Chapter II
Literature Review

Chapter II presents the theoretical foundation of this research. It reviews previous studies, explains the relevant theories and concepts, and discusses the theoretical framework used to analyze the research data. Together, these sections provide the conceptual basis for understanding Todorov's Narrative Cycle and the motif of solitude in Paulo Coelho's “The Alchemist”.

2.1 Previous Studies

Several studies have discussed “The Alchemist” from various perspectives, yet most of them focus on its psychological, moral, or ideological aspects rather than its narrative construction. By reviewing these studies, the writer aims to identify the research gap this study seeks to address, particularly the lack of structural analysis of the motif of solitude.

First, Hunain Sabir and Huzaira Akmal's (2025) study, “Discovering the Self: A Study of Paulo Coelho’s The Alchemist,” examines Santiago’s journey through the lens of existentialism and Jungian psychology. Their analysis offers a compelling exploration of the protagonist’s spiritual awakening and treats solitude as a stage of introspection that leads to personal enlightenment. This becomes a notable strength because it highlights the philosophical dimension of Santiago’s development and explains how internal conflict fuels his search for identity. The study successfully maps Santiago’s psychological evolution, making it insightful for readers interested in the novel’s spiritual themes. However, the research prioritizes the psychological process over the narrative arrangement. It does not

clarify how moments of solitude are situated within the flow of events or how they function structurally in the plot. As a result, the study overlooks the sequential logic linking Santiago's solitary experiences to the narrative's progression.

In contrast to Sabir and Akmal's approach, the present study emphasizes solitude not only as an emotional or spiritual moment but also as a narrative device that advances the plot. This research gains strength by examining how solitude marks transitions between narrative stages rather than interpreting it solely as inner reflection. Through Todorov's model, this study explains how each moment of solitude accompanies shifts from stability to conflict and then to a new balance. This makes the contribution of the present research distinct and necessary because it reveals how solitude is intentionally embedded into the narrative structure, something the previous study does not address.

Second, Weena Mae Granada Ampo's (2025) study, "Quest of a Dreamer: A Youth-Centric Analysis of Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist," interprets the novel from the perspective of youthful aspiration. The study effectively highlights moral and motivational messages related to perseverance, courage, and the pursuit of dreams. This becomes one of its strengths, as it offers a fresh and accessible perspective for young readers who connect with Santiago's ambition. The research also captures the novel's inspirational tone, reinforcing Coelho's influence among young audiences. Despite these strengths, the study focuses largely on moral implications and does not address how Santiago's experiences are structurally organized. The analysis overlooks patterns that recur throughout the narrative, particularly the recurring emergence of solitude whenever Santiago approaches key

stages of his journey. Thus, the story's structural dynamics remain insufficiently examined.

Compared with Ampo's analysis, the present research aims to reveal the narrative logic that organizes Santiago's path. By observing the regularity of solitude's appearance, this study identifies a pattern of transitions that shape the plot. This becomes a significant strength because it does not reduce Santiago's experiences to mere moral lessons. Instead, it explains the underlying mechanism that allows those lessons to manifest. Therefore, this research is essential for understanding how the story functions at a structural level, a dimension that earlier studies have not explored.

Third, the study by Suhendar, Diyaa Naurah Mizanti Ismi, and Budiarto (2024), "An Analysis of Moral Value in The Alchemist," identifies moral lessons such as honesty, steadfastness, and sympathy. The strength of this study lies in its systematic categorization of moral values supported by textual evidence. It successfully shows how readers may learn ethical principles from Santiago's experiences. However, the study's focus remains confined to mapping moral messages, without linking these values to the structural elements that generate them. The novel is treated as though its primary purpose is to convey ethics, rather than as a narrative with deliberate structural design. As a result, important aspects such as narrative sequencing, transitions between story phases, and the function of recurring motifs are not addressed.

In light of this, the present research takes a different position. Instead of interpreting moral messages as isolated findings, this study explains how such values arise from solitude's structural role. By showing how every shift in Santiago's understanding is preceded by a moment of solitude, this analysis provides a foundation for understanding "why" those moral values appear at specific points in the story. This makes the present study more structurally grounded and necessary for expanding previous research focused solely on ethics.

Fourth, Howidah Qadoori Jameel's (2024) study, "An Ideological Analysis in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist," interprets the novel through ideological and cultural lenses. The strength of this work lies in its exploration of how the text constructs cultural dialogue, particularly between Eastern and Western worldviews. The study offers valuable insights into the portrayal of identity, cultural hybridity, and philosophical symbolism. Despite these strengths, Jameel's analysis revolves around thematic interpretation and does not examine how the novel's narrative structure shapes these ideological elements. How Coelho organizes events, arranges turning points, or uses motifs such as solitude are not discussed as part of the ideological message.

The present research addresses this gap. While ideology indeed plays a role in shaping the novel, this study argues that these thematic implications cannot be separated from the narrative's structural pattern. By demonstrating how moments of solitude precede shifts in Santiago's worldview, the present analysis reveals that ideology is not only expressed through dialogue or symbolism but also through the

structure of Santiago's solitary experiences. This situates the research as a necessary complement to ideological interpretations.

Fifth**,** a study by Harjanti and Ardiansyah (2024), *"Nilai-Nilai Filosofis dalam Novel The Alchemist,"* examines Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist" through a philosophical lens. This research focuses on philosophical values such as existential awareness, skepticism, and empiricism reflected in Santiago's journey. One of the strengths of this study lies in its ability to reveal how Santiago's decisions and experiences constitute a process of inner transformation and philosophical awakening, as it emphasizes reflective moments and life choices. The study provides valuable insight into the protagonist's internal development and the novel's philosophical depth.

The present research takes a broader approach by interpreting solitude as a narrative mechanism rather than a psychological symptom. By applying Todorov's narrative theory, this study demonstrates that solitude appears at crucial narrative junctures: moments of disruption, recognition, and transition. This structured pattern is absent from the psychoanalytic study, making the current analysis more comprehensive in explaining "how" the plot advances and "why" solitude matters in shaping the narrative as a whole.

Taken together, these previous studies expand the understanding of "The Alchemist" across moral, psychological, ideological, and inspirational domains. However, they share a common limitation: none examine how a recurring structural pattern shapes the narrative. Because solitude recurs at key plot transitions, the

present study focuses on this structural phenomenon through Todorov's narrative model. By addressing how solitude organizes the story's movement, this research responds to a gap that earlier studies have not explored and provides a complementary perspective on Coelho's novel.

No.	Researcher (Year)	Research Focus	Strength	Weakness	Research Gap
1.	Hunain Sabir and Huzaira Akmal (2025)	Santiago's journey through existentialism and Jungian psychology.	Successfully maps Santiago's psychological evolution and spiritual awakening.	Prioritizes psychological processes over narrative arrangement and flow.	Does not clarify how moments of solitude function structurally within the plot.
2.	Weena Mae Granada Ampo (2025)	Interpretations of youthful aspiration, perseverance, and courage.	Provides a fresh and accessible viewpoint for young readers.	Focuses largely on moral implications and overlooks recurring narrative patterns.	Fails to address how solitude emerges at key stages, shaping the structural dynamic.
3.	Suhendar, Diyaa Naurah Mizanti Ismi, and Budiarto. (2024)	Analysis of moral values such as honesty, steadfastness, and perseverance.	Systematic categorization of ethical principles with textual evidence.	Treats the novel primarily as a tool for ethics rather than a deliberate design.	Does not link moral values to structural elements like narrative sequencing or motifs.
4.	Howidah Qadoori Jameel's (2024)	Ideological and cultural analysis (Eastern vs Western worldviews).	Offers insights into cultural hybridity, identity, and philosophical symbolism.	Revolves around thematic interpretation rather than narrative structure.	Does not examine how solitude functions as a structural device to shape ideology.

5.	Harjanti & Ardiansyah (2024).	Philosophical values, existential awareness, and empiricism.	Reveals the process of inner transformation and philosophical awakening.	Interprets solitude primarily as a psychological symptom or inner reflection.	Lacks a structured pattern explaining "how" the plot advances through solitude.

Table 2.1 Previous Studies

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Narrative Function and Structural Movement in Todorov's Theory

Tzvetan Todorov is widely recognized as one of the founding figures of narratology. Narratology is a field concerned with the systematic study of narrative structure. Although Todorov is often associated with the concept of the narrative cycle, his theoretical contribution extends beyond the identification of plot stages. His work positions narrative as a structured system governed by relationships, transformations, and functions that organize meaning within a story (Eiranen et al., 2022).

In Todorov's narratology, narrative is understood as a movement of transformation rather than a mere sequence of events. The progression from equilibrium to disruption and toward a new equilibrium represents a structural process through which characters, situations, and meanings evolve. This perspective emphasizes that narrative structure is not limited to external actions. Also includes shifts in characters' awareness, motivation, and internal states. As such, the narrative cycle functions as a

framework that accommodates both events and the interpretative experiences that accompany them.

Furthermore, Todorov's approach acknowledges the importance of causality and coherence in narrative organization. Events are not presented as isolated incidents, but as interconnected moments that generate change within the story world. This understanding allows narrative elements such as motifs, symbols, and recurring situations to be examined as functional components that contribute to narrative movement. From this viewpoint, motifs are not merely thematic decorations but actively shape transitions between narrative stages.

Within this broader narratological framework, solitude can be examined not merely as a psychological condition or thematic concern, but as a structural element that participates in narrative transformation. Moments of solitude often coincide with narrative shifts, such as the disruption of stability, recognition of conflict, or movement toward resolution. Therefore, analyzing solitude through Todorov's narratology enables this study to explore how internal experiences are structurally embedded within the narrative cycle.

By applying Todorov's narratology beyond the level of plot description, this research situates solitude as an integral narrative mechanism. The theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how narrative structure accommodates character

development, internal reflection, and transformation. Consequently, Todorov's theory is not used solely to map plot stages, but to explain how narrative structure operates as a system that organizes meaning, transition, and progression in "The Alchemist".

2.2.2 Todorov's Narrative Theory

Todorov's narrative theory is one of the most influential structural approaches in literary studies, particularly in analyzing how stories progress through recognizable stages. According to Tzvetan Todorov (1971), narrative is not simply a sequence of events. However, a structured movement that follows an internal logic, in which a story begins with an initial state of equilibrium, experiences disruption, and moves toward a new equilibrium. Building on this foundation, later scholars such as Chandler (2007), Barry (2009), and Tyson (2006) elaborate this movement into five distinct functional stages: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attempt to repair, and new equilibrium. This model emphasizes that narrative meaning emerges from transformation rather than from isolated incidents.

Beyond identifying plot stages, Todorov views narrative as a system in which each phase performs a specific function within the overall structure. Following the elaboration proposed by these scholars, the stages of equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attempt to repair, and new equilibrium are not merely chronological divisions but functional positions that guide the story's development. Each stage prepares the conditions for

the next, creating a dynamic process in which narrative movement is driven by change and response. In this sense, narrative progression depends on moments of transition that shift the story from one structural state to another.

Todorov's theory also highlights that narrative movement is activated by disturbance and sustained through structural tension. A narrative remains static as long as equilibrium is maintained; it begins to move only when balance is disrupted. The subsequent stages exist to respond to this disturbance, allowing characters to recognize change, take action, and eventually establish a transformed order. This perspective positions narrative as a process of instability and reorganization rather than a linear chain of events.

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to "The Alchemist" because the novel repeatedly emphasizes moments of transition rather than continuous action. Santiago's journey is structured around shifts in understanding, direction, and purpose. Many of these occur during moments when he is alone. By applying Todorov's narrative theory, this study does not treat solitude as merely a background condition or emotional atmosphere. Instead, solitude is examined as part of the narrative mechanism that enables movement between structural stages.

Therefore, Todorov's theory provides a framework for understanding not only "where" events occur in the narrative, but "how" they function within the story's structural system. By focusing on narrative

function and structural movement, this study uses Todorov's model to explain how moments of solitude serve as transitional points connecting equilibrium, disruption, and resolution. This makes Todorov's narrative theory the most appropriate theoretical foundation for analyzing solitude as a narrative mechanism in "The Alchemist".

2.2.3 Equilibrium

In Todorov's structural narratology, "equilibrium" refers to the initial state of balance and stability that exists before any conflict or narrative disturbance arises. It is the condition in which the fictional world operates according to its ordinary rules and the characters function within a predictable environment. This opening phase serves as the foundation for the narrative, establishing norms, routines, relationships, and expectations that allow readers to understand what "order" means within the fictional universe.

Chandler (2007), drawing on Todorov's structural narratology, explains that equilibrium represents the initial narrative situation in which events follow a stable and recognizable order. This stage is necessary to establish narrative normality, allowing later disruptions to be perceived as meaningful structural shifts rather than random events.

Equilibrium is essential because it provides a reference point against which subsequent disruption can be measured. By presenting a stable situation, the narrative creates a contrast that highlights the significance of

later changes. In narratology, this initial balance does not imply perfection; rather, it signifies a recognizable and functional condition before narrative conflict sets in. This phase also often reveals the protagonist's everyday life, basic desires, or initial limitations. In many works of fiction, the equilibrium stage introduces the protagonist's identity, social environment, cultural context, and emotional landscape.

The purpose of equilibrium is therefore both descriptive and structural. Descriptively, it situates the audience within the fictional world. Structurally, it prepares the reader for the upcoming disruption by establishing what will eventually be altered, challenged, or lost. Without this initial state, the narrative would lack orientation and the impact of change would be diminished. Equilibrium thus plays a fundamental role in marking the beginning of the narrative cycle and guiding the reader's understanding of the shifts that follow.

2.2.4 Disruption

The stage of "disruption" represents the moment in Todorov's narrative model when the initial state of balance is interrupted by an event, force, or realization that destabilizes the established order. This disruption introduces conflict and propels the plot forward. It may arise from external events such as an unexpected encounter, a revelation, a threat, or a shift in circumstances, or from internal changes within the protagonist, such as a new desire, awareness, or emotional conflict.

Chandler (2007), building on Todorov's narrative model, notes that disruption is the moment when narrative stability is broken, creating an imbalance that demands resolution. This disturbance is not incidental but structurally necessary to initiate narrative movement and generate meaningful conflict.

Disruption functions as the catalyst that transforms a static situation into a dynamic narrative. It marks the transition from normalcy to imbalance, signaling the beginning of the protagonist's journey or transformation. In structural terms, the disruption creates disequilibrium, generating narrative tension and establishing the central problem that must be resolved.

Narratologists emphasize that the disruption is not merely a dramatic incident but a structural component that alters the narrative's direction. It challenges the stability of the existing world and forces characters to respond. The disruption also plays a significant role in establishing the story's stakes by demonstrating what has been lost or what must be confronted.

Importantly, disruption is necessary for narrative progression. Without disturbance, the equilibrium would continue indefinitely, and the story would fail to develop. Thus, disruption marks the decisive shift that activates the narrative cycle, transitioning the story into a phase of uncertainty and movement toward resolution.

2.2.5 Recognition

"Recognition", in Todorov's model, is the stage in which characters become aware of the disruption and its implications. It marks the moment when the protagonist recognizes the change and begins to make sense of the altered situation. This phase is crucial for narrative coherence because it bridges the initial disturbance and the subsequent actions.

Barry (2009), referring to Todorov's narrative structure, explains that recognition marks the point at which characters understand the nature of the disruption and its consequences. This stage provides interpretative clarity, ensuring that subsequent actions arise from awareness rather than mere reaction.

Recognition often involves comprehension, self-awareness, or realization. It may occur gradually or suddenly, but its function remains the same: to provide clarity about the nature of the imbalance. During this phase, the protagonist interprets the disruption's meaning, evaluates its consequences, and begins to formulate responses.

In many narratives, recognition may manifest as discovery, reflection, confrontation, or internal awakening. It may also appear through guidance from other characters, introspection, or direct experience. Structurally, recognition ensures that the protagonist does not act unthinkingly. Instead, their actions arise from an informed understanding of the situation.

This stage deepens the narrative by revealing motives, goals, and conflicts that were previously hidden or unacknowledged. Recognition not only clarifies the nature of the problem but also prepares the protagonist for the active efforts required in the next stage of the cycle. Without recognition, the transition from disruption to repair would lack cohesion.

2.2.6 Attempt to Repair

The "attempt to repair" constitutes the phase in which the protagonist takes action to restore balance and resolve the conflict created by the disruption. This is the stage of effort, struggle, experimentation, and pursuit. Characters engage in actions intended to confront the disorder, solve emerging problems, or bridge the gap between imbalance and stability.

According to Tyson (2006), Todorov's narrative framework is applied. The attempt to repair constitutes the central phase of narrative action, in which characters actively respond to disruption through effort, decision-making, and transformation. This stage sustains narrative momentum and enables structural development toward resolution.

This stage often occupies the largest portion of a narrative because it encompasses the protagonist's journey, challenges, failures, and partial successes. It highlights the active processes by which the character seeks resolution, whether through physical acts, emotional development, intellectual problem-solving, or moral decision-making.

From a structural standpoint, the attempt to repair drives the plot forward and provides narrative momentum. It allows the protagonist to grow, adapt, and change, making it a key phase for character development. Attempts at repair may involve collaboration with other characters or solitary efforts, depending on the story's psychological or thematic orientation.

The repair phase underscores the struggles inherent in achieving transformation. It emphasizes that resolution is not immediate but is the result of sustained effort and confrontation with obstacles. This stage ultimately leads the narrative toward the final phase, where the consequences of the protagonist's actions become evident.

2.2.7 New Equilibrium

The "new equilibrium" is the final stage of Todorov's narrative cycle. It signifies the restoration of stability after the disruption has been addressed and resolved. The new equilibrium is distinct from the initial equilibrium because it incorporates the changes, growth, and transformations that have occurred throughout the narrative.

Abrams and Harpham (2015), drawing on Todorov-influenced structural narratology, state that the new equilibrium represents a reconfigured stability shaped by narrative experience rather than a return to the original order. This final stage affirms narrative closure while highlighting transformation within the story's structure.

In this phase, the protagonist arrives at a renewed state of balance shaped by the experiences encountered during the attempt to repair. The narrative world stabilizes again, though it may not return to its previous form. Often, the new equilibrium reflects a deeper understanding, a new environment, or a matured psychological state.

The new equilibrium provides closure by demonstrating that the narrative conflict has been resolved and that order has been reestablished. It also highlights the cyclical nature of Todorov's model as every narrative begins with stability, undergoes disruption, and concludes with a modified form of stability. Structurally, this final stage completes the narrative arc and reinforces the story's coherence as a unified whole.

2.3 Psychology of Solitude in Literature

This section draws on psychological theory solely to establish a conceptual understanding of solitude as a phenomenon, providing background on how solitude is later treated as a narrative mechanism in this study, rather than as a framework for interpreting the characters' psychological states. The study of solitude in psychology emphasizes that being alone is a complex emotional and cognitive experience rather than a simple physical state. In psychological discourse, solitude is understood not merely as isolation, but as a meaningful condition that may contribute to self-awareness, introspection, emotional regulation, and personal growth. Many psychological models differentiate between solitude and loneliness, noting that solitude can be restorative and constructive, whereas loneliness often involves negative emotions such as abandonment or exclusion (Peplau & Perlman,

1982; Long & Averill, 2003; Coplan et al., 2021). This capacity of literary texts to convey emotional experience during difficult circumstances has similarly been observed in the study of children's poetry, which shows how textual elements can express feelings of hardship while simultaneously offering psychological resilience (Agustiningsih et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Solitude in Psychological Theory

In psychological studies, solitude is generally understood as a voluntary experience of being alone that encourages reflection and self-development. Unlike loneliness, which is associated with unwanted isolation and emotional distress, solitude is often viewed as a constructive condition that enables individuals to understand themselves more deeply. Researchers argue that solitude creates opportunities for self-awareness, identity formation, emotional independence, and personal growth because individuals can evaluate their thoughts and experiences without external distractions (Weinstein et al., 2022; Long & Averill, 2003).

Furthermore, psychological perspectives suggest that solitude plays an important role in personal transformation. Through periods of reflection, individuals become better able to interpret their experiences, make independent decisions, and develop greater self-understanding. Consequently, solitude is frequently associated with maturity, self-discovery, and inner development rather than with isolation alone. These perspectives provide an important conceptual foundation for understanding

why solitude repeatedly accompanies moments of change in literary narratives.

2.3.2 Solitude in the Context of Literary Psychology

Within literary psychology, solitude is analyzed not merely as a psychological condition but as a narrative and symbolic element. Characters who experience solitude often undergo crucial moments of transformation, realization, or moral decision-making. Solitude in literature is frequently depicted as a turning point that allows characters to encounter internal conflicts, understand their desires, or confront their fears. This aligns with psychological theory that suggests solitude can serve as a context for self-reflection and personal re-evaluation (Coplan et al., 2021).

Literary psychologists examine how solitude shapes character development, emotional transitions, and narrative progression. Solitude may symbolize independence, enlightenment, self-discovery, or personal sacrifice, depending on the literary context. It may also function as a psychological environment that reveals inner conflicts or unspoken motivations. Psychological research underscores that voluntary solitude versus involuntary isolation yields different cognitive and emotional outcomes, which is relevant for understanding how literary characters respond to solitude (Larson, 1990; Long & Averill, 2003).

In fictional narratives, solitude often accompanies moments of reflection, growth, or change. The literary portrayal of solitude aligns with

psychological understandings of its role in promoting self-awareness and emotional depth. Psychological studies indicate that solitude provides an opportunity for individuals to disengage from social demands and engage in introspection, which can facilitate personal insight (Weinstein et al., 2022).

Although solitude has frequently been examined as a psychological condition, a philosophical concept, or a literary theme, this research approaches solitude from a different perspective. Rather than viewing solitude merely as the protagonist's emotional experience, this study positions it as a narrative mechanism that contributes to the story's structural progression. By applying Todorov’s narrative theory, the research examines how solitude functions across the five narrative stages and supports both the main character's development and the narrative's progression. Consequently, solitude is understood not only as a thematic element but also as a structural strategy that Paulo Coelho employs to organize the narrative and guide the protagonist’s transformation.