally encompass practices aimed at social benefit and focus on approaches that meet societal expectations. Public relations is a field where activities are carried out that research societal expectations and strive to act accordingly. The economic and social changes that resulted particularly from the Industrial Revolution brought with them many new developments and problems. In subsequent periods, especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, advancements in technology increased production and transportation opportunities, leading to a certain level of prosperity worldwide, but also giving rise to a number of problems. The increase in production area, along with the number and variety of products, has led to increased competition. This situation has resulted in the emergence of large-scale businesses, as large-scale production offers the possibility of reducing costs. Over time, with the development of technology and transportation facilities, these large businesses have been able to transform into much larger and global-scale enterprises. Many large-scale businesses have also felt the need to state their sensitivity to human and environmental health, given the potential negative impact this situation could have on their corporate reputation. In this way, they have sought to send a positive message to society regarding their use of resources and their awareness of their responsibilities to their corporate reputation. This study aims to clarify the general framework of concepts such as Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility (including Economic Responsibility, Legal Responsibility, Ethical Responsibility, and Philanthropic Responsibility – Charity), Social Marketing, Sponsorship, and

Issue Management, which can be considered among practices aimed at providing social benefit. These practices are important from both a societal and institutional perspective. Aimed at providing benefits to social life, these practices also serve the function of building and maintaining reputation at the institutional level. This study will attempt to clarify the importance of public relations practices aimed at providing social benefits, both in terms of social benefit and corporate reputation building.

**Keywords:** *Public Relations, Social Benefit, Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility, Philanthropic Responsibility (Charity), Social Marketing, Sponsorship, Issue Management.*

## GİRİŞ

Günümüzün ekonomik yapısı ve rekabet ortamı içerisinde kuruluşların ürün ve hizmet sundukları hedef kitlenin isteklerini görmezden gelen bir biçimde ve toplumun beklentilerinin dışında faaliyette bulunmaları beklenemez. Bu nedenle kuruluşların bu doğrultuda ürün ve hizmet sundukları hedef kitlenin beklentilerini anlamaya yönelik çalışmalar yürüttüklerini, kendi bünyelerinde birimler oluşturduklarını, hatta kimi zaman hedef kitlenin beklentilerini anlamaya yönelik olarak kendi içlerinde veya araştırma şirketleri aracılığıyla ölçümler yaptıkları bilinmektedir. Çünkü günümüzün rekabet ortamında kuruluşlar hedef kitle ile sadece ürün ve hizmet sunumunda iletişim kurmanın yeterli olmayabileceğinin bilinci içindedirler. Bundan dolayı da kuruluşlar, ürün ve hizmetleri hedef kitleye sunmadan önce hedef kitlelerinin ürün ve hizmete ilişkin beklentileri konusunda bilgi sahibi olarak faaliyette bulunmaktadırlar. Kuruluşların, ekonomik olarak devamlılıklarını sağlamaya yönelik bu çalışmalarının yanında içinde buldukları toplumsal yapının faydasına yönelik olarak da faaliyetlerde bulunmaları da kuruluşlar açısından en önemli hedeflerden bir olan kurumsal itibarın sağlanması, korunması ve yükseltilmesi açısından önemlidir. Bu çalışma, halkla ilişkiler uygulamaları içerisinde yer alan ve toplum yararını gözeten uygulamaları konu almaktadır. Çalışmanın temel amaçları arasında toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarına açıklık getirilmesi yer almaktadır. Bu amaçla halkla ilişkilerin toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik bir takım uygulamalarının kavramsal çerçevesini belirginleştirmek ve bu konuya ilişkin literatürde ortaya çıkabilecek karmaşıklığı bir ölçüde giderebilmekte çalışmanın amaçları arasında yer almaktadır. Çalışmanın kapsamı içerisinde halkla ilişkilerin toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik uygulamaları arasında yer alan, Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Sosyal Pazarlama, Sosyal Girişimcilik, Sürdürülebilirlik, Sponsorluk ve Sorun Yönetimi yer almaktadır. Çalışmada toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik olan halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarının genel olarak kavramsal çerçevesi literatür taraması yöntemi ile açıklanacaktır. Bu çerçevede kuruluşlar

açısından kurumsal itibara katkı sağlayabilme potansiyeli olan halkla ilişkiler uygulamaları arasından toplumsal faydaya katkı sağlayabileceğini düşündüğümüz uygulamalar olan Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Sosyal Pazarlama, Sosyal Girişimcilik, Sürdürülebilirlik, Sponsorluk ve Sorun Yönetimi kavramlarının genel çerçevede açıklanması hedeflenmektedir.

## **HALKLA İLİŞKİLERİN TOPLUMSAL AÇIDAN ÖNEMİ**

Halkla İlişkiler bir uygulama alanı ve akademik çalışma sahası olmakla birlikte toplumsal yaşam açısından önemli faaliyetleri içerir. Halkla ilişkiler faaliyetleri geçmişten günümüze, topluma yönelik olarak mesaj geliştirmek isteyen hem kamu hem de özel işletmeler açısından önemlidir. Geniş kitlelerin bir konuyu anlaması, benimsemesi ve istenilen yönde davranış geliştirmesi halkla ilişkilerin temel amaçları arasında sayılabilir. Halkla ilişkiler faaliyetleri gerçekleştirilirken kurum veya kuruluşların amaçlarına fayda sağlayacak yöntemler kullanılabilir. Ancak bu amaçların toplumsal faydayı da gözetmesi halkla ilişkilerin önemli bir prensibidir. Nihai olarak toplumsal bir fayda sağlamayan bir halkla ilişkiler kampanyasının uzun vadeli olumlu sonuçlar sağlayamayacağı gibi kurumsal itibarın korunması ve geliştirilmesine de katkı sunamayabileceğini söyleyebiliriz. Günümüzde kuruluşların toplumsal fayda temeline dayanan ve sosyal sorumluluk taşıyan faaliyetlerinin esasen eski dönemlere kadar uzanan bir geçmişi olduğunu belirtmemiz mümkündür. Konuya tarihsel açıdan baktığımızda, toplumlar açısından Sanayi Devriminin önemli bir dönüm noktası olduğunu söyleyebilmek mümkündür. Sanayi Devrimi ile birlikte seri üretime geçilmesi, hammadde ihtiyacının artması, üretim sonucu sanayi atıklarının ortaya çıkması, üretilen ürünleri ülkeler arası nakliyesi ve bu durumun süreklilik kazanması hem bireyleri hem de çevreyi birçok açıdan etkilemiştir. En temelde çevre bilinci henüz oluşmamış üretim yapılarında çevreye verilen zararın boyutları üzerine yeterince düşünülmeden ve gerekli tedbirler alınmadan gerçekleştirilen üretim faaliyetleri çevreye yönelik ciddi bir sorun haline gelmiştir. Bu türden olumsuz durumların, kuruluşların itibarlarına olumsuz yönde etki etmemesi için kuruluşun faydasına yönelik yapılan çalışmalarda toplumsal faydanın da gözetilmesi gerekli hale gelmiştir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, günümüzde kuruluşlardan üretmiş oldukları ürün ve hizmetler ile kendi açılarından kârlılığını hedeflerken diğer yandan da toplumsal açıdan önemli olan konulara yönelik hassasiyet göstermeleri önemli kabul edilmektedir.

Geçmişte Batı'da "iyiliksever yatırımlar" olarak adlandırılan bazı projeler günümüzde ülkemizde "toplumsal sorumluluk" projeleri adıyla uygulanmaya başlamıştır. Günümüzde işletmeler için en önemli unsurlardan olan kârlılığını sürdürmenin destekçisi durumundaki bu türden uygulamalar birçok kuruluş ve işletme tarafından kabul görmüş durumdadır. Halkla ilişkiler uygulaması olarak

kabul edilebilecek bu uygulamaların kuruma en önemli katkılarından biri itibarın artırılmasıdır. (Kazancı, 2021: 381.)

Kurum veya kuruluşların toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik birçok uygulamasının kurumsal iletişim açısından başarılı olması aynı zamanda kurumsal itibara da katkı sağlayacağından birer halkla ilişkiler uygulaması olarak değerlendirilebilmesi mümkündür. Bu açıdan bakıldığında; Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Sosyal Girişimcilik, Sosyal Pazarlama, Filantropi (Hayırseverlik), Sponsorluk ve Sorun Yönetimi uygulamaları halkla ilişkilerin temel işlevlerinin yerine getirildiği alanlar arasında kabul edilebilir.

Yukarıda da belirttiğimiz, Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Filantropik Sorumluluk (Hayırseverlik), Sosyal Pazarlama, Sponsorluk, Sorun Yönetimi, Sosyal Girişimcilik kavramları temel hedefleri itibariyle birbirleriyle karıştırılabilecek veya yanlışlıkla birbirlerinin yerine kullanılacak kavramlardır. Bu açıdan değerlendirdiğimizde kavramsal açıdan karmaşıklık oluşturmaması anlamında bu kavramların genel çerçevesinin belirlenmesi yerinde olacaktır.

## **TOPLUMSAL FAYDA SAĞLAMAYA YÖNELİK HALKLA İLİŞKİLER UYGULAMALARI**

Halkla ilişkilerin toplumsal fayda temelindeki uygulamaları olarak nitelendirilebilecek uygulamalar arasında; sosyal sorumluluk, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, sosyal pazarlama, sosyal girişimcilik, sürdürülebilirlik, sponsorluk ve sorun yönetimi faaliyetleri yer almaktadır. Bu faaliyet alanlarını birer halkla ilişkiler uygulama alanı olarak nitelendirmemizin en temel nedeni, halkla ilişkiler çalışmalarının en önemli amaçları arasında yer alan itibar oluşturma ve devam ettirmenin olmasıdır. Bu uygulamaların başarılı bir biçimde istenilen iletişim hedeflerini oluşturması ile birlikte kuruluşlarda itibara katkı sunması beklenebilir. Kuruluşların hedef kitle açısından itibarlı bir konumda kabul edilebilmelerinin en temel unsurlarından bir olarak, hedef kitlenin zihninde olumlu bir anlam oluşturmalarını söylemek mümkündür. Hedef kitlede olumlu bir anlam oluşturulması da olumlu bir görünüm, imaj oluşturulması ile gerçekleşebilir. Bu nedenlerle aşağıda açıklamalarına yer verilen toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik uygulamalar, başarılı bir şekilde gerçekleştirilebilmeleri durumunda hedef kitlede olumlu bir karşılık bulabilirler.

## **SOSYAL SORUMLULUK**

Sosyal sorumluluk uygulamaları, toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik halkla ilişkiler faaliyetleri arasında en çok bilinen ve gerçekleştirilen uygulamalar arasında sayılabilir. Sosyal sorumluluk uygulamaları hem toplumsal hem de kurumsal anlamda geçmişten günümüze kadar önemli uygulamaları içermektedir.

Sosyal sorumluluk kavramına açıklık getirmeden önce sorumluluk kavramını açıklamak konunun açıklanabilmesi açısından önemlidir.

Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlüğüne göre Sorumluluk kavramına getirilen tanımlama aşağıda yer almaktadır.

*“Kişinin kendi davranışlarını veya kendi yetki alanına giren herhangi bir olayın sonuçlarını üstlenmesi; mesuliyet...”* (<https://sozluk.gov.tr>, Erişim tarihi:10.11.2025)

Sorumluluk kavramının kelime anlamından da anlaşılacağı gibi sorumlu olan kişi veya sorumlu olunan konu, bireylerin veya toplumun bir konuya ilişkin olarak ortaya çıkabilecek bir durumun sonuçları konusunda kişilere bazı görevler düştüğüne işaret etmektedir.

Sorumluluk kavramı, bireyin üzerine tanımlanmış ve yerine getirmesi gereken işlerden sorumlu olması anlamına gelmektedir. Sorumluluk bireylere tanımlanır ve bir işi kişinin kendisinin yapması veya işin yapılması için yürütülecek faaliyetlerden sorumlu olmasını ifade eder. (S. C. Certo, & S. T. Certo, 2000: 234. Aktaran: Akmeşe, 2019: 4)

Bireysel düzeydeki sorumluluk için bireyin davranışları sonucu ortaya çıkabilecek ve hem bireylere hem de topluma karşı yerine getirmesi gereken davranışları veya kaçınması gereken durumları belirtmek mümkündür. Örneğin bir kişinin toplumsal düzenin sağlanması açısından kurallara uyması bireyin topluma karşı olan sorumluluğunu yerine getirmesidir ve bireyin topluma ilişkin sorumluluğunun bir parçasıdır. Ancak günümüzde topluma yönelik hassasiyeti bulunan bireylerin topluma yönelik sorumluluk davranışları bununla sınırlı kalmamaktadır. Bireylerin içinde buldukları çevrenin durumu veya toplumdaki dezavantajlı grupların sorunlarına yönelik bir sorumluluk duygusu içerisinde bulunabilmeleri de söz konusudur. Bireylerin çevreye ve dezavantajlı olarak sayılabilen bu gruplara yönelik hassasiyetler içerisinde bulunmaları ve bu birey ve grupların yaşamlarını kolaylaştırıcı bir takım da faaliyetlerde bulunmaları da söz konusu olabilir.

İşletmeler hem kendi yapıları içerisindeki insan topluluklarının sorunları ile ilgilenirken hem de işletme dışında yer alan toplum kesimiyle ilişki kurar. Burada işletmeler toplumun özellikle ürün ve hizmet üretmekte oldukları kesimlerini yakından takip ederler. Bu nedenlerle bir işletme toplumun dışında kalmaz ve İşletmeler kendi dışındaki kişi ve kuruluşlarla da ilişki içinde olmalıdır. İşletmeler sadece üreten, pazarlama yapan ve kâr hedefleyen kuruluşlar olmanın ötesinde toplumsal sorumlulukları da bulunan kuruluşlardır. İşletmelerin ticari

faaliyetleri dışında içinde buldukları topluma yönelik sorumluluklarını yerine getirme amacıyla, tutum ve davranışlarını değiştirmeleri, ticari faaliyette bulunan işletmeleri, sosyal sorumlulukları da bulunan işletmeler haline getirmektedir. (Sabuncuoğlu, 1998: 13-14)

Sosyal sorumluluk, bir işletmenin karar verirken veya faaliyete geçerken ortaya çıkabilecek sonuçların çevreye veya topluma olan etkisini değerlendirerek ekonomik şartlar ve yasal düzenlemelere, iş etiğine ve kurum içi ve kurum dışı beklentilere uygun bir çalışma yöntem ve politikası takip etmesi ve insanların mutluluğunu gözetmesi ile ilişkilidir. İşletmeler faaliyetleri ile toplum karşısında bir uygulama içinde bulunmaları veya toplumda memnuniyetsizlik ortaya çıkaracak faaliyetleri nedeni ile topluma karşı sorumludurlar ve hesap vermek durumundadırlar. Bu çerçevede değerlendirildiğinde sosyal sorumluluk işletmeler ile toplum arasında gerçekleşen bir sosyal hareket olarak açıklamak mümkündür. Bir başka ifade ile bir sosyal hareket olarak sosyal sorumluluk, bir sosyal anlaşma ve uzlaşma çabasıdır. (Eren, 1997: 102. Aktaran: Özüpek, 2013: 20)

Sosyal sorumluluk, İşletmelerin kendi çıkarları ile birlikte içinde buldukları toplumun sorunlarına yönelik duyarlılığını ve toplumsal sorumluluğunu gösterebilmek için hayırseverlik ve sponsorluk gibi faaliyetleri gerçekleştirmesidir. Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk ise sosyal sorumluluğun yanında kurumların ekonomik, etik ve hukuki sorumluluklarını da içermektedir. Bunun tersi durumundaki uygulamalar işletmelerin sadece kendi tanıtımlarını gerçekleştirmeye çalışan toplumsal sorumluluklarını yerine getirmeyen bir görünüm içinde olmasına neden olabilir. (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 188)

Yukarıda sosyal sorumluluk kavramına ilişkin bir tanımlamaya yer verilmiştir. Temelinde kurum veya işletmelerin toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik çabalarının kurumsal itibara yönelik olumlu sonuçları olabileceği düşüncesinden yola çıkılarak gerçekleştirilen sosyal sorumluluk faaliyetlerinin çerçevesinin belirlenmesi de kurumlar ve işletmeler açısından önemlidir.

Sosyal Sorumluluğun İşletmeler açısından sınırlarının ve kapsamının belirlenmesinde bir takım ölçütler bulunmaktadır. Bu kriterler aşağıdaki gibi açıklanabilir. (G. A. Steiner & J. F. Steiner, 1994: 130. Aktaran: Özüpek, 2013: 22-23)

- a) Sosyal sorumluluk açısından bütün kurum ve işletmeler için ortak bir yöntem yoktur. Her işletmenin kendi özel durumuna uygun olarak hangi uygulamaları yapacağını veya yapmayacağını belirlemesi gerekir.
- b) İşletmelerin kâr amacı taşıyan yapılar olduğu bilinmeli ve kâr elde edemezse

- toplumsal sorumluluklarını yerine getiremeyebilecekleri bilinmelidir.
- c) İşletmeler ileriye dönük planlama içinde olmalı ve kısa vadede düşük kârlı ancak sosyal yönden sorumluluk içinde bulunduğu konulara yönelik uzun vadede işletme çıkarlarına uygun hareket etmelidir.
  - d) Bir işletmenin sosyal sorumluluğu sosyal gücü ile orantılıdır.
  - e) İşletmelerin sosyal sorumlulukları birçok özelliklerine göre farklılıklar gösterebilir. Bunlar; İşletmenin hacmi, ürünler, rekabetçi stratejiler, üretim süreçleri, pazarlama uygulamaları, yöneticilerin değerleri ve düşüncelerine göre farklılıklar içerebilir.
  - f) İşletmelerin sosyal sorumlulukları seçerken, en iyi yönetebilecekleri sosyal sorumlulukları tercih etmeleri gerekir.

İşletmelerin sosyal sorumluluğa ilişkin kapsam ve sınırlarına yönelik yukarıda verilen açıklamalardan da anlaşılacağı gibi esasen sosyal sorumluluk işletmeler açısından belirli bir planlama dahilinde gerçekleştirilmesi gereken faaliyetler bütünüdür. Birçok faaliyet alanında olduğu gibi sosyal sorumluluk uygulamalarının belirlenmesinde de belirli ilkelere göre hareket edilmesi önemlidir.

Bir işletmenin sosyal sorumluluğunun belirlenmesinde önemli olan temel prensipleri şu şekilde belirtmek mümkündür. (Robertson & Nicholson, 1996: 195. Aktaran: Özüpek, 2013: 22-23.)

- *Meşruiyet ilkesi*: Bir İşletmenin hem kurumsal alanda gerçekleştirmiş olduğu çalışmalar hem de faaliyet konuları ile ilgili olarak topluma yönelik sorumlulukları bulunduğu görüşünü temel almak.
- *Kamu Sorumluluğu İlkesi*: Bir işletmenin toplumla ilişki olan yönetim düzeyindeki işlevleri ve yürüttüğü faaliyetleri ile topluma karşı sorumlulukları bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenle bir işletmenin sorumluluğunu yürütmüş olduğu faaliyetler ve çıkarları ile ilgili ortaya çıkan sorunlarla sınırlandırılabilir.
- *Yönetsel Takdir Edebilme Hakkı İlkesi*: Bu prensip yönetim fonksiyonu içerisinde yer alan yöneticilerin etik açıdan önemli önemli bir görevi olduğu ile ilgilidir. İşletmenin sosyal olarak sorumlu olduğu alanlarda gerçekleştirilecek faaliyetlerin belirlenmesinde yöneticilerin sorumluluklarının belirlenmesi bu kapsamdadır.

## **KURUMSAL SOSYAL SORUMLULUK**

Toplumsal yaşam açısından kamunun, toplumsal yaşamın iyileştirilmesi, refahın artırılması, sağlıklı yaşam çevrenin desteklenmesine yönelik kamu hizmetlerini yerine getirmesi önemlidir. Bununla birlikte günümüzde bütün kurum ve kuruluşların, işletmelerin içinde buldukları toplumun her anlamda yararına yönelik faaliyetlerde bulunmaları beklenen bir durumdur.

Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk kavramını açıklamadan önce kurumların sorumluluklarına ilişkin genel bir açıklama yapmak yararlı olacaktır. Günümüzde, kurumların içinde buldukları topluma ilişkin sorumlulukları önemli bir inceleme alanıdır. Bu açıdan kurumsal sorumluluk kavramına şu şekilde bir açıklama getirmek mümkündür.

Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk bir işletmenin toplumsal, kültürel, ekonomik ve çevresel konulara yönelik duyarlılığını ve kamu yöneticileri, yurttaşlar çalışanlar ve paydaşlar ile olan ilişkilerini toplum yararına olacak şekilde sorumluluk içeren yaklaşımlarla gerçekleştirmeleridir. Ayrıca işletmeler kendi kurdukları vakıf ve derneklerde sosyal sorumluluk faaliyetlerini yürütebilmektedirler veya bir vakıf veya dernekle ortak çalışmalar yapabilirler. (Kazancı, 2021: 381)

Kurum ve kuruluşların, işletmelerin, sivil toplum kuruluşlarının toplumun genelinin yararına ve çevreye yönelik yürütmüş oldukları faaliyetlerin belirli bir amaç ve plan dâhilinde yürütülmesi toplumsal faydaya katkı sağlayabileceği gibi aynı zamanda kurumsal anlamda da fayda sağlayabilir. Bu fayda en temelde kurumsal itibarın sağlanması, artırılması ve korunmasına yönelik olabilir.

Kurumsal sorumluluk geniş bir alana ilişkin uygulamaları içermektedir. Burada kurumsal sorumluluğun temelde iki ana uygulamasını açıklamak yerinde olacaktır. Bunlardan ilki toplumsal açıdan felaket olarak kabul edilebilecek durumlara yönelik kurumlar tarafından gerçekleştirilen faaliyetlerdir. İkinci uygulama alanı ise, kurumların toplumsal faydaya yönelik gönüllülük esasına dayanan kâr amacı taşımayan, ekonomik işlevleri dışında bulunan ancak kuruma da faydalı olan faaliyetlerini sayabilmek mümkündür. Halkla ilişkiler uygulamaları arasında kriz yönetimi ve kamusal faydaya yönelik çalışmalar bu kapsamda değerlendirilebilir. (L'Etang, 2002: 156)

Kuruluşlar ve işletmeler, açısından en önemli değerlerden biri, hedef kitleleri tarafından itibarlı olarak değerlendirilebilmektir. Bunun sağlanabilmesi açısından kuruluşların ve işletmelerin, hedef kitlenin algısında ürün ve hizmetleri ile olumlu bir anlam oluşturabilmeleri önemlidir. Bu nedenle kuruluşlar ve işletmeler kendi oluşturmak istedikleri algıya uygun bir biçimde faaliyetlerini yürütürler. Burada esas olan kuruluşun ve işletmenin toplumsal fayda sağlama temelinde en uygun biçimde kurumsal olarak sosyal sorumluluğunu yerine getirebilmesidir.

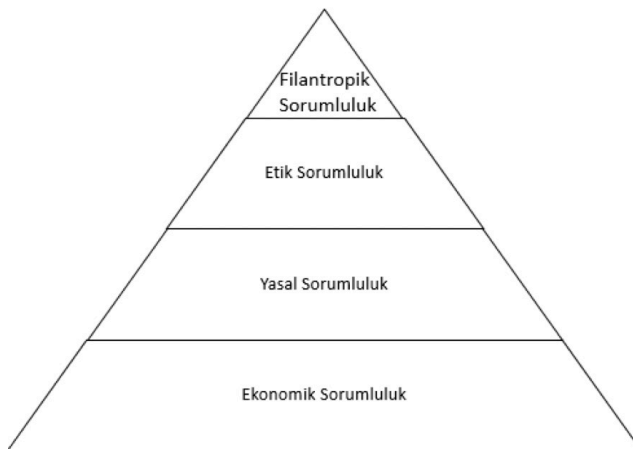
Kurumsal Sorumluluğun yirminci yüzyılda ortaya çıkışının temelinde Amerika'daki uygulamalar önemlidir. Kurumsal sorumluluk yaklaşımı daha sonraları İngiltere ve Avrupa'da ilgi görmüştür. Bu görüş toplumdaki gelir düzeyi düşük olan kişilere zengin şirketlerin bağışta bulunması gerektiği düşüncesine dayanmaktadır. Toplumsal açıdan değerlendirildiğinde yükümlülük 1960'lar ve

1970’lerde toplumsal hareketlerin içinde bulunan tarafından şekillendirilmiştir. Toplumsal hareketlerin içinde bulunanlar toplumsal adaletin sağlanabilmesi konusunda toplumdaki büyük kurumları ve yönetimi sorumlu tutmuşlardır. Bu görüş içerisinde bulunanlar, büyük ölçekli kurumların gücün artmasıyla birlikte sorumluluklarının da artması gerektiği düşüncesinden yola çıkarak bireylere ve küçük topluluklar yönelik bir yükümlülük taşınması gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir. (L’Etang, 2002: 157-158)

Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk uygulamalarının önemli bir kısmı kurumun faaliyet alanının dışında ve eğitim, sanat, spor gibi alanlarda bağış ve parasal yardımın dışında kurum veya kuruluşa mekân, donanım, profesyonel danışmanlık, eğitim, teknolojik destek alanlarında yardımda bulunulması uygulamaları dahil edilebilir. Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk alanındaki hâkim görüş bu türden desteklerin hem toplumun hem de kurumların çıkarlarına uygun olduğu yönündedir. Sosyal sorumluluğa yönelik halkla ilişkiler alanındaki bu türden uygulamaların topluma fayda sağlayabileceği düşünülebilir. (L’Etang, 2002: 165)

Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk uygulamaları kuruluşlar açısından birçok sorumluluğu yerine getirmeyi gerektirmektedir. Aşağıda yer alan ve Carroll’un katmanlar halinde belirtmiş olduğu kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk düzeyleri konunun açıklanabilmesi anlamında önemlidir. Ayrıca konunun katmanlar halinde aktarılması da anlaşılmasını kolaylaştıran bir unsur olarak kabul edilebilir.

Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk dört bileşen halinde belirtilmiş ve başlangıç katmanı olarak her şeyin temelini oluşturduğu düşünülen ekonomik performans kabul edilmiştir. (Carroll, 1991: 42.)



**Şekil 1: Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Piramidi**

**Kaynak:** Archie B Carroll, 1991: 42.

## **EKONOMİK SORUMLULUK**

Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk kavramını toplumsal açıdan değerlendirdiğimizde toplumdaki bireylerin kuruluşlardan toplumun geneline yönelik bazı noktalarda beklenti içinde bulunabileceklerini söyleyebiliriz. Bu beklentiler bireysel olmanın ötesinde ülke ekonomisine katkı, istihdam sağlanması gibi konuları içerebilir. Bu nedenledir kuruluşların toplumsal açıdan birçok anlamda önemli yapılar olduğunu ve bu anlamda sorumlulukları bulunduğunu söyleyebilmemiz mümkündür.

Tarihsel süreçte toplum için ürün ve hizmet üretmek üzere ortaya çıkmış olan işletmeler, iktisadi yapılardır. İşletmeler açısından kârlılık en önemli motivasyon kaynaklarından biridir. İşletmeler toplumsal yapı içerisinde temel ekonomik birimlerdir. Yine tarihsel süreçte işletmelerin en önemli işlevlerinden biri tüketicilerin ihtiyacı olan ürün ve hizmetleri üretmeleri ve makul bir ölçüde kâr elde etmeleridir. Bununla birlikte işletmelerin kâr elde etme amacı, maksimum kâr elde etmeye dönüşmüş ve günümüze kadar gelen bir değer olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, İşletmelerin diğer bütün sorumlulukları önemli olmakla birlikte ekonomik sorumluluğa dayanmaktadır. (Carroll, 1991: 40-41)

## **YASAL SORUMLULUK**

Kuruluşların içinde buldukları ülkenin yasal mevzuatına uygun hareket ederek ürün ve hizmet üretmeleri en temel sorumlulukları arasında kabul edilebilir. Kuruluşların yasal mevzuat çerçevesinde hareket ederek ekonomik faaliyetlerini sürdürmeleri bir anlamda tüketici haklarına da uygun hareket etmeleri gereğini ortaya çıkaracaktır. Bununla birlikte serbest ekonomik koşulların geçerli olduğu ekonomik sistemlerde rekabet ortamı içerisindeki kuruluşların sorumlu oldukları yasal mevzuatı bilmeleri ve bu mevzuata uygun olarak faaliyetlerini sürdürmeleri de kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk ile ilgilidir.

İşletmeler toplum tarafından yalnızca kâr amacı taşıyan kuruluşlar olarak kabul görmezler. Bununla birlikte işletmelerin faaliyetlerini gerçekleştirirken yasal düzenlemelere uymaları beklenmektedir. İşletmelerin ekonomik faaliyetlerini hukuki çerçeve içinde için gerçekleştirmeleri gerekir. Yasal sorumluluklar, etik ilkelerin kanunlaştırılması anlamında düşünülebilir. Tarihsel süreç açısından bir değerlendirme yapılacak olduğunda, yasal sorumluluklar, ekonomik sorumlulukların bir üst basamağında yer alır. Bununla birlikte yasal sorumluluklar, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Piramidinde, serbest girişimin temel ilkesi olarak ekonomik sorumluluklar ile ilişkili olduğu için ekonomik sorumluluğun bir üst basamağında yer alır. (Carroll, 1991: 41)

## **ETİK SORUMLULUKLAR**

Ekonomik ve yasal sorumluluklar adalet ve hakkaniyete ilişkin etik normları temsil ederken, etik sorumluluklar yasada yer almasa bile toplum üyeleri

tarafından beklenen veya yasaklanan faaliyetleri ve uygulamaları kapsar. Etik sorumluluklar, toplumda tüketicilerin, çalışanların ve diğer bütün paydaşların adil ve hakkaniyetli bir şekilde haklarının korunmasına yönelik standartları ve ilkeleri içermektedir. (Carroll, 1991: 41)

Etik sorumlulukları kuruluşlar açısından değerlendirdiğimizde; yasal bir zorunluluğu olmadığı halde kuruluşların yürütmüş oldukları faaliyetleri gereği zaman içerisinde aynı alanda faaliyet gösteren çalışanlar ve ürün ve hizmetin hedef kitlesi konumunda bireyler tarafından karşılanması gerektiği düşünülen sorumluluklar olarak ifade edilir. Yasal bir zorunluluğu olmadığı halde etik sorumluluğunu yerine getiren kuruluşlar hedef kitleleri ve paydaşları tarafından faaliyetlerini belirli ilkelere uygun olarak gerçekleştiren ve sorumluluklarının bilincinde olan sadece kar elde etmeyi değil toplumu ve onu oluşturan bireyleri de gözeten kuruluşlar olarak kabul edilebilir. Bu durum da bu kuruluşların hedef kitlelerince itibarlı kuruluşlar olarak değerlendirilebilmelerini sağlayabilir.

Toplumsal ve çevresel alanlarda ortaya çıkan birçok değişim örneğin, medeni haklar, tüketici hareketleri ve çevre ile ilgili birçok konu daha sonra ortaya çıkabilecek yasal düzenlemelerin bir anlamdaki öncüsü ve habercisi konumundadır. Bu anlamda etik sorumluluklar toplumda karşılanması beklenen birçok konudaki değerleri ve kuralları kapsayan bir kavram olarak belirtilebilir. Bununla birlikte bu değerler ve kurallar geçerli olan mevzuatın öngördüğü uygulamaların üzerinde bir performansın sağlanmasına yönelik de olabilir. Etik sorumlulukların çerçevesinin iyi tanımlanamamış olması ve meşruiyetlerinin tartışılmasından dolayı işletmelerin bu konuda değerlendirme yapmaları da güçtür. (Carroll, 1991: 41)

### **FİLANTROPİK SORUMLULUK – (HAYIRSEVERLİK)**

Hayırseverlik kavramı bireylerin içinde buldukları toplumun ve çevrenin ihtiyaç duyduğu konulara ve sorunlara ilişkin olarak herhangi bir zorunluluk olmaksızın fayda sağlamaya yönelik gerçekleştirilen faaliyetler ile ilgilidir. Bu yönüyle hayırseverlik birçok toplum için çok önemli bir kavram olarak kabul edilebilir. Çünkü, her toplumda ihtiyaç duyulanlar ve sorunlar hakkında her zaman herkes bilgi sahibi olmayabilir. Bireylerin içinde buldukları toplumun ihtiyaçları ve sorunlarına ilişkin farkındalıklarının olması ve bu ihtiyaç ve sorunları gidermeye yönelik herhangi bir karşılık beklemezsizin katkı sunmaya çalışmaları da hayırseverlik ile ilişkilendirilebilir.

Hayırseverlik kavramı akademik çerçevede düşünüldüğünde, temelinde yasal gerekliliklerin dışında ve kâr amacı taşımayan uygulamaları faaliyetleri içermektedir. Bu türden hayırsever ve yardımsever faaliyetlerin temeli gönüllülük esasına dayanır ve kâr amacı taşımaz. Hayırseverlik davranışı, sosyal sorumluluk

davranışında yer alan karşılıklı hak ve görevlerin yer aldığı bir durumdaki “sosyal sorumluluk” kavramındaki biçiminden farklıdır. (L’Etang, 2002: 157)

Hayırseverlik, işletmelerden iyi birer kurumsal vatandaş olmalarına yönelik beklentiye karşılık gerçekleştirilen kurumsal eylemleri içermektedir. Hayırseverlikte insan refahının artırılması ve iyi niyetin sağlanması için aktif olarak faaliyetlere katılım yer almaktadır. Hayırseverlik faaliyetlerin arasında sanat, eğitim veya topluma katkı benzeri ekonomik kaynak aktarılması ve işletme yöneticilerinin bu konulara zaman ayırması da örnek olarak verilebilir. (Carroll, 1991: 42)

Kurumsal hayırseverlik bir sosyal amaç için bir kurum tarafından bir yardım kuruluşuna nakit bağış veya ürün ve hizmet biçiminde yapılan katkı olarak belirtilebilir. Bu biçimdeki bir yardım kurumsal hayırseverlik biçimleri arasında belki de en geleneksel yöntem olabilir. Bu türden destekler geçmişte de toplum sağlığı, bireylere yönelik yardım kurumları, eğitim ve sanat alanları ile birlikte çevreyi koruma amacı ile hareket eden kurumsal yapılar için önemli bir destek niteliği taşımıştır. (Kotler & Lee: 2006, 141)

## **SOSYAL PAZARLAMA**

Sosyal pazarlama genel itibariyle toplumsal faydaya yönelik uygulamaların kuruluşların, üretmiş oldukları ürün ve hizmetler gibi kabul görmesi, desteklenmesine yönelik gerçekleştirilen ve pazarlama yöntemlerine benzer yöntemlerle hedef kitleye ulaşmaya çalışan uygulamaları içermektedir.

Sosyal pazarlama, toplumsal konulara ilişkin görüşlerin kabul edilebilmesi için pazarlama programlarının tasarlanması, uygulanması ve kontrolüdür. Sosyal pazarlama, üretim planlaması, fiyatlandırma, iletişim, dağıtım ve pazarlama araştırmalarını içermektedir. (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971: 5)

Sosyal Pazarlama uygulamaları çok eski bir geçmişe sahiptir. Bunlar arasında; Hindistan’da 1950’lerdeki aile planlaması kampanyaları, İsveç’te 1970’lerde sigara ve alkol kullanmayan bir ülke hedefi ile gerçekleştirilen kampanyalarını saymak mümkündür. Yine Avustralya’da trafikte emniyet kemerinin takılması ve Kanada’da bağımlılıkla mücadele ve sağlıklı yaşama yönelik kampanyaları gerçekleştirilmiştir. 1980’li yıllardan itibaren Dünya Bankası, Dünya Sağlık Örgütü ve Hastalık Kontrol ve Önleme Merkezleri Sosyal Pazarlamayı bir kavram olarak kullanmaya başlamışlardır. (Kotler & Keller, 2012: 638)

Sosyal pazarlama, pazarlama bilgisi, kavram ve teknikleri ile pazarlama politikalarını sosyal amaçların gerçekleşmesi için kullanan ayrıca pazarlama kararlarının ve faaliyetlerinin ortaya çıkaracağı toplumsal sonuçlar ile de ilgilenen

bir pazarlama dalı olarak tanımlanabilir. (Kelley & Lazer, 1973: 4. Aktaran: İlter & Bayraktaroğlu, 2007: 52.)

Halkla İlişkilerin sosyal sorumluluğa ilişkin rolleri arasında çevre sorunlarının çözümü konusunda faaliyet bulunma, sağlık ve eğitim alanındaki sorunların çözümüne yönelik işletmelerin hayırseverlik yapması gerektiğine ilişkin görüşe yönelik bir uzlaşma söz konusudur. (Kim & Reber, 2008: 3. Aktaran: Demircan, 2020: 120)

### **SOSYAL GİRİŞİMCİLİK**

Sosyal Girişimcilik, toplumsal yaşam içerisinde ortaya çıkan sorunlar ve yardıma ihtiyaç duyulan konular ile ilgili olarak kuruluşların, işletmelerin, toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik vakıf ve dernek gibi sivil toplum kuruluşları kurmalarını ve bu girişimler ile topluma belirli bir çerçevede, sistemli bir biçimde katkı sunmalarını amaçlayan uygulamaları içermektedir.

Sosyal girişimcilik, tarihsel süreçte kooperatifçilik hareketinden ortaya çıkmış daha sonrasında sosyal inovasyon ve sosyal girişimcilik fikri ve faaliyetleri ile birlikte hareket kazanmıştır. Ayrıca sosyal girişimcilik faaliyetlerinin temel unsurları hayırseverlik faaliyetlerinde bulunanlara yol gösterici olmuştur. (www.un.org/ Erişim tarihi: 07.11.2025)

Sosyal Girişimcilik kavramı yeni gibi görünmekle birlikte esasen Sosyal Girişimcilik Olgusu yeni değildir. Geçmiş dönemlerde de sosyal girişimcilik daima olmuştur. Ancak kavram geçmişte bu şekilde tanımlanmıyordu. Bugün için herkesin kabul ettiği birçok kurum sosyal girişimler ile ortaya çıkmıştır. Bununla birlikte yeni bir kavram olan sosyal girişimcilik bu türden faaliyetlerin sınırlarının belirsizleştiğini göstermesi açısından önemlidir. Kâr amacı taşımayan ve yenilikçi girişimlerin yanında sosyal girişimcilik, kâr amacı taşıyan toplum kalkınma bankaları ve kâr amacı taşımayan ve kâr amacı taşıyan unsurları bir arada barındıran karma kuruluşları ve toplumsal amaçlı işletmeleri de bulundurabilir. Örneğin evsiz insanlar için ev sağlanması ve kişilerin eğitilmesi ve istihdam edilmesi bu kapsamda sayılabilir. (Dees, 2001:1, <https://issuemanagement.org>, Erişim tarihi: 07.11.2025 )

### **SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK**

Toplumsal fayda sağlama açısından sürdürülebilirliğin halkla ilişkiler bağlamında açıklanabilmesi için sürdürülebilirlik kavramının açıklanması gerekmektedir. Konuya ilişkin literatür incelenecek olursa sürdürülebilirlik kavramına birçok farklı açıdan tanımlamaların getirildiği görülebilir. Bu tanımlamalar arasında aşağıda yer alan tanımlama konuyu halkla ilişkiler çerçevesinde değerlendirmede daha açıklayıcı olabilir.

Birleşmiş Milletler, Sürdürülebilirlik kavramını; “*bugünün ihtiyaçları karşılırken gelecek nesillerin ihtiyaçlarını karşılama imkânına zarar verilmemesi*” olarak tanımlamaktadır. (www.un.org, Erişim tarihi: 07.11.2025)

Kavramının ekonomik bir boyutu da olduğunu düşündüğümüzde aşağıda yer alan tanımlama önemli kabul edilebilir.

Dünya Bankasının, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk kavramına 2004 yılında yapmış olduğu tanımlamaya göre, çalışanlar, aileler ve yerel topluluklarla sürdürülebilir ekonomik gelişime katkı sağlanması ile ilgili bir kavramdır. Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, iş ve gelişim ile birlikte yaşam kalitesinin yükseltilmesi amaçlarını taşımaktadır. (Çakar Mengü, 2013: 121)

## **SPONSORLUK**

Toplumsal faydaya yönelik halkla ilişkiler uygulamaları açısından sponsorluk kavramının genel çerçevesini belirtmek yararlı olacaktır. Sponsorluk genel itibari ile işletmelerin, kurum ve kuruluşların istenilen yönde tanıtılması yönünde kullanılabilen bir araç olduğunu belirtmemiz mümkündür. Örneğin bir işletmenin, kurum veya kuruluşun yürütmekte oldukları faaliyetleri ile ilişkisi olsun veya olmasın toplumsal fayda temelinde bir dernek, vakıf, yardım amaçlı bir kampanya veya etkinliğe doğrudan parasal yardımda bulunması veya ürün veya hizmet desteği sağlaması sponsorluk kapsamında sayılabilir. Burada önemli olan unsur işletmenin, kurum veya kuruluşun bunun hayırseverlik veya bağışçılıktan farklı olarak karşılığında bir beklenti içinde olunmasıdır.

Sponsorluk, bir işletmenin, kurum veya kuruluşun karşılığında ticari bir potansiyel beklentisi ile bir faaliyete yönelik, nakit, ürün, eşya biçimde yapmış oldukları bir yatırım ve destek olarak tanımlanabilir.

Temel itibariyle sponsor olan işletme, kurum veya kuruluş sağlamış olduğu desteğin karşılığında iki şey elde eder. Bunları şu şekilde sıralamak mümkündür.

- a) Sponsor olan işletme, kurum veya kuruluş sponsorluk yapılan etkinlik veya konunun izleyicisi konumundaki kişiler tarafından görünür olabilmektedir.
- b) Sponsor olunan etkinlik veya konunun algılanış biçimi ve olumlu yöndeki imajından yararlanmak. (Meenaghan, 1991: 10)

Kavramsal açıdan işletmeler, kurum ve kuruluşlar açısından sponsorluk kavramını değerlendirdiğimizde; sponsorluk, desteklemek ile ilişkili olduğundan desteklenen kurum veya kuruluşun veya etkinliğin, halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerinin önemli bir hedefi olan kurumsal itibar açısından da olumlu yönde olması önemlidir.

Sponsorluk faaliyetleri sonucu toplumsal fayda sağlanmış olsa bile sponsorluk faaliyeti hayırseverlik ve bağışçılık kavramları ile karıştırılmamalıdır. (Meenaghan, 1991: 10)

## **SORUN YÖNETİMİ**

Halkla ilişkilerin bir uygulama alanı olan sorun yönetimi, esasen halkla ilişkilerin en temel işlevlerinden bir olan taraflar arasında uyumun sağlanmasına yönelik iletişim faaliyetleri ile ilgilidir. Sorun yönetimi çalışmaları ile birlikte özellikle kuruluşlarda ortaya çıkması muhtemel sorunların önceden tespit edilmesi ve önlenmesine yönelik tedbirler alınması ve bu sorunlara yönelik nasıl bir çözüm geliştirileceğine ilişkin faaliyet planı oluşturulması ve sorun ortaya çıktıktan sonra da bu faaliyetlerin gerçekleştirilmesi ile ilgili faaliyetleri gerçekleştirilebilir.

Sorun Yönetiminin Kökenleri; Sorun Yönetimi bir terim olarak ilk kez 1976 yılında Howard Chase tarafından kullanılmıştır. Howard Chase 1950 ve 1960 yıllarda bir işletmede halkla ilişkiler sorumlusu olarak görev yapmaktayken, dış etkenlerin işletmeler üzerindeki etkisini görmüştür. Bu etkenlere yanıt verebilmek için işletmenin CEO düzeyindeki yöneticileri, Howard Chase ve diğer halkla ilişkiler uzmanlarının önerilerini almıştır. Bununla birlikte bu türden öneriler ancak işletme açısından olumsuz durumlar ortaya çıktıktan sonra verilmiştir. Howard Chase, işletme içinde bir grup personelin, bir sorunun ortaya çıkmakta olduğunu erken bir dönemde işletmeye haber verebileceğini düşünmüştür. Sorun ortaya çıkmadan gerçekleştirilecek ön hazırlık süreci ile birlikte soruna ortaya çıktığında daha iyi yanıt verilebilmesi imkânını sağlayabileceği düşünülmektedir. Ayrıca sorun ortaya çıkmadan önce çatışmadan kaçınmak için ürün ve ürüne ilişkin çeşitli karar değişiklikleri yapılarak çatışmalardan uzak durulması da mümkün olabilir. Hatta bu durum yeni pazarların oluşmasına da imkân sağlayabilir. Fakat bütün bu değişimler için işletme yönetiminin dikkatinin çekilebilmesi, tercihen de yönetimde yer alınmasının gerektiği düşünülmektedir. (<https://issuemanagement.org/page/what-is-issue-management?&hhsearchterms>) Erişim tarihi: 09.11.2025)

Bir kurumda sorun yönetimi kurumsal açıdan organizasyonu önemli ölçüde etkileyebilecek sorunlar ve değişiklikler karşısında kurumsal politika ve uygulamalarda değişimlerin gerçekleştirilebileceği uzun vadeli stratejik kararların alınmasını gerektirebilecek bir faaliyettir. (Theaker, 2008: 161)

Halkla İlişkiler açısından değerlendirdiğimizde sorunların yönetilmesi ve çözümü ile kurumsal sosyal sorumlulukla ilişkilidir. Sorun yönetiminin kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk ile bağlantılı olmasının temel nedeni kurumsal sosyal sorumluluğun toplumda ortaya çıkan sorunlar ve bu sorunları duyuran faaliyetlere cevap verebilme aracı olarak değerlendirilmesidir. (L'Etang, 2002: 158-159)

## SONUÇ

‘Halkla İlişkilerin Toplumsal Fayda Temelindeki Alanları’ başlıklı çalışmamızda, halkla ilişkilerin temelde toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik işlevi açıklanmaya çalışılmış ve bu doğrultuda, kuruluşların toplumsal fayda temeline dayalı olarak gerçekleştirmiş olduğu birçok faaliyetin kavramsal çerçevesine yönelik tanımlamalara yer verilmiştir. Bilindiği gibi halkla ilişkiler uygulama alanı içerisinde yer alan birçok uygulama temelde kuruluşların itibarına katkı sağlamayı hedef alan çalışmaları içerir. Hedef kitle açısından daha itibarlı bir görünüm elde eden kuruluşlar mevcut ekonomik yapılarını ve kârlılıklarını yükselterek ekonomik yapı içerisinde devamlılıklarını sağlama imkânına sahip olabilirler. Kuruluşların itibarlarını yükseltmeye yönelik yürütmüş oldukları bu faaliyetler günümüzde özellikle internet üzerinden sosyal ağlar aracılığı ile işletmelerin itibarlarını olumsuz yönde etkileyebilecek girişimlere yönelik daha güçlü bir görünüm kazanılmasına da imkân verebilmektedir. Bu nedenlerle kuruluşlar bir yandan ürün ve hizmetlerinin tanıtımına yönelik kitle iletişim araçları üzerinden reklam faaliyetleri gerçekleştirirken diğer yandan da kurumsal itibarı doğrudan olumlu yönde etkilemesi hedeflenen sosyal faaliyetlere yönelmişlerdir. Burada kuruluşlar kimi zaman toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik olan dernekler ve vakıflar üzerinden kimi zaman doğrudan kamuya maddi kaynak desteğinde bulunarak kimi zamanda kendi gerçekleştirmiş oldukları projeler ile topluma fayda sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu biçimde ortaya çıkan, topluma fayda sağlama düşüncesinin temelinde, kuruluşların içinde buldukları toplumdaki elde etmiş oldukları kazanımlarına karşılık bir anlamda cevap verme niteliğinde karşılık olarak katkı sunma anlamında gerçekleştirdikleri sosyal içerikli faaliyetler ve farklı şekillerde gerçekleştirdikleri destekler yer alabilir. Bu çalışmada, kuruluşların toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik olarak gerçekleştirdikleri halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerinde ortaya çıkabilecek kavramsal kargaşayı gidermek amaçlanmıştır. Bununla birlikte farklı yöntem ve araçları kullanan bu uygulamaların kavramsal olarak genel çerçevesinin belirlenmesi sağlanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda; gerçekleştirilen literatür taraması ile birlikte toplumsal fayda sağlamaya yönelik gerçekleştirilen ve gerçekleştirilme biçimleri itibarıyla birer halkla ilişkiler uygulaması niteliği taşıyan, Sosyal Sorumluluk, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk başlığı altında (Ekonomik Sorumluluk, Yasal Sorumluluk, Etik Sorumluluk ve Filantropik Sorumluluk - Hayırseverlik ), Sosyal Pazarlama, Sponsorluk, Sorun Yönetimi uygulamalarının kavramsal çerçevesi çizilmiş ve bu türden halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerinin toplumsal fayda sağlamak ile birlikte, başarılı bir biçimde uygulanmaları durumunda kurumsal itibara olumlu anlamda katkı sunabileceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

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# *The Meaning of Myths in Javanese Culture in Indonesian Horror Films*

*Nahara Reghy Putri Nursyamsi<sup>1</sup>*

## **ABSTRACT**

Horror films often serve as a medium to convey information and depict stories rooted in oral traditions and local myths, particularly drawing from Javanese mythology. Filmmakers create films with the aim of entertaining while conveying underlying meanings. This study explores the significance of using myths in Indonesian horror films, questioning whether it reflects the preservation of cultural heritage, revives oral traditions, and provides a distinct Indonesian identity in global cinema. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the meaning of myths in the creation of myth, Javanese culture, film. Indonesian horror films and offers new insights into how cultural heritage can be translated into visual entertainment. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of films as a platform for strengthening cultural identity. This study aims to describe the meaning of Javanese myths in Indonesian horror films using a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection techniques involve literature reviews. The research aims to explore data through books, scholarly works, and relevant journal articles on the topic. The findings indicate that the use of Javanese myths in Indonesian horror films is not only intended to create tension or fear but also to convey cultural messages embedded in those mythologies. Javanese myths serve as a means to preserve and introduce the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Javanese society to the audience, especially the younger generation.

**Keywords:** *Mythology, Javanese Culture, Indonesian Horror Films*

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## **Endonezya Korku Filmlerinde Cava Kùltüründeki Mitlerin Anlamı**

### **ÖZET**

Korku filmleri, genellikle sözlü geleneklere ve yerel mitlere dayanan hikâyeleri aktarmak ve bilgi iletmek için bir araç görevi görür; özellikle Cava mitolojisinden beslenir. Film yapımcıları, hem eğlendirmek hem de derin anlamlar iletmek amacıyla filmler üretirler. Bu çalışma, Endonezya korku filmlerinde mitlerin kullanımının önemini incelemekte ve bunun kültürel mirasın korunmasını mı yansıttığını, sözlü gelenekleri yeniden canlandırıp canlandırmadığını ve küresel sinemada özgün bir Endonezya kimliği sağlayıp sağlamadığını sorgulamaktadır. Araştırma, Endonezya korku filmlerinin yaratımında mitlerin anlamına dair daha derin bir anlayışa katkıda bulunmakta ve kültürel mirasın görsel eğlenceye nasıl dönüştürülebileceğine ilişkin yeni bakış açıları sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışma filmlerin kültürel kimliğin güçlendirilmesi için bir platform olarak önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu çalışma, nitel tanımlayıcı bir yaklaşım kullanarak Endonezya korku filmlerinde Cava mitlerinin anlamını açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Veri toplama teknikleri literatür taramasını içermektedir. Araştırma, konuyla ilgili kitaplar, akademik çalışmalar ve bilimsel makaleler aracılığıyla verileri incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bulgular, Endonezya korku filmlerinde Cava mitlerinin kullanılmasının yalnızca gerilim veya korku yaratmak amacıyla değil, aynı zamanda bu mitolojilerde yer alan kültürel mesajları iletmek için de yapıldığını göstermektedir. Cava mitleri, Cava toplumunun değerlerini, inançlarını ve geleneklerini özellikle genç kuşaklara tanıtmak ve korumak için bir araç görevi görmektedir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mitoloji, Cava Kùltürü, Endonezya Korku Filmleri,*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Horror films remain one of the most popular genres in Indonesian cinema and continue to dominate the national film industry (Fajar & Lestari, 2021). Beyond entertainment, Indonesian horror films frequently incorporate local myths, supernatural beliefs, folklore, and traditional rituals that reflect the cultural identity of Indonesian society (Akbar, 2022). In particular, Javanese mythology has become a significant cultural source in contemporary horror cinema, where mystical narratives and spiritual entities are represented through visual storytelling and cinematic symbolism.

Javanese culture was selected as the focus of this study because it is one of the most dominant cultural sources represented in Indonesian horror cinema. Many Indonesian horror films adopt Javanese myths, rituals, mystical beliefs, and supernatural symbols as central narrative elements (Esfandari, 2016). Ritual practices such as *Sesajen*, beliefs in ancestral spirits, sacred heirlooms, mystical songs, and supernatural entities frequently appear in horror films and are strongly associated with Javanese cultural identity. In addition, Javanese mythology has long been recognized as closely connected to spirituality, mysticism, and supernatural traditions that continue to influence Indonesian popular culture. As a result, Javanese myths become important cultural symbols through which Indonesian horror films construct fear, suspense, and mystical imagination for audiences.

Myths are cultural narratives that convey values, beliefs, and collective meanings within a society. Roland Barthes conceptualized myth as a system of communication that constructs ideological meaning through signs and symbols, while Joseph Campbell viewed myth as a narrative containing moral and spiritual significance for a community (Nastiti, 2023). In Javanese culture, myths are closely associated with spiritual beliefs, rituals, and the relationship between humans and the supernatural world. These beliefs continue to persist in modern society and are transmitted through oral traditions, traditional performances, and contemporary media such as film (Herusatoto, 2018).

The persistence of mythological beliefs in Indonesian society has encouraged filmmakers to reinterpret traditional myths into modern cinematic narratives. Horror films often portray sacred rituals, supernatural beings, and mystical practices derived from Javanese culture to create fear and suspense while simultaneously representing cultural identity. However, these representations are not culturally neutral. Film, as a form of mass media, has the power to shape audience perceptions and reconstruct cultural meanings. The representation of Javanese myths in horror cinema may preserve cultural memory, but it may also simplify, stereotype, or commodify cultural beliefs for commercial purposes.

Previous studies have examined Javanese mythology in literature, traditional rituals, and folklore traditions Istibillah et al., (2021) and other studies have discussed the popularity of myth-based horror films in Indonesia. However, limited research specifically analyzes how Indonesian horror films construct and communicate the cultural meaning of Javanese myths through cinematic representation. In addition, studies focusing on the symbolic representation of myth in contemporary Indonesian horror cinema remain relatively limited.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how Javanese myths are represented and interpreted in Indonesian horror films. Through a literature review approach, this research analyzes patterns of myth representation, cultural symbolism, and the communication of Javanese cultural values in horror cinema. This study contributes to the discussion of cultural representation in Indonesian film by highlighting how horror cinema reconstructs mythological narratives within contemporary popular culture.

Although previous studies have discussed myths in particular Indonesian horror films, most research focuses only on specific narratives, rituals, or individual cultural symbols. Limited studies comprehensively examine how Javanese myths are represented and reconstructed across Indonesian horror cinema from a cultural representation perspective. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the representation of Javanese myths in Indonesian horror films through a literature review approach by identifying recurring themes, symbolic meanings, and cultural patterns found in previous studies.

This study contributes to the fields of cultural studies, communication studies, and film studies by providing a broader understanding of how Indonesian horror cinema reconstructs Javanese mythology into contemporary visual narratives. In addition, the study explains how horror films simultaneously function as media for cultural preservation and commercial entertainment through the representation of mysticism, spirituality, and supernatural beliefs in popular culture.

## **Methods**

### ***Literature Study***

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a literature review method (library research). Literature review research is conducted through the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of scholarly sources relevant to a particular topic in order to develop conceptual understanding and identify patterns within previous studies (Ridwan et al., 2021). This method was selected because the research focuses on examining the representation of Javanese myths and cultural values in Indonesian horror films through existing academic discussions, journal articles, books, and previous research findings rather than

through field observation or audience interviews. The data sources in this study consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, research reports, and academic publications discussing mythology, Javanese culture, cultural representation, and Indonesian horror cinema. The literature reviewed includes studies related to Indonesian horror films such as *KKN di Desa Penari*, *Mangkujiwo*, and *Malam Satu Suro*, which prominently portray elements of Javanese mythology, mysticism, and traditional belief systems.

Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide interpretative explanations of social and cultural phenomena in narrative form rather than statistical measurement (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2022). In this study, the qualitative approach is used to describe and interpret how myths, rituals, and spiritual beliefs are represented within Indonesian horror films. The analysis focuses on identifying recurring themes, symbolic meanings, and cultural values found in previous scholarly discussions concerning mythological representation in horror cinema.

The research process began with collecting relevant literature discussing Javanese myths, Indonesian horror films, and cultural representation. After the data were gathered, the researcher conducted data reduction and classification by selecting sources that were directly related to the research objectives. The selected literature was then categorized thematically based on recurring discussions concerning myth, mysticism, ritual practices, supernatural symbols, and cultural teachings in Indonesian horror films. The stages of analysis were adapted from the literature review framework proposed by Darmalaksana (2020), including data collection, data organization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing.

To strengthen the analytical framework, this study also adopts Roland Barthes' concept of myth as a cultural system of meaning. Barthes explains that myth functions as a form of representation that transforms cultural signs into ideological meanings. Through this perspective, the study interprets how myths in Indonesian horror films are represented not merely as supernatural stories, but also as cultural symbols associated with spirituality, morality, mysticism, and Javanese identity. This theoretical perspective helps explain how horror cinema reconstructs traditional beliefs into contemporary visual narratives within popular culture. The analysis was conducted through interpretative reading and comparative examination of previous studies to identify patterns in the representation of Javanese mythology in Indonesian horror cinema. Particular attention was given to how myths such as *Sesajen*, *Ayam Cemani*, *Celeng Ludro*, *Pengilon Kembar*, and *Malam Satu Suro* are represented as symbols of fear, spirituality, and supernatural power. Furthermore, the study examines how these mythological representations contribute to shaping audience perceptions of Javanese culture in contemporary media.

## **FINDINGS**

### **The Nature of Local Myths**

Local myths within Indonesian society are characterized by dual elements Tremendum (the frightening or awe-inspiring) and Fascinossum (the fascinating or spiritually moving). These two dimensions coexist to evoke both fear and reverence within the collective imagination of the people. According to Kurniawan & Santabudi (2023) citing Subagya, mythological belief is deeply connected to faith in supernatural events, sacred places, and mystical beings endowed with extraordinary spiritual power. Such beliefs often create a sense of sacredness (Keramat) and mystery (Angker), forming the foundation of many Indonesian cultural expressions, including film narratives.

### **The Moral Meaning of Myths**

Horror films that incorporate local culture—such as traditional rituals, customs, and ancestral wisdom—play a significant role in preserving indigenous values. Ihsana & Urfan (2024) examined one such example in their study of the film *Primbon* (2023), an 88-minute feature set in an abandoned house in Klaten, Central Java, which had been uninhabited for twelve years. Directed by Rudi Soejarwo and produced by Yoen K., the film follows the story of Rana (played by Flavio Zaviera), a young woman who mysteriously disappears during a mountain hike with her friend Janu (played by Chicco Kurniawan). Although Janu eventually finds his way home, Rana never returns and is declared missing.

Beyond its supernatural narrative, *Primbon* delivers a profound moral message emphasizing the importance of obedience to parental advice. The film illustrates that disregarding such wisdom can lead to unrest or even disastrous consequences. It also invites audiences to reflect on the richness of local wisdom, ancestral knowledge, and the Javanese way of life. These themes highlight the enduring cultural relevance of myth and tradition in shaping moral consciousness within society.

#### **» Ritual Cleansing and the Meaning of Ruwatan**

One of the key mythological representations in *Primbon* centers on the ritual of self-purification known as Ruwatan. In Javanese tradition, Ruwatan is a sacred ceremony performed to release a person from curses or misfortunes believed to bring danger to themselves or their community (Ihsana & Urfan, 2024). The ritual symbolizes spiritual renewal and the restoration of harmony between humans and the unseen world. As (Wardani, 2020) explains, the ultimate purpose of Ruwatan is to cleanse individuals from Sukerta, a condition of impurity or misfortune and protect them from ill fate.



Figure 1. Ritual cleansing (*Ruwatan*) scene in the film *Primbon*

In Javanese society, *Ruwatan* ceremonies are often accompanied by traditional *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppet) performances. The play most frequently performed in these contexts is *Murwakala*, which tells the story of *Batara Kala*, a mythical giant associated with misfortune. *Wayang* performances have long been an integral part of Javanese cultural life, serving not only as artistic entertainment but also as a spiritual medium in ritual practices. Susanti & Lestari (2020) note, *Wayang* holds historical and symbolic significance as a means of seeking protection from life's uncertainties and maintaining social balance during *Ruwatan* ceremonies.

Through its portrayal of *Ruwatan*, *Primbon* reflects the coexistence of fear and reverence within Javanese spirituality capturing how myth continues to influence human behavior, moral decision-making, and belief systems in modern Indonesia.

#### » **Myth and Mysticism in Film *KKN di Desa Penari***

Another widely recognized example of myth representation in Indonesian horror cinema is *KKN di Desa Penari*, analyzed by Anisya et al (2023). Released in 2022 and adapted from the viral “simple man” story shared on social media in 2019, the film portrays the supernatural experiences of six university students undertaking their community service program (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata* or *KKN*) in a remote village. Throughout the narrative, the students encounter a series of mysterious events connected to local spiritual beliefs and supernatural forces. The film not only functions as a horror narrative but also reconstructs Javanese mythology through cinematic representation, emphasizing the relationship between humans, spirituality, and unseen entities within Javanese culture.

One of the most significant mythological elements represented in the film is the ritual practice of *Sesajen* (offerings). Various scenes depict *Sesajen* being placed in certain locations around the village as symbolic acts intended to maintain harmony between humans and supernatural beings. In Javanese culture, *Sesajen* carries not only spiritual meaning but also moral and social significance.

Offerings are traditionally dedicated to ancestral spirits, deities, or supernatural forces believed to influence human life (Gazali et al., 2023). Through these representations, the film portrays Sesajen as an important cultural practice rooted in respect, balance, and spiritual obedience.



Figure 2. Scene film KKN di Desa Penari (2022)

The depiction of Sesajen in the film also reflects the continuing influence of mythological belief systems within Javanese society. Sesajen functions as a medium through which individuals express reverence toward unseen spiritual powers that are believed to shape everyday life (Malik, 2023). In mythological contexts, offerings symbolize communication between the human and spiritual worlds, representing continuity between the living and ancestral spirits. As Sukmawan et al (2023) explain, Sesajen serves as a symbolic bridge connecting humans with supernatural entities. Through cinematic visualization, however, the film transforms this sacred cultural ritual into a source of fear, tension, and supernatural suspense. This representation demonstrates how Indonesian horror films reconstruct traditional rituals into visual symbols associated with mystery and danger.



Figure 3. Sesajen in the film KKN di Desa Penari (2022)

From Barthes' perspective, myth operates not only as a cultural narrative but also as a system of signs that produces ideological meaning. In *KKN di Desa Penari*, *Sesajen* is represented as a mystical object closely associated with supernatural terror and spiritual punishment. The film therefore positions Javanese spiritual practices within a horror framework that naturalizes the association between local culture and mysticism. Although the film contributes to preserving cultural narratives, it simultaneously commodifies sacred rituals by transforming them into entertainment-oriented horror aesthetics for mass audiences.

Another form of mythological practice depicted in the film is the myth of *Ayam Cemani*, a black chicken widely associated with mystical beliefs in several regions of Java. Known for its entirely black feathers, skin, and internal organs, *Ayam Cemani* is believed to possess supernatural power capable of providing protection, prosperity, and spiritual strength (Malik, 2023). Within Javanese mythology, the ritual sacrifice of *Ayam Cemani* is often understood as an attempt to maintain spiritual balance and avoid misfortune or malevolent forces (Chrisnanti & Sa'idah, 2023).

The representation of *Ayam Cemani* in the film strengthens the atmosphere of fear and mystical danger while simultaneously reinforcing the image of Javanese culture as deeply connected to supernaturalism. The use of culturally familiar mythological symbols creates narrative authenticity and emotional engagement for audiences because such myths remain recognizable within Indonesian society. At the same time, the repeated portrayal of Javanese traditions through occult and mystical imagery may contribute to cultural stereotyping in popular media. Javanese culture becomes predominantly associated with horror, magic, and

supernatural fear, rather than being represented through its broader philosophical and social values.

Through these depictions, *KKN di Desa Penari* demonstrates how Indonesian horror cinema reconstructs mythology into contemporary visual narratives that function both as cultural representation and commercial entertainment. Myths, rituals, and spiritual beliefs are transformed into cinematic symbols that preserve elements of cultural memory while simultaneously adapting them into marketable horror spectacles. This indicates that horror films play a significant role in shaping audience perceptions of Javanese culture by framing mythology as both a cultural identity and a source of supernatural fear within contemporary popular culture.

» **Myth of Celeng Ludro**

Mythological motifs are also prominently represented in the Indonesian horror film *Mangkujiwo*, as discussed by Kurniawan & Santabudi (2023)). The film incorporates several Javanese myths, including Celeng Ludro, Pengilon Kembar (twin mirrors), and Tembang Lingsir, which function as central symbols of fear, curse, and supernatural power throughout the narrative. The story revolves around a young pregnant woman who is believed by village elders to be cursed and mentally unstable. Influenced by local superstition and mystical beliefs, the woman becomes marginalized, imprisoned, and subjected to ritual practices associated with supernatural forces. Through this narrative, the film portrays how mythological beliefs continue to influence social behavior, collective fear, and systems of authority within Javanese society.



Figure 4. Poster of the horror film *Mangkujiwo* (2020)

One of the most dominant myths represented in the film is Celeng Ludro, a mystical wild boar associated with chaos, destruction, and spiritual imbalance. Within Javanese belief, Celeng Ludro symbolizes the presence of malevolent supernatural forces capable of bringing misfortune and social disorder (Kurniawan & Santabudi, 2023b). The term celeng refers to a wild boar, an untamed and aggressive animal, while ludro in Javanese culture refers to unruly or destructive behavior (Reno, 2020). Symbolically, the myth functions as a cultural warning against arrogance, greed, moral corruption, and the abuse of power.

The representation of Celeng Ludro in *Mangkujiwo* demonstrates how myth operates not only as folklore but also as a moral and ideological narrative within Javanese culture. The myth reflects the belief that imbalance between humans, nature, and spirituality may lead to disaster or supernatural punishment. Through cinematic representation, the film transforms Celeng Ludro into a visual symbol of fear and spiritual terror while simultaneously communicating ethical values concerning respect for nature and social harmony. This depiction suggests that mythology in Indonesian horror cinema often serves a dual function preserving traditional moral teachings while creating suspense and horror aesthetics for audiences.

From Barthes' perspective, myth functions as a cultural sign that naturalizes specific meanings and ideologies within society. In *Mangkujiwo*, Celeng Ludro is represented as a supernatural entity associated with danger and destruction, reinforcing the perception of Javanese mysticism as deeply connected to fear and the occult. The film therefore reconstructs traditional mythology into a cinematic spectacle that both preserves cultural memory and commodifies mystical belief for entertainment purposes. Through this representation, horror cinema positions myth as an accessible visual language capable of evoking emotional tension while simultaneously shaping audience perceptions of Javanese culture.

Another important mythological symbol depicted in the film is Pengilon Kembar (twin mirrors). In *Mangkujiwo*, Pengilon Kembar refers to sacred heirlooms (Pusaka) believed to contain mystical energy and supernatural power. These objects are portrayed as spiritually dangerous and therefore must not be used carelessly (Kurniawan & Santabudi, 2023). Within Javanese belief systems, heirlooms are often associated with ancestral spirits, authority, protection, and spiritual legitimacy. The myth surrounding sacred heirlooms reflects the belief that certain objects possess supernatural capabilities capable of influencing human destiny and social power.

The representation of Pengilon Kembar reinforces the cultural perception that mystical heirlooms function as symbols of authority and sacred power within

Javanese society. As explained by Hapsari (2024), heirlooms contribute to the collective imagination surrounding leadership, spirituality, and supernatural legitimacy in Javanese culture. Through cinematic representation, Mangkujiwo transforms these sacred objects into visual symbols of mystery and terror, emphasizing the connection between power and mysticism in horror narratives. This depiction illustrates how Indonesian horror films utilize traditional symbols to construct suspense while simultaneously preserving elements of cultural identity and ancestral belief.

Overall, the representation of Celeng Ludro, Pengilon Kembar, and other mythological symbols in Indonesian horror films demonstrates that mythology continues to function as an important cultural framework within contemporary cinema. Horror films reconstruct myths into visual narratives that simultaneously preserve spiritual beliefs, communicate moral messages, and commodify mysticism as popular entertainment. These representations indicate that Indonesian horror cinema plays a significant role in shaping audience understanding of Javanese culture by associating mythology with fear, spirituality, authority, and supernatural power.

#### » **Mytology in Sandekala Film**

Research concerning mythological meaning in Indonesian culture is also reflected in the study conducted by Anggara et al (2021)) on the short horror film Sandekala directed by Amriy Ramadhan. The film explores Indonesian traditional belief systems through cinematic representation, illustrating how local myths continue to shape collective imagination, moral values, and social behavior within society. Through horror narratives and visual symbolism, Sandekala demonstrates how myths remain relevant in contemporary culture and continue to function as instruments for preserving indigenous identity within modern media.

The main mythology depicted in this short film centres on the prohibition of leaving the house after sunset, especially after the call to Maghrib prayer. Javanese people believe that evil spirits or jinn roam during these hours and can kidnap people who are still outside their homes. This mythology tells of the existence of supernatural beings that disturb or kidnap children who are playing at dusk (Hidayatulloh, 2020).

The term Sandekala in Javanese refers to a specific period of time and is also related to legends from the mystical world. In this myth, the entity that appears at dusk is known as Jin Ummu Sibyan, a female spirit believed to be able to harm babies, children, and pregnant women (Anggara et al., 2021). According to local beliefs, these spirits appear at dusk to kidnap or harm anyone who is outside their homes during this vulnerable period.



Figure 5. Scene from the short film Sandekala (2015)

The meaning of the Sandekala myth remains a mystery because it cannot be empirically proven and is primarily passed down through folklore. This myth serves as a cultural warning a moral prohibition aimed at protecting individuals from potential danger (Hidayatulloh, 2020) the film Sandekala conveys a moral message about following traditional advice: avoiding activities outside the home during Maghrib, as this time should be used for prayer and family togetherness.

» **Javanese Myth Malam Satu Suro (1988)**

Film Malam Satu Suro directed by Sisworo Gautama Putra and written by Naryono, the film combines horror and romance elements while incorporating strong mystical themes rooted in Javanese belief systems. The narrative centers on Suketi, a woman who transforms into a Sundel Bolong after being resurrected from death by a Javanese shaman named Ki Rengga. Through supernatural rituals and metaphysical practices, the film portrays the interaction between the human world and the spiritual realm, reflecting the persistence of mystical beliefs within Javanese culture.



Figure 6. Poster for the 1988 film *Malam Satu Suro*

The central myth represented in the film is the belief surrounding Malam Satu Suro, a sacred night in the Javanese calendar associated with spiritual power, ritual practices, and supernatural activities. In Javanese tradition, Satu Suro is considered a spiritually significant period during which prayers, wishes, and rituals are believed to possess stronger metaphysical influence (Nur, 2016). The film represents Malam Satu Suro as a moment when the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds becomes increasingly fragile, enabling communication with supernatural beings and the performance of mystical rituals.

Within Javanese belief systems, Malam Satu Suro is frequently associated with spiritual reflection, purification, and the search for blessings or protection. Ritual activities performed during this night may include prayer ceremonies, meditation, ancestral offerings, and other forms of spiritual devotion intended to strengthen harmony between humans and unseen forces (Mukid, 2019). Through these representations, the film portrays Satu Suro not merely as a mystical tradition but also as a cultural symbol connected to spirituality, morality, and self-reflection within Javanese society.

However, through horror cinematic representation, the sacredness of Malam Satu Suro is simultaneously transformed into a source of fear and supernatural terror. The film reconstructs spiritual rituals and metaphysical beliefs into horror aesthetics designed to evoke suspense, mystery, and emotional tension among audiences. This representation demonstrates how Indonesian horror films frequently reinterpret traditional cultural practices through supernatural narratives that emphasize danger, curse, and mystical power.

From Barthes' perspective, myth functions as a cultural system that produces ideological meanings through symbols and representations. In *Malam Satu Suro*, the sacred night of Satu Suro is represented as a mystical space strongly associated with supernatural encounters, black magic, and spiritual danger.

Through cinematic construction, the film naturalizes the perception that Javanese spirituality is closely linked to occultism and mystical fear. Although the film contributes to preserving elements of traditional belief, it also commodifies sacred rituals by transforming them into popular horror entertainment.

The representation of Malam Satu Suro in Indonesian horror cinema reflects the broader role of myth within contemporary media culture. Mythological beliefs are not only maintained as cultural heritage but are also continuously reconstructed into visual narratives that shape audience perceptions of Javanese identity and spirituality. Through horror films, sacred traditions become symbolic instruments for constructing fear, suspense, and supernatural imagination while simultaneously preserving cultural memory within modern popular culture.

### ***Myths as Cultural Teachings***

Myths continue to play an important role in preserving cultural values and shaping collective beliefs within Javanese society. As part of cultural heritage, myths function not only as traditional stories but also as symbolic systems that communicate moral teachings, social norms, and spiritual values across generations (Dinda et al., 2019). The persistence of mythological beliefs in contemporary society demonstrates that myths remain relevant as cultural frameworks used to interpret human relationships with nature, spirituality, and social life. In Javanese culture, myths are closely connected to indigenous beliefs, Hindu-Javanese traditions, and Pre-Islamic cultural practices that continue to survive through folklore, legends, rituals, and oral narratives (Setiawan, 2021).

Myths often contain ethical teachings related to honesty, loyalty, obedience, courage, and respect for others. According to Ria (2021), mythical narratives function as cultural guidance that shapes community behavior and strengthens collective belief systems. Myths also help individuals understand natural phenomena and events beyond rational explanation, allowing communities to construct meaning regarding the unseen world and spiritual existence. In this context, myths operate as symbolic instruments that connect cultural identity with everyday social practices.

The educational function of myths is also reflected in their role as transmitters of wisdom, moral values, and social experience. Cultural teachings embedded within myths have been passed down for generations through storytelling and collective memory (*Heriyanti & Hartaka, 2022*). Although some myths have undergone transformation over time, they continue to function as mechanisms for preserving cultural identity and reinforcing communal values. Lauterboom (2023) explains that myths can serve as effective educational tools for introducing cultural norms and belief systems to younger generations.

Within Indonesian society, myths are frequently associated with spirituality and religion because cultural beliefs often coexist with religious practices (Laia, 2022). Myths therefore become part of the symbolic structures through which communities interpret both visible and invisible realities. As Jariah (2020) argues, humans tend to rely on cultural symbols to explain environmental and metaphysical phenomena that cannot be rationally understood. Through this process, myths become systems of meaning that shape social perceptions of morality, spirituality, and human existence.

The representation of myths as cultural teachings is strongly reflected in Indonesian horror cinema, particularly in films such as *Mangkujiwo*. The film portrays Javanese culture as closely associated with sacredness, mysticism, and supernatural belief systems. Elements such as traditional rituals, heirlooms, mystical songs, and spiritual practices are represented as central narrative components that construct fear and suspense within the horror genre (*Kurniawan & Santabudi, 2023*) through cinematic representation, myths are transformed into visual narratives that simultaneously communicate cultural teachings and create commercial entertainment.

From a cultural studies perspective, the representation of Javanese myths in horror films demonstrates how media reconstructs traditional beliefs into contemporary popular culture. Horror cinema does not merely preserve myths as cultural heritage but also commodifies them into horror aesthetics designed for mass audiences. This representation positions Javanese culture as strongly connected to mysticism and supernaturalism, reinforcing collective perceptions of Java as a cultural space associated with spiritual power, sacred rituals, and mystery. At the same time, films such as *Mangkujiwo* contribute to maintaining cultural identity by introducing traditional language, customs, and belief systems to modern audiences through cinematic storytelling.

### **CONCLUSION**

Indonesian horror films often explore local myths as key elements of their stories, particularly those from Javanese culture. Javanese myths often serve as symbols in horror films, representing values, beliefs, or fears perceived by Javanese society. Indonesian horror films are an effective medium for preserving and popularising these myths in visual form, creating a link between the past and the present. In addition to being enjoyable to watch, films that feature Javanese myths also serve as a tool for cultural education. Viewers, especially the younger generation, can learn about the cultural values, traditions, and beliefs of Javanese society. Javanese myths adapted in horror films often have deep symbolic meanings. These meanings can reflect the values, norms, and philosophical concepts of Javanese society. In the context of horror films, these myths can be interpreted as

social criticism or as a way to convey moral messages to the audience.

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