

**ACCEPTING REALITY AS THE STRATEGY OF MAINTAINING A
MARRIAGE REFLECTED IN OSCAR WILDE'S
AN IDEAL HUSBAND (1895):
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**



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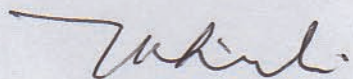
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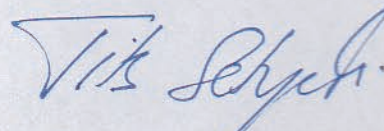
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ABSTRAK

Pernikahan adalah hubungan resmi antara seorang laki-laki dan seorang wanita sebagai suami dan istri. Ada banyak masalah yang akan dihadapi oleh pasangan suami istri selama mereka hidup bersama. Pernikahan diibaratkan seperti benteng perang. Orang-orang yang belum menikah, ingin menikah. Di sisi lain, orang-orang yang sudah menikah ingin bercerai dan merasa tidak nyaman dengan hubungan pernikahan mereka. Pada penelitian ini, peneliti menempatkan beberapa krisis pernikahan, strategi untuk mempertahankan sebuah pernikahan, dan alasan mengapa pengarang memberikan perhatian pada krisis pernikahan pada masyarakat kelas atas era Victoria selama periode tahun 1890. Akhirnya, peneliti membuktikan bahwa dengan menerima kenyataan, orang-orang akan mempertahankan hubungan pernikahan mereka dan memutuskan tidak bercerai.

Kata kunci: pernikahan, krisis pernikahan, strategi dalam mempertahankan sebuah pernikahan

ACCEPTING REALITY AS THE STRATEGY OF MAINTAINING A MARRIAGE REFLECTED IN OSCAR WILDE'S *AN IDEAL HUSBAND* (1895): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is a formal relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife. There are many problems that will face for the marriage couple during the time they live together. Marriage is like the war castle. People, who are not married yet, want to marriage. In the other case, people who are in marriage want to divorce and feel uncomfortable with their marriage relationship. In this paper, the researcher puts some marital crisis, the strategies of maintaining a marriage, and the reason why the author gave concern in marital crisis of Victorian upper class society during 1890s time period. Finally, the researcher demonstrates that by accepting reality, people should maintain their marriage relationship and decide not to divorce.

Keywords: marriage, marital crisis, strategy of maintaining a marriage

INTRODUCTION

An Ideal Husband is an interesting play to read. As far as the writer concerns, the research on this play has been conducted by some students by using different issues. Some researchers conducted *An Ideal Husband* play in religious issues (Fisher, 2003; Powell, 1997), some others conducted the research in educational issues (Arnold, 2002; Lampert, 1996; Meidaratika, 2008; Bemrose, 1996), and some others conducted in political issues (Sinfield, 1994; Helland, 2010). There are many social issues that have been conducted by some researchers such as anxiety, forms, functions and figures of negation, vaudeville, a mistake in the past and its consequences, trust, social critiques, modern art, dowdies, and dandies, woman position, wife, and narcissism (Setyonugroho, 2010; Fromonot, 2010; Hemming, 2010; Churatul, 2012; Pasaribu, 2008; Crowell, 2013; Bristow, 1994; Halim, 2014; Power, 2013; Beckson, 1994).

An Ideal Husband is one of the plays reflecting luxurious life style of Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* in cultural issue (Cunneen, 1999). Some conducted in artistic life issues (Vernadakis, 2010; Stuart, 1999; Delamora, 1994; Cohen, 2003). There is one

who conducted in law aspect discussing political pamphlet by *William Gladstone*, *Charles Dickens's novels*, and *An Ideal Husband* fraternity was troubled by anxieties about possibility (Ragussis, 2006). However, there are various researches of *An Ideal Husband* play that has been conducted by some students in some perspective issues.

In this paper, I explain that *An Ideal Husband* reflects real condition of Victorian upper class society that is hypocrite in many things especially in their marriage and its marital crisis. As with sociology, literature too is pre-eminently concerned with man's social world, his adaptation to it, and his desire to change it (Swingewood and Laurenson, 1972). It is a work of art, which expresses life of people and some problems in society. Sociology is an attempt to make sense of humans and ways they live in their lives (Burns and Burns, 1973). The sociology of literature is a study of literature based on the sociological perspective. It explains in social phenomena in a certain time described by the author in their literary works. The writer is not influenced by society but, it is the contrary that he influences the society (Wellek and Warren, 1962). It means that the writer has great roles and impacts in convincing the society about some issues in that time by their literary works. In this paper, I put a literary work as the social document reflecting the certain age when it is written and deals with the social situation of the author.

Strategy of Maintaining a Marriage

According to Girgis and George (2008) marriage is the union of a man and a woman who make a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other of the type that is naturally (inherently) fulfilled by bearing and rearing children together. There is no marriage relationship without any obstacle on it. Marriage couple will face some marital crisis such as divorce, love affair, and family conflict. Divorce is legal dissolution of a marriage caused by some factors such as less of commitment, too much arguing, etc (Doherty, 2012). Divorce is chosen by marriage couple when they feel there is no reason for maintaining their marriage relationship again. A great marriage is not the result of two 'soul mates' that find each other (Evans and Martin, 2012). Some marriage couples decide to get divorce. Then, it becomes a broken marriage into love affair that is more passionate than their honeymoon period with their spouse before. Besides of marriage, family is the important relationship in our

society. Families are children's main socialization agents and communication becomes the important part (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2004). Less communication among family members is one of the problems in the bound of family. By facing all of these problems, some marriage couples decide to stay and there is no divorce. The strategies of maintaining a marriage are introspection, making agreement between husband and wife, and accepting reality.

The first strategy is introspection. Every individual should introspect their own personality so that they can identify what the problem is. According to Macdonald (2008: 741) Introspection is a term used by philosophers to refer to a special method or means by which one comes to know certain of one's own mental states; specifically, one's current conscious states. After that they can solve that problem. Individuals should try to find their own mistake and promise not to do that again. Everyone exactly does a lot of mistakes but by promising and trying not to do that again, it will be one of strategies in maintaining a marriage. According to Engelbert and Carruthers (2010: 245) philosophers have traditionally assumed that the human mind is largely transparent to itself.

The second strategy is making agreement between husband and wife. They can write some agreements and promises to do that. It can make every spouse more possessive. In the other case, marriage couple should try to believe each other in many conditions. The function is to keep their marriage relationship from divorce and to appear belief each other. According to Craven (1963: 23) In order to assist families in improving their decision making ability, it is important that the agent understands who makes decisions, who is likely to influence decisions, and what effect the method of arriving at decisions has on changes made on the farm and in the home. The agents here mean husband and wife. The time before divorce is difficult time not only for husband and wife but also their children. According to Brandt and Fox (1997: 1) people are expected to make rational decisions at a time of emotional turmoil and in a setting that does not lend itself to be rational discussion. It means that every marriage couple should have rational and strong reason for being divorce.

The last strategy is accepting reality for each other. There is no definitive answer to the question of what reality around us is. According to Ben (2013: 202) in broadest terms, one can define reality as all that exist, irrespective of whether or not it

can be observed or understood. Accepting reality deals with everything that cannot be changed. Acceptance can be defined as admitting, tolerating, and not judging everyone of what other people are. Every individual has his own mistake in the past so we should accept it and there is no regret on it because this life must go on.

Object of the Study

The object of the study is Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* written in 1895. It is not like the other researchers who used social issue such as anxiety, trust, figures of negation, mistake and consequences, social critique, dowdies and dandies, woman position, wife, and narcissism, the researcher focuses in marriage relationship, marital crisis, the strategies of maintaining a marriage especially by accepting reality, and the reason why Oscar Wilde gave concern on marital crisis. The main difference is the specific marital crisis in marriage such as divorce, love affair, and family conflict had not been conducted yet by the other researchers before. The title itself becomes the social critique from the author that there is no an ideal husband.

This play tells us about London society in Victorian upper class during the time period 1890s. This play shows some marital crisis in marriage. First, when a woman marry a man who has important position in their work. Second is someone's inability to accept reality of their spouse in past. Third, there is no child in the middle of family. Fourth, it is about jealousy. The last is a wife who has opinion that her husband is ideal. When it becomes the crisis in marriage, then marriage is ended by getting divorce, love affair, and family conflict. Here, the author said implicitly that by accepting reality, we should still stay in our marriage and decide not to be divorce like others.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Victorian Upper Class Society

An Ideal Husband play is a group of rich people who are from upper class society in London. Sir Robert Chiltern and Lady Chiltern are as the main characters in this play. They are from Victorian upper class society. It can be seen by the first scene. The scene is in Sir Robert Chiltern's house in Grosvenor Square. His house is so luxurious in that era. People who come from upper class society in Victorian era

are like to come to party and to watch Opera with their relatives. Wilde shows their life style by extravagant party.

The Concept of Marriage

Sir Robert Chiltern is the main character as the 'ideal husband' who has great power as politician of impeccable moral character in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* play. His wife, Lady Chiltern has opinion that he is the 'ideal husband' and believes that he has no faults even though in his past. Lady Chiltern's opinion is false when Mrs Cheveley come in their towns and wants to meet with her husband. Mrs Cheveley knew the beginning of Sir Robert Chiltern's career, he gained his reputation, wealth, position, and power by taking part in an illegal way to Baron Arnheim. Sir Robert Chiltern did not care of losing his reputation, wealth, position, and power. He was afraid if he lost his wife's love.

Lady Chiltern said that she had met Mrs Cheveley in their schooldays. She remembered that Mrs Cheveley has bad behavior. For long time they could not meet each other, Lady Chiltern did not know that Mrs Cheveley had married second time. Lady Markby as Mrs Cheveley's friend said when in that era people married as often as they can. It was most fashionable. (AIH, Act I, Scene I)

In *An Ideal Husband* play, Oscar Wilde said that marriage is like fashionable. When people get bored with their couple, they can change to the other people. They can marry as often as they can. Some people will marry more than once in their life. They have opinion that marriage for more than once is the common thing in their society especially in upper class society in that era. It can be seen by the dialogue between characters of Lady Chiltern and Lady Markby. They are talking about Mrs Cheveley's marriage. She married more than once. Lady Markby said that it was the common thing in that era. Woman especially who come from upper class society can married as often as they can. Wilde shows this problem by the character of Mrs Cheveley.

Lord Caversham asked to his son Lord Goring to marry. He expected that Lord Goring would marry Mabel Chiltern. Lord Goring did not want to marry in his age. He felt that he was still young. He said that marriage was just he should like to do. He also said that a sensible wife would reduce his to a condition of absolute idiocy in less than six months. Implicitly he said marriage is like the legal contract of

life. Lord Goring also said that men married the women they deserved; they should have a very bad time of it. (AIH, Act IV, Scene IV)

An Ideal Husband play draws the concept of marriage. It is like the contract of life. There is time when the contract will be end. Oscar Wilde wants to say that in Victorian era, it was foolish contract of marriage. It can be seen by the dialogue between Lord Goring and his father Lord Caversham. Lord Goring tells that marriage as a contract of life between husband and wife. He does not want to marry yet. In this dialogue, Lord Goring said that marriage is less than six months. Nevertheless Lord Caversham wants him to get married. He is too much thinking to decide a marriage.

Marital Crisis

Marrying with an admirable husband in London is like marrying also with their work. They are busy. They do anything in politics for their career, wealth, position, and power. As a wife, woman should accept all of that. Nevertheless, they do not like with that condition. They are also less communication with their husband. It can make uncomfortable condition in their marriage relationship. They come to the party without their husband. They think that they will be happy by marrying with the man who has a great power in the society. The fact remains contradiction. Wilde shows us by the character of Mrs Marchmont and Lady Basildon.

Mrs Marchmont said that she was so glad what Lady Basildon said about her. Her husband Mr Marchmont and she had been married for seven years and he had never once told her that she was morbid. Mrs Marchmont said that men were so painfully unobservant. Then Lady Basildon said that Mrs Marchmont was the most morbid person in London. (AIH, Act I, Scene I)

The one of marital crisis is when a woman married with an admirable man. They will face by some obstacles on it. Their husband is often careless and talks little. It can be seen by the characters of Mrs Marchmont and Lady Basildon when they were attending party without their husband. Wilde shows that the majority characters especially woman characters were attending party without their husband.

Sir Robert Chiltern talked to Lord Goring about his wife. He said that Lady Chiltern would not married with his if she had known the origin of his fortune like

that, the basis of his career as like that, and he had done a thing that he supposed most men would call shameful and dishonorable. (AIH, Act II, Scene II)

Some woman cannot accept their husband just as they are. They wanted to look for the perfect and ideal husband. They cannot accept the reality from their spouse in their past. They think that when marrying with a man who has all characters that they want, they will be happy. The fact remains contradiction. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. They, however, also have their bad memories in past. It becomes a problem if woman cannot accept the past of their husband. We live in the present and the only reality we have is now. It is not the past. Life must go on and the past will always learn us to stronger and not to do something wrong like that again. Wilde here shows by the bad memories in the past of the character Sir Robert Chiltern. His wife Lady Chiltern cannot accept the reality of her husband at first.

The one of wife's character that reflects cannot accept reality of her husband is Lady Chiltern. She said that her husband was different. He is not like the person in common. In Lady Chiltern's mind all his life he had stood apart from others. He had never let the world soil his. To the world, as to her, he had been an ideal always. She supposed that her husband to be that ideal still. (AIH, Act I, Scene I)

Lady Chiltern loves her husband so much. She supports her husband when he is faced by secret problem in his past. She is always there when her husband who always need her. She regards that Sir Robert Chiltern in an ideal husband. She always says that her husband is the ideal one. She cannot accept the reality in her husband's past. Wilde shows in the first and second act of his play. A woman that cannot accept her bad memories in past of her husband has close relationship with a woman who has opinion that her husband is the ideal husband.

The marriage condition without children yet is reflected in marriage relationship between the main characters Sir Robert Chiltern and Lady Chiltern. Sir Robert Chiltern said that perhaps if God had been sent them children, his wife might have been kinder to his. He also said that God had given them a lonely house. Lady Chiltern had cut his heart in two. (AIH, Act III, Scene III)

Having children is the happiness thing in the family. They can be strengthening for both their parents in facing the hardships of life. In the other hand, there are some marriage couples who have not children yet. It is not the reason for

them to separate each other also to leave their couple. By accepting their couple for those themselves, they can support and wait each other. It can be seen by marriage couple Sir Robert Chiltern and his beautiful wife Lady Chiltern. Although Sir Robert Chiltern said that they have lonely house, he still loves his wife.

The conflict in marriage is not always about love. Wilde also tells us that money and power becomes the one of many conflicts that will face for the marriage couple. Lady Chiltern asked why her husband should it be. She said that they had no need of money. Money that came from a tainted source was degradation. She also said that power was nothing in itself. It was power to do well that was fine that and that only. (AIH, Act I, Scene I)

Money and Power becomes conflict between spouses. It is especially if they marry with a man or a woman who has admirable roles in their society. Here, Wilde shows that money and power becomes one of the family conflicts in London society in Victorian era. It happened especially in upper class society who has great roles in that era. It can be seen by the major character of Sir Robert Chiltern who has great and important role in the political life.

A wife should support their husband in many conditions especially when they are in bad condition. Then a couple can love each other and face the hardships of life together. Lady Chiltern said that she felt that night she had saved her husband from something that might had been a danger to his, from something that might had made men honor their less than they did. She knew that and for that she loved her husband. Sir Robert Chiltern asked for his wife to love his always. (AIH, Act I, Scene I)

Alike common marriage couple, Sir Robert Chiltern and Lady Chiltern is faced by several problems. One of the problems comes from Mrs Cheveley. She suddenly comes in their life by brought Sir Robert Chiltern's secret and faults in his past. When they too much arguing, Lady Chiltern decides to separate with her husband. It is not easy to say that word because she loves her husband. She still loves her husband. Even though at first, Lady Chiltern is jealous with the relationship between her husband and Mrs Cheveley. She thinks that she should save her husband for the woman like Mrs Cheveley. Every problem in marriage relationship will make their love much stronger than before if every individual can face all obstacles together.

Strategy of Maintaining a Marriage

Oscar Wilde said that in marriage, both of couple marriage should introspect, making agreement, and accept not only strengthen but also the weaknesses from their couple. It is because there is no people can be perfect. They live with strengthen and also their weaknesses. So that they should support, share, and face many problems together. They also can face the hardships of life during the time period they live together. It can be seen by the dialogue between Lord Goring and Sir Robert Chiltern.

Lord Goring asked for Sir Robert Chiltern for told his wife the whole thing. Secrets from other people's wives were a necessary luxury in modern life. Sir Robert Chiltern said that he could not tell his wife. It would have made a life-long separation between them and he would have lost the love of the one woman in the world he worships. (AIH, Act II, Scene II)

A couple should share everything so that there is no anything hidden. They should accept what the reality is because we live in the present. By sharing everything will make marriage couple more believes. By accepting the reality also make every couple marriage have deeper love. If there is no anything hidden, every marriage couple should try to find solve of every obstacle and marital crisis in their relationship.

Lady Chiltern said that she knew Mrs Cheveley and her husband does not know yet. They were at school together. Mrs Cheveley was untruthful, dishonest, and evil influence on everyone whose trust of friendship she could win. Lady Chiltern hated and she despised her. She had been stolen things, she was a thief. She was sent away for being a thief. Sir Robert Chiltern said to his wife that what she told his may be true, but it happened many years ago. It was best forgotten. Mrs Cheveley might have changed since then. No one should be entirely judged by their past. (AIH, Act I, Scene I)

Lady Chiltern is always forgiving her husband. She knows that it was her husband's past. Every people ever do their mistake. We are also like that. By forgiving our spouse, it is a proof of real love. Among family members has different opinion in some cases. If one of them cannot accept the differences, it will be a conflict in family. Wilde shows the different opinion between Sir Robert Chiltern and

his wife Lady Chiltern. It becomes one of the conflicts in their family. Lady Chiltern judged Mrs Cheveley was a dishonest woman when they were at school together. In Sir Robert Chiltern's opinion no one should be entirely judged by their past. It becomes the contradiction opinion.

Loving Each Other

Wilde shows for loving each other by the characters of Lord Goring and Mabel Chiltern. Lord Goring loves Mabel Chiltern. They accept strengthen and weaknesses from each other. At first, Sir Robert Chiltern cannot accept propose from Lord Goring. He regards that Lord Goring has special relationship with Mrs Cheveley. Lord Goring can explain what real relationship between him and Mrs Cheveley. After knowing Lord Goring's reasons then Sir Robert Chiltern accept Lord Goring's propose to his beautiful sister, Mabel Chiltern. Lady Chiltern was happy to hear that. Lord Caversham and Sir Robert Chiltern agree with marriage between Lord Goring and Mabel Chiltern.

In the end of the Act, Wilde wanted to show the resolution. Lord Goring proposed Mabel Chiltern. Sir Robert Chiltern said that Lord Goring could not bring Mabel the love that she deserves. He cannot accept his proposal at first. Then Lord Goring asked the reason why Sir Robert Chiltern refused his proposal. Sir Robert Chiltern answered that Lord Goring had special relationship with Mrs Cheveley. (AIH, Act IV, Scene IV)

There is No Ideal Husband

People live with strengthen and their weaknesses. Nobody is ideal in this world. There is no an ideal husband. It is a real husband with strengthen and weaknesses. By introspection, making agreement, supporting, trusting, forgiving, and accepting our spouse, it will make good, great, and happy marriage. Wilde shows in the character of Mabel Chiltern that there is no ideal husband. She said that an ideal husband is like something in the next world. Then she said that a man can be anything what he likes also what he chooses. Mabel Chiltern just wants to be a real wife to her future husband that is Lord Goring. The woman should be like Mabel Chiltern did for becomes a real wife to a real husband. By his play, Wilde criticizes the folly of

expecting an ideal standard for man and woman. It is because how much people improve in the outside, the fact remains that there is no ideal man and woman.

In the last Act, Wilde also tells us that there is no an ideal husband. There is a real husband for a real wife. It can be seen by the dialogue between the characters of Mabel Chiltern and Lord Caversham. Mabel Chiltern said that she does not think she should like to have an ideal husband. It was like something in the next world. Then Lord Caversham asked her what she wanted for Lord Goring to be then. Then Mabel Chiltern said that Lord Goring could be what he chooses. All she wanted was to be a real wife to Lord Goring. (AIH, Act IV, Scene IV)

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, the researcher comes to conclusion as follows. The first, there are five marital crisis is illustrated in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* play. The first marital crisis is when a woman marries with a man who has important position in their work. Wilde shows this crisis in some characters in his play. The woman who has a husband with their great power in their work should accept less communication and care from their husband. The second marital crisis is inability someone to accept reality from their spouse in past. Wilde shows this condition between the major characters Sir Robert Chiltern and Lady Chiltern. Lady Chiltern at first cannot accept the reality from her husband in past because it was bad memories, secrets, and faults of Sir Robert Chiltern's career. By discussing with Lord Goring, she realizes that everyone has their own mistake and as spouse we should accept bad reality from our spouse in their past. The third marital crisis is no children yet in the middle of family. Wilde also shows this crisis between the major characters. Here the author wants to say that even though there is no child in the middle of family is not reason for divorce. It is because having children is not the only reason for two people to decide marriage and live together. The fourth marital crisis is jealousy. It is the common problem in marriage relationship. Wilde shows by the characters of Lord Goring, Mabel Chiltern, and Mrs Cheveley. The last marital crisis is wife's opinion that her husband is ideal. It becomes the social critique from the author that there is no ideal husband. Wilde tells this crisis between the main characters.

The second, there are three strategies are employed to maintain a marriage. The first strategy is introspection. By knowing mistake from every individual should make solve of the problem clearly. Then the second strategy is making agreement between husband and wife. After knowing all problems, introspection, finding solves, and then a couple should make agreement so that the mistake in the past will not repeat again. The last strategy is accepting reality. By accepting reality, a couple will have new 'live' and decide not to remember all in the past especially bad memories. It is because we live in the here and now. We are not live in the past or the future. Today is the only reality we have. We can learn from our past.

The third, Oscar Wilde gave concern in marital crisis because he wants to criticize the England society in that era especially in upper class society that hypocrite for many cases particularly in marriage cases. Wilde wants to show that there is no ideal husband but there is a real husband. A real husband with strengthen and weaknesses. Wilde describe by the character of Sir Robert Chiltern. A woman should become a real wife for a real husband. A man can choose anything they want and a woman should support their husband even though in good and bad conditions. So that marriage relationship becomes a great and happy marriage.

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