

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background

The word “pandemic” has terrorized everyone in the world. Millions of people have been suffered from the deadly illness known as Corona Virus Disease (Covid)-19. It spread very fast to almost all countries in the world. Almost all countries have been trying to do whatever they can to save more lives. In the era of globalization, pandemic is not something new (Antràs, Redding, and Rossi-Hansberg, 2020, p.1). the year 2020 became a tough year for all the people in the world due to the highly contagious virus which caused a serious impact to almost every aspect of human’s life, not only physically but also mentally.

Due to the spread of this deadly virus, there is a serious impact that people can see in social life including economic sector, education, psychology, etc (Joint Advisor, 2020, p.11). This means, pandemic must be handled carefully and professionally so that it will end. However, to stop the spread of infectious disease, every country has face many problems. Due to the policies set by many countries, the year 2020 was a hard time every country. Many cities were locked down. Stores, restaurants, malls and schools were closed. Many countries forbid public gatherings and events. These all have caused a serious problem in the world’s economy (Abidah *et al.*, 2020, p.38). Its impact has been surprisingly serious to the world and thus, it is regarded as a world-wide catastrophe (Cheval *et al.*, 2020, p.1).

Since the issues centered on pandemic Covid-19 have become one of the main topics in all countries, people have huge interest in knowing more about it. The spread of infectious diseases can attract a lot of people to learn and understand better (Adalja *et al.*, 2018, p.8), this can be considered as a phenomenal topic to discuss. For this reason, the idea of selecting this topic is influenced by the circumstances faced by everyone during the pandemic. This makes the pandemic issue an object that needs to be studied, especially if it is related to the image shown by the films.

It is obvious that films play an important role in society as a part entertainment media. In addition, it is also important to know that films can display symbols which can show certain images, especially those related to human’s life because films function as media to express what people feel and think (Watson, 2003, p. 9). Therefore, movies can also enrich people’s

knowledge (Adi, 2011, p.71). From the ideas above, it is clear that the issue or objects depicted in films can convey certain meanings that people need to understand. American movie producers, for example, want to portray certain phenomenal issues in society because those depictions are experienced by people.

The issue of pandemic shown in films is not something new. There have been many movies with pandemic themes. However, as the world has been battling a pandemic, the talk of pandemic seems to be something important. At the same time, this study can be more interesting because it discusses the pandemic issue represented in American films. Therefore, this study explores the pandemic issues represented in American films.

1.2. The Problems of Study

Regarding the points explained above, this study concentrates on two problems. The problems discussed in this study are listed in the form of question as followings:

- (a) Why is pandemic used as a theme in American films?
- (b) How is pandemic portrayed in American films?

1.3. The Objectives of Study

Based on the research problems above, this study has two intentions as followings:

- (a) to understand the reasons pandemic is used as a theme in American films
- (b) to identify how pandemic is portrayed in American films.

1.4. The Purpose of Study

This study has two purposes to fulfill. Theoretically, the research findings aim at contributing to the development of theories in humanities especially in media studies, film studies, cultural studies as well as literary studies. Practically, this study aims at improving people's understanding about the significant values and knowledge behind the pandemic depicted in American films which can be useful for everyone to see and learn about the reflection of social and cultural issues in society. By this way, people can be aware of the need to obtain values of life from entertainment media such as films.

1.5. Literary Review

There have been many articles or reports discussing about pandemic in human's life, especially in health and medical sciences. For instance, Morens, Folkers, and Fauci (2009); Yamamoto (2013); Van, Jamison, and Summers (2018); Singer, Thompson, and Bonsall (2020); and Balkhair (2020) focused on the impact of pandemic in medical sciences and human's health. Their researches are mostly viewed from health science perspectives. However, this study discusses pandemic represented in entertainment media such as film, especially American movies which are usually well-known. Additionally, analyzing pandemic portrayed in films is not frequently done by researchers, especially those from Indonesia. Therefore, this study can be more interesting by interpreting the pandemic concept in American movies.

1.6. Clarification of Terminology

The term "pandemic" used in this study generally means the disease which can easily and quickly passed on to others. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines pandemic as "a disease that spreads over a whole country or the whole world (Wehmeier, 2000 p. 915). Further, World Health Organization (2014, p. xviii) explains pandemic as "An epidemic occurring worldwide or over a wide area, crossing boundaries of several countries, and usually affecting a large number of people". In other words, a disease is commonly known as a pandemic if it spreads from one region to many countries (Morens *et al.*, 2009, p. 1019). Some infectious diseases such as bubonic plague, yellow fever, pox, etc. were once terrifying pandemics in history (Beach, et al., 2020, p. 6). Thus, the concept of pandemic used in this study is the disease caused by virus or bacteria that is easily spread to other people in a short time.

Since this study discusses the issue of pandemic in American films, the term "film" needs to be clarified in order to form a clear concept of film used in this study. The word "film" can also mean movie. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines films as "a series of moving picture recorded with sound that tells a story, shown on TV or at the cinema." (Wehmeier (ed.), 2000, p. 473). In films, characters play an important role because an idea is dramatized through them (Adi, 2011, p. 57). In this 21st century, film has been widely used to reflect popular culture (Turner, 2003, p. 2). Thus, the term film used in this study refer to audio-visual entertainment media that presents stories in the form of scenes with characters played by actors and watched by

people in cinemas. The films selected for this study are films produced by American film producers.

1.7. The Scope of Study

This study focuses on discussing the concept of pandemic used in American films. American movies on pandemic have been widely watched by many people, particularly those which use popular actors as the main characters. There are five American movies used in this study – *Outbreak* (1995), *I am Legend* (2007), *Carriers* (2009), *Contagion* (2011), and *The World War Z* (2013). These films depict about pandemic experienced by human beings. Even though there are still many more movies portraying pandemic, the five films above are selected to be analyzed because these American films have been shown widely in many countries, especially in Indonesia.