

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background

Living in society certainly cannot be separated from various problems. Every individual must have good or bad experiences when interacting with other individuals. One of the many problems that often occurs is bullying. Cases of bullying are often reported in various countries. It has long been a problem that seems to have never gone away. It happens anywhere such as in schools, campuses, workplaces, and other public places. However, most studies reveal that many people have been bullied in their teens (Aalsma & Brown, 2008, p. 101). The experience of being bullied by other people can bring about different kinds of impacts to the victims. Therefore, it is essential to find a way out to end bullying even if it is not easy (Kustanti et al., 2020, p. 1507). This shows that the issue of bullying is still a concern for many people and needs to be discussed in forums or research.

Bullying is something complicated and it may happen for many reasons (Swearer & Hymel, 2015, p. 344). However, it is commonly considered a negative action that in fact many people experience it. One is said to be experiencing bullying when he feels helpless in a state of pressure over the actions done by other people and he then worries and is scared that the incident will occur again (Akasyah et al., 2018, p. 538). Bullying can be categorized into physical, verbal and cyber bullying (Nurmalia et al., 2021, p. 247). Even though many people think that bullying in this era is rare in fact, the phenomenon of still often happens anytime and anywhere in this era. In Indonesia, for instance, bullying by a group of students is still frequently reported in the media. This is an unfortunate condition because schools should be able to provide education and guidance to students to stop bullying.

Due to the large number of bullying cases that have occurred in American society which may cause physical and mental injury or even death (Benedict et al., 2014, p. 2), the issue of bullying has been widely discussed in media. It is also often used as a theme in films. American films, for instance, frequently depict the phenomenon of bullying. This issue would be a path for people to see the problems. There are many phenomena or knowledge that can be learned by every individual when watching films (Adi, 2011, p. 71; Rudy et al., 2021, p. 43). It implies that the issue of bullying which is reflected in movies can be something that people need to study. Therefore, a study about bullying reflected on films is essential to be read by people and it is also important because bullying, especially in the school environment, would become a serious concern for everyone.

1.2 The Problems

There are two problems regarding the issue of bullying discussed in this study. They are:

- (a) What portraits are often shown in American films about bullying?
- (b) What does bullying represent?

1.3 The Objectives

Based on the problems above, the objectives of the study are:

- (a) to reveal what portraits are often found in American films about bullying.
- (b) to identify what bullying represents.

1.4 The Use

This research theoretically contributes to the development of theory in relevant fields such as literary and cultural studies, film studies, and other humanities and it can be useful as a reference for other researchers studying the similar issue. Besides, this study can also provide

better understanding as well as more information about the issue of bullying for everyone so that people can help prevent acts of bullying occur in society.

1.5 The Scope

This study focuses on the analysis of three American movies with the theme of bullying, namely: *Bully* (2011), *A Girl Like Her* (2015), and *Wonder* (2017). The phenomenon of bullying depicted in the three films becomes the object of discussion in this study by concentrating on dialogs related to bullying between characters and scenes portraying bullying in the films.

1.6 Literature Review

Literature review was carried out by reviewing a number of journal articles. Most of them were studies on the issue of bullying that had been conducted by previous researchers. A review of several scientific articles provides information on the issue of bullying associated with the mental health of the victims. For instance, a study completed by Swearer and Hymel (2015) argued that bullying, which is a complex phenomenon, must be overcome with efforts related to individual experience, characteristics, causes, consequences and others. Other findings on bullying from a mental perspective such as studies by Fullchange and Furlong (2016), Akasyah et al. (2018), Huang et al. (2018), Kustanti et al. (2020), Lucas-Molina et al. (2022) emphasized the psychological effects experienced by victims of bullying such as fear, sadness, trauma, etc.

However, there is a study by Bokhari et al. (2020) talked about the various effects of bullying depending on the condition of the victim and it may contribute to the strength of the victims. Apart from that, there are also two journal articles which talked about bullying in films such as the studies conducted by Ningrum and Bahri (2020) as well as Nurmalia et al. (2021) which pointed out the some types of bullying in films entitled *A Girl Like Her* and *Carrie*. Even though this study discusses about the issue of bullying in American films, it is still different from the previous studies described above in terms of approach to data analysis, types of films used as data as well as research questions. Those are the points that can be research gaps filled by this study to become a study with an element of novelty.

1.7 Clarification of Terminology

This section contains explanations as well as definitions of several important terms used in this study in order to avert misunderstanding. The first term that needs to be defined properly is bullying. It is perhaps no longer a new term. Many people must have heard of it. However, not everyone can actually understand what bullying is. An individual is said to be bullied when he experiences repeated negative treatment and usually he is unable to defend himself from the bully (Olweus, 1994, p. 98). According to Jan and Husain (2015, p. 43), bullying is student's behavior that relies on strength that tends to be continuous and damaging such as to hit, to threaten, to insult someone, etc. In addition, Ningrum and Bahri (2020, p. 3) explained that it is an act of using violence or threats to intimidate others.

Bullying is also defined as forms of violent behaviors that contain elements of physical and psychological coercion against individuals who are weak and unable to fight back (Zakiyah et al., 2017, p. 326) and the bullying behavior can result in injury to the victim (Hartati et al., 2020, p. 55). People often equate bullying with aggressive behavior. Regarding this, Aalsma and Brown (2008, p. 102) it is necessary to understand in advance that the basic aspect of distinguishing bullying and aggressive behaviors lies in imbalance of power. It means that if the victim cannot resist the strength of the bullies who are older in age or more in number of bullies, then the victim is deemed to have been bullied. It means that the victim of bullying is usually weaker than the bully, therefore, the victim is unable to defend himself and is forced to

accept bullying. As explained in the previous section, in general, many studies have found that bullying can be done in the form of physical violence, verbal violence and bullying in cyberspace (Akasyah et al., 2018, p. 541; Nurmalia et al., 2021, p. 247; Lucas-Molina et al., 2022, p. 39).

It is said that bullying is considered to be common in school and an unfavorable school environment will trigger bullying (Gomba & Tsai, 2012, p. 162; Swearer & Hymel, 2015, p. 347; Huang et al., 2018, p. 231; Bokhari et al., 2020, p. 1; Armitage, 2021, p. 2). Acts of bullying are more common in schools although it is also possible that bullying can occur in the workplace, home, etc. In general, victims of bullying will have problems in adjusting and functioning their emotions (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016, p. 2). So, besides the difference in the level of strength between the bully and the victim, victims of bullying also generally experience emotional stress that will have an impact on their lives.