

**DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY IN THE NOVEL “*THE DISCOMFORT OF
EVENING*” (2020) BY MARIEKE LUCAS RIJNEVELD**

THESIS

*Submitted as Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements to Obtain
Strata One (S1) Degree in English Department*



By:

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21019038/2021

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ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS

UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG

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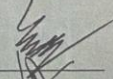
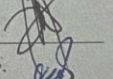
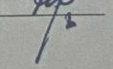
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ABSTRACT

Heriska, Enda. 2025. Dysfunctional Family in The Novel “*The Discomfort of Evening*” (2020) by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld. Thesis, English Language and Literature Department. Faculty of Languages and Arts. Universitas Negeri Padang.

This research explores the theme of a dysfunctional family in the novel *The Discomfort of Evening* (2020) by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld. The research focuses on the causes and the impacts of dysfunction family, particularly on the children. Through the Sigmund Freud’s theory of *Mourning and Melancholia*. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyse how unresolved trauma, lack of emotional support, and communication breakdown contribute to the deterioration of family relationships. The results of this research reveals that some of the causes of the dysfunctional family are trauma, melancholia, overly religious belief systems, and isolated living areas. And the impacts of a dysfunctional family are relationship breakdown between family members and mental issues, especially in children. This literary research provides insight into the psychological consequences of dysfunctional families and ways to address grief healthily to prevent long-term emotional damage.

Keywords: Dysfunctional family, grief, trauma, Mourning and Melancholia theory.

ABSTRAK

Heriska, Enda. 2025. Keluarga Disfungsional dalam novel “*The Discomfort of Evening*” (2020) oleh Marieke Lucas Rijneveld. Tesis, Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tema keluarga disfungsional dalam *The Discomfort of Evening* (2020) karya Marieke Lucas Rijneveld. Penelitian ini berfokus pada dampak psikologis dari disfungsi keluarga, terutama pada anak-anak, melalui lensa teori *Mourning and Melancholia* Sigmund Freud. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk menganalisis bagaimana trauma yang tidak terselesaikan, kurangnya dukungan emosional, dan kerusakan komunikasi berkontribusi pada penurunan hubungan keluarga. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah pertama, penyebab keluarga disfungsional adalah trauma, melankolis, sistem kepercayaan yang terlalu religius, dan tempat tinggal yang terisolasi. Kedua, dampak dari keluarga disfungsional adalah rusaknya hubungan antara anggota keluarga dan masalah mental, terutama pada anak-anak. Penelitian literatur ini memberikan wawasan tentang konsekuensi psikologis dari keluarga disfungsional dan bagaimana mengatasi kesedihan secara sehat untuk mencegah kerusakan emosional jangka panjang.

Kata kunci: Keluarga disfungsional, kesedihan, trauma, Mourning dan Melancholia teori.

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Padang, 15 Mei 2025

Enda Heriska

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. 1 Background of Research	1
1. 2 Focus of the Problem.....	7
1. 3 Research Questions	8
1. 4 Purpose of Research	8
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2. 1 Review of Related Studies	9
2. 1. 1 Psychoanalysis in Literature	9
2. 1. 2 Family and Dysfunctional Family	12
2. 1. 2. 3 Impacts of Dysfunctional Family	17
2. 2 Previous Research	19
2. 3 Conceptual Farmwork	22
CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHOD	25
3. 1 Data and Sources of Data	25
3. 2 Collection and Analysing	25
3. 3 Technique of Data Analysis	26
CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION	28
4.1 The Causes of Dysfunctional Family in “<i>The Discomfort of Evening</i>”..	28
4. 1. 1 Trauma	29
4. 1. 2 Melancholia	34
4. 1. 3 Overly Religious Belief Systems.....	38
4. 1. 4 Isolated Living Area.....	42
4.2 The Impacts of Dysfunctional Family in “<i>The Discomfort of Evening</i>”	45
4. 2. 1 Relationship Breakdown.....	46
4. 2. 2 Mental Disorder	49

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	55
5. 1 Conclusion.....	55
5. 2 Suggestion	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background of Research

Family is the smallest unit of human social life. Family is a minor form that has significant benefits for shaping individual characters and influencing groups. A nice personality is usually a result of one's great upbringing surroundings (Efendi & Putra, 2024:2). Furthermore, family can be classified as smallest unit of society, consisting of two or more members, living in a household under the care of a householder it in a family member take place, where each family member has their respective roles, maintaining a custom and culture of its own (Azis & Mukramin, 2020:54). Additionally, Burgess & Locke (as cited in Puja, 2013) added that a family is a group of people joined by marriage, blood, or adoption; consisting of one home, interacting and communicating with each other in their social roles as husband and wife, mother and father, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, resulting in a shared culture.

Therefore, it is crucial for families to prioritize instilling positive values and morals in their members. By fostering a strong sense of character within the family unit, individuals can contribute positively to society as a whole. As these values are shared within the community, they create a ripple effect that enhances unity and cooperation among individuals, leading to collaborative efforts that uplift local neighbourhoods. Ultimately, the values

imparted in families serve as the bedrock of a nation's character, promoting justice, equality, and compassion for a better future for all.

Human beings are inherently social creatures and cannot exist in isolation. This interdependence highlights the importance of relationships both within and beyond the family. The family serves as the first environment in which individuals learn to navigate social interactions, establishing foundational skills that are later applied in wider societal contexts. A sociologist, Mead (2014:50), claims that the role of early family interactions in developing the "*self and identity*". Surrounding environments, such as neighbourhoods and communities, further shape individuals' social identities by providing spaces for interaction, collaboration, and shared cultural experiences. These environments act as extensions of the family unit, creating a network of support and influence that is essential for human development.

Social relationships and the environment significantly influence family dynamics and overall quality of life. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979: 5-8) claims that external systems like neighbours, schools, and social networks shape individual development and family dynamics. Interactions between a family and the broader community can either strengthen or disrupt internal family dynamics. A supportive social environment can provide emotional and practical support, reduce stress and enhance bonds among family members. However, Durkheim (1933:86) assumes that external social pressures like economic hardships, discrimination, or

unhealthy environmental conditions can increase strain on families and exacerbate internal tensions. Furthermore, Jhon & Gross (2004:348) argue that rigid cultural or religious norms can inhibit emotional expression, creating settings where familial relationships suffer. Therefore, the quality of social relationships and the conditions of a family play a crucial role in shaping harmony or discord within family life.

However, not all families function harmoniously. When a family is unable to provide a nurturing environment due to external stressors such as poor environment and isolation and exacerbated by internal issues such as grief, trauma, or dysfunctional relationships with family members, the family can become a dysfunctional family. Martin (2023) emphasizes that the inability to fulfil responsibilities, especially those of parents, can create disorganization or dysfunction, creating chaos, especially for the children, and disharmony in a family. Dysfunctional families are characterized by persistent negativity, unhealthy dynamics, and abusive interactions, which severely impact the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of their members (Li, 2024). In agreement with Li, Kurnia (s2019) explains that a dysfunctional family shows disharmony or tension within the family, such as conflict between children and parents. Family dysfunction occurs when one or more family members neglect to fulfil their responsibilities and carry out their duties, and this can cause family dysfunction and cause the family to become divided. Common issues are conflict, misbehaviour,

abuse, and neglect, which are often caused by unresponsive parenting and obstacles such as addiction, mental health issues, or severe physical illness.

Dysfunctional families are often labelled as "broken homes," but this oversimplifies the complex nature of family struggles. Dysfunction is not always caused by divorce; it can arise from various factors such as financial instability, poor communication, or the loss of a loved one. The death of a family member, in particular, can bring profound sadness and trauma, disrupting emotional bonds and altering family dynamics. When grief is not properly processed, family members may experience emotional detachment, relationships breakdown, and patterns of neglect or conflict, further deepening dysfunction.

Trauma is one of the effects how dysfunctional families develop. Traumatic experiences, neglect, domestic violence, sudden loss of a loved one, or exposure to severe stressors such as poverty or chronic illness, can disrupt family dynamics and relationships. These events often leave unresolved emotional wounds that manifest as unhealthy behaviour patterns. Freud (1920:14) highlights that unresolved trauma - especially from childhood - is stored in the subconscious mind and can strongly influence behaviour and emotional responses in adulthood. Parents who have experienced trauma in their parenting may struggle to provide emotional support. They may inadvertently replicate the dysfunctional patterns they experienced, creating a cycle of trauma that continues for generations. Children raised in dysfunctional families are particularly

vulnerable to the effects of this trauma. Furthermore, Jannah & Hariastuti (2023:112) add that dysfunctional family can give the impact especially on children who experience emotional neglect, which can lead to chronic anxiety, loneliness, bad behaviour, feeling of envy, low self-esteem and self-confidence, relationship breakdown, and mental disorder. Sigmund Freud's theory of "*Mourning and Melancholia*" (1917:244), explains valuable insights into how unresolved grief can create dysfunctional families. Freud differentiates between mourning, which is a natural grieving process where individuals gradually detach from their deceased loved ones, and melancholia, which is a pathological state characterized by internalized grief. This internalization can lead to feelings of guilt, self-blame, and emotional withdrawal.

This theme is explored in *The Discomfort of Evening* (2020) by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, which portrays a family of farmers living in isolated rural Dutch's countryside, that experience family dysfunction due to the deep trauma they have long suffered. The sudden death of the protagonist's brother leads to a fractured family dynamic. Instead of finding solace in one another, the family members withdraw into their suffering, unable to express their grief or support each other. The parents become emotionally distant, while the children, develop disturbing thoughts and behaviours as struggle to cope with the loss in silence.

In the novel *The Discomfort of Evening*, the family's inability to properly mourn results in melancholia, where each member represses their

emotions rather than confront them, ultimately causing more harm. This phenomenon is not just limited to fiction; in real life, many families struggle with loss in similar ways. For example, after the sudden death of a child, parents may become consumed by their grief, neglecting their surviving children, leading to emotional isolation and long-term psychological distress. One example is effluent from an event the took place in America, the Kennedy family, known for their prominent political legacy, has faced significant tragedy and loss, beginning with the death of Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. in World War II in 1944. This set a pattern of grief as John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 and his brother Robert followed in 1968, deeply impacting their family, particularly their mother, Rose Kennedy. Ted Kennedy, the youngest brother, struggled with personal issues under the weight of family expectations. Jacqueline Kennedy turned to a more private life after her husband's death. The recurring losses led to emotional distress, psychological struggles, and strained relationships among the family, illustrating how unresolved grief can contribute to dysfunction. This research analyses *The Discomfort of Evening* through the lens of Freud's concepts of "*Mourning and Melancholia*". It explores how unresolved grief can transform a once-functioning family into a dysfunctional one. This research examines how each character's response to loss contributes to the overall disintegration of the family structure, offering a deeper psychological understanding of family dysfunction in literature.

This research also connects with Andhika's et al., (2021), research entitled "*The Impact of Dysfunctional Family on Adult Child Portrayed in My Name Is Lucy Barton*," It examines the complex dynamics of dysfunctional families and their impact on the mental and emotional development of adolescents. The study emphasizes the need to understand how these family situations affect individuals, using both psychological insights and cultural perspectives. Ultimately, this research aims to provide insights into how literary works reflect significant psychological and social issues, enhancing our understanding of human experiences within difficult family environments.

1. 2 Focus of the Problem

This research aims to the causes and effects of family dysfunction as depicted in *The Discomfort of Evening* (2020) by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld by using Freud's concepts of *Mourning and Melancholia*. Specifically, it investigates the factors that contribute to a dysfunctional family dynamic in the novel, such as trauma, grief, lack of communication, or societal pressures. Additionally, the study explores how family dysfunction impacts the characters' psychological states, relationships, behaviours, and overall well-being, revealing the profound emotional and social consequences of these dysfunctions. By analysing these themes, the research aims to deepen our understanding of how literature portrays the complexities and challenges of family life.

1. 3 Research Questions

The research questions serve as the foundation for this study's direction and purposes. Appropriate questions will help in comprehending and analysing the key. Below are the research questions that have guide this research.

1. What are the causes of the dysfunctional family in the novel “*The Discomfort of Evening (2020)*”?
2. What are the impacts of dysfunctional family on the members of the family in the novel “*The Discomfort of Evening (2020)*”?

1. 4 Purpose of Research

1. To find out the causes of family dysfunction in the novel *The Discomfort of Evening (2020)* by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld.
2. To find out the impacts of dysfunctional family on the family members in the novel *The Discomfort of Evening (2020)* by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5. 1 Conclusion

The novel "*The Discomfort of Evening*" by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld deeply depicts the dynamics of a dysfunctional family and its impact on family members, especially children. Based on the analysis that has been conducted, there are two main findings in this novel related to dysfunctional families. First, the cause of the dysfunctional family in this novel is rooted in the trauma from Matthies' death. This loss inflicted deep emotional wounds on Jas's family, especially on his parents, who were unable to process their grief healthily. This trauma culminates in a state of melancholia, where they are constantly trapped in sadness without any healthy resolution. As a result, communication and affection within the family breakdown, creating alienation among family members and even affect their psychologist especially children. In addition, rigid religious norms that suppress emotional expression, as well as an environment isolated from society, further exacerbate the situation. All these factors contribute to the formation of a dysfunctional family.

Second, the impact of the dysfunctional family in this novel is very evident in the relationship between parents and children. Relationship breakdown becomes the main consequences, where parents can no longer provide the emotional support and guidance their children need. This makes

children, including Jas, grow up in uncertainty and without control over their lives, which ultimately destroys their identity and personality. Moreover, unhealthy relationships and an unsupportive environment exacerbate their mentality. They are not only physically trapped in the isolated village but also emotionally trapped in unresolved trauma and sorrow.

Overall, *The Discomfort of Evening* highlights how dysfunctional families are not only formed due to internal factors, such as loss and trauma but are also influenced by external factors such as social norms and the environment. This novel shows that an individual's ability to cope with loss is very important for maintaining emotional balance within the family. By presenting the story from Jas's perspective, this novel provides deep insights into the psychological impact of dysfunctional families, especially for children who must endure an environment filled with uncertainty and loss. This research also emphasizes the importance of handling grief in a healthy way to prevent long-term emotional damage. with some of the causes and effects found in this research can be a reference for maintaining family harmony.

5. 2 Suggestion

In the novel “*The Discomfort of Evening*”, several suggestions can be made concerning the issue of dysfunctional families. Ideally, the family should be a secure environment where each member feels free to share their emotions, particularly in times of loss and trauma. It is crucial for parents

and children to maintain open lines of communication to prevent emotional detachment and alienation, as experienced by the Jas family. Additionally, navigating a healthy grieving process is vital for sustaining psychological stability within the family. Support from the broader community and access to professional resources like therapy can aid individuals in processing their grief, helping them avoid prolonged sadness.

Moreover, strict societal norms and religious pressures can exacerbate the struggles faced by families dealing with trauma. This highlights the necessity for mental health education in society to promote an understanding of the significance of expressing emotions and seeking assistance when necessary. It is equally important for those who have endured trauma to have ongoing access to supportive communities and networks that can facilitate healthier grieving. By fostering a nurturing atmosphere, individuals with experiences similar to the Jas family can better appreciate the value of seeking help and managing trauma in a constructive way.

This research explores the portrayal of a dysfunctional family in Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's novel, *The Discomfort of Evening*, through the lens of Sigmund Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* theory. The research utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach, as its goal is to illustrate how trauma and loss depicted in the novel contribute to the development of a dysfunctional family. Consequently, future researchers interested in analysing literary works are encouraged to apply the *Mourning and*

Melancholia theory to different subjects for a deeper exploration of the psychological effects of loss and trauma within families.

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