

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Childhood is a special time that is simple yet full of joy and unique experiences. Kids often act freely, not thinking much about the consequences of their actions since they are still learning. Most adults fondly remember their childhood and might even wish to relive those moments. However, as people grow from being kids to adults, they change and develop in many ways. An adult is a well-rounded person shaped by their experiences, personality, and identity (Mazianaomi & Sanjaya, 2012). While childhood seems like a carefree time, it is also when our personalities start taking shape. Every adult has been a child, and who we are today is influenced by our younger years. Childhood is more than just fun, it is a crucial and complex time that plays a big role in shaping our lives (Mazianaomi & Sanjaya, 2012). Childhood is a fundamental time of happiness and learning. Kids act without overthinking, which adults fondly remember and often want to relive. As we grow up, these early experiences shape our character and who we become. So, childhood isn't just about fun, it lays the foundation for our adult selves.

Childhood is seen as a concept created by society, shaped by cultural and social norms rather than just biological development. This view helps us understand the early years of life by recognizing that childhood is not a natural or universal stage for all humans. Instead, it is a unique aspect shaped by the society and culture one

lives in. Factors like economic conditions, social policies, education, and cultural beliefs all play a role in defining childhood in different places and times. This means the experiences and expectations of children can differ greatly depending on where and when they grow up. Recognizing childhood as a social construct shows us that our ideas and treatment of children are influenced by societal and cultural contexts, not just by biology (Jenks, 2004).

Childhood serves as a vital time when individuals accumulate key experiences for their upcoming life. During this phase, people frequently imitate what they see and encounter in their environment. As such, the surroundings play a pivotal role in shaping human growth during these early years. A less supportive environment during childhood can have lasting negative effects on a person's development and character in later life stages. During childhood, as individuals explore the world around them, they absorb knowledge by observing their environment. While negative behaviors in children can be modified, they won't entirely reshape the child's core identity. These habits become deeply ingrained over time, significantly influencing their personality, especially considering that internal pressures indirectly impact a child's emotional well-being (Mazianaomi & Sanjaya, 2012).

During childhood, kids quickly pick up things from their surroundings, but they do not always understand what is right or wrong. They absorb everything without really thinking about it and make it a part of themselves. As they grow and become more aware, they form their own thoughts and ideas based on what they

have experienced. However, they are also easily influenced by what is around them. As they get older, they learn and grow, and these early experiences stick with them. Even if they learn and change over time, those early lessons still shape who they become, even if we are not exactly sure how much they influence their future actions and personality (Mazianaomi & Sanjaya, 2012). Although childhood should ideally be a time when individuals prepare themselves for a better future, it is an undeniable fact that many children experience trauma during this period. As a result of this trauma, children may struggle to form healthy relationships, have low self-esteem, or even suffer from ongoing emotional and psychological disorders in adulthood. Therefore, the importance of supporting and protecting children from traumatic experiences cannot be overlooked, as the impact can last throughout their lives.

Childhood trauma varies based on individual experiences and contexts, generally referring to situations where a child encounters or learns about threatening events. It is essential to recognize that trauma's impact differs among individuals, what deeply affects one might be perceived differently by another. While some traumatic events can trigger reactions like shock or potentially lead to PTSD, not every traumatic experience results in this diagnosis. Factors like the duration and intensity of trauma, coupled with protective environments, significantly influence PTSD outcomes. Examples of such distressing experiences for children encompass institutional racism, living with mentally ill caregivers, experiencing loss, facing natural disasters, sexual abuse, dealing with parental incarceration, encountering violence at home or school, and witnessing domestic abuse (King-White, 2022).

Many children face traumatic experiences in various settings like schools, communities, and homes, making it crucial for them to understand they are not isolated in their struggles. SAM HSA highlights concerning statistics in 2015 alone, over 680,000 children in the U.S. experienced abuse or neglect. Additionally, a quarter of high school students engaged in physical altercations, with bullying affecting numerous students 1 in 5 faced traditional bullying, and 1 in 6 encountered cyberbullying. Shockingly, 17% of kids aged 12-17 reported physical abuse, while over half of families have encountered some form of disaster, emphasizing the widespread nature of these challenges (King-White, 2022).

Childhood trauma can deeply impact a child's emotional, physical, and relational well-being if not addressed. Such trauma heightens vulnerability to various mental health challenges, from PTSD to anxiety and substance-related issues. Trust and security can erode due to traumatic incidents involving close individuals, affecting relationships profoundly. Academically, trauma may result in school avoidance, decreased performance, and challenges with authority figures. As individuals grow, the long-term effects of childhood trauma can manifest physically, increasing risks of serious health conditions like heart disease and diabetes, as highlighted by the CDC. Furthermore, trauma's repercussions extend beyond the individual, affecting families, peers, and communities, leading to broader societal challenges and cycles of adversity (King-White, 2022). When kids go through tough times due to trauma, they need help especially with their feelings. Family, friends, and trusted adults play a big role by giving them love, support, and understanding.

Talking and being with these caring people helps kids handle their emotions and feel better about themselves. Having a supportive environment is really important for kids to heal and move forward.

Having a strong social support system is crucial when it comes to preventing or treating PTSD. Studies consistently show that people with limited social support tend to have more severe PTSD symptoms, face greater challenges, and may even think about suicide more often. Social support plays a vital role in both preventing and treating PTSD. Research also reveals that

social support varies in how it is measured and how it affects daily life. For instance, different people in someone's life can offer varying levels of support that impact their PTSD symptoms and how they respond to treatment. Positive social interactions and feeling emotionally supported can help reduce PTSD symptoms and improve treatment outcomes (Gros et al., 2016). The research highlights the vital role of strong relationships and support for those dealing with PTSD. It is not just about being helpful, it is about being essential. Communities and societies must create caring and empathetic settings. Since support can vary among individuals, it is crucial to offer the right kind of assistance. In essence, providing and receiving support can significantly aid individuals with PTSD in their healing journey.

Stories about childhood trauma are often popping up in movies, TV shows, and books. This rise in storytelling highlights how much people are starting to realize the deep effects of such tough experiences on kids. Entertainment like films and TV not only tell engaging stories but also help us see and feel the struggles many young

people go through. By sharing these stories, they are helping viewers understand and care more about these issues, sparking important conversations about childhood trauma in today's world.

A study titled "Elevated Empathy in Adults Following Childhood Trauma" explores the potential relationship between childhood trauma and increased empathy in adulthood. In this research, the investigators analyzed that although trauma is often associated with a risk of depression, studies indicate that adults who experienced trauma during childhood tend to have higher levels of empathy. The study's findings suggest that the severity of childhood trauma positively correlates with empathy components, indicating that childhood trauma may enhance an individual's ability to understand and feel the suffering of others (Greenberg et al., 2018).

However, in this study the researcher presents information or studies that were not previously submitted by other researchers, specifically regarding the impact of childhood trauma on social interactions. In the previously mentioned study, there was no mention of any significant impact that trauma could have on a person's social interactions, nor did that study address the kind of support needed by someone who has experienced childhood trauma.

In this undergraduate thesis, the researcher chooses a film entitled *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* which was produced in America as the subject of the study. "*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*," both a film and a novel penned by Stephen Chbosky, delves deeply into the complexities of adolescence, intertwining themes

of friendship, love, identity, mental health, and notably, childhood trauma. Released in 2012, the story centers around Charlie, an introspective high school freshman who grapples with his childhood trauma. Through heartfelt letters to an anonymous confidant, Charlie chronicles his high school experiences, including forging meaningful relationships with his friends Sam and Patrick. Their inclusive circle offers Charlie a supportive environment, enabling him to confront and navigate his haunting childhood traumas. This journey of self-discovery and healing underscores the narrative's authenticity. Stellar performances by Logan Lerman, Emma Watson, and Ezra Miller enrich the storytelling, capturing the essence of adolescence marked by both joy and sorrow. In the end, the movie serves as a touching story about growing up, highlighting how childhood trauma can deeply affect someone. At the same time, it shows how friendships and self-acceptance can make a big difference in overcoming challenges.

In this study, the researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method. This method is designed to find out more and gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject under study. Moreover, the study is supported by two main theories. First, the PTSD theory or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder theory proposed by Sigmund Freud offers profound insights into the traumatic impacts and how it influences individuals from a psychological perspective. Second, the social support theory developed by Sheldon Cohen emphasizes the significance of social networks and human interactions in providing emotional and psychological support. By using these two theories, the researcher aims to provide a thorough and comprehensive analysis for

the impact of childhood trauma on the main character's social interactions in the *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and identify the support he needs.

B. Problem Formulation

In this study, researcher will discuss several important issues, namely:

1. What is the impact of Charlie's childhood trauma on his social interactions in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012)?
2. What kind of support does Charlie need to deal with his childhood trauma in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012)?

C. Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the impact of Charlie's childhood trauma on his social interaction in the movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012).
2. To analyze the support that Charlie needs to deal with his childhood trauma in the movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012).

D. Review on Related Studies

A research in 2018 entitled "The Impact and Long-Term Effects of Childhood Trauma" discuss how childhood trauma, especially complex trauma, can have long-term effects that can lead to lifelong medical and psychological challenges. The author of that research used qualitative descriptive method techniques. The findings of the research explain that childhood trauma can lead to neurobiological

changes that affect an individual's development and result in significant alterations in brain function. These changes can impact cognitive and emotional aspects of an individual. As a result, individuals who have experienced childhood trauma may experience ongoing mental and emotional symptoms into adulthood (Dye, 2018).

Other study entitled “The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Children’s Wellbeing and Adult” investigates if symptoms related to depression and anxiety, sleep disturbance and low self-esteem are consequences of childhood trauma. The author use an empirical research method that involves interviewing several individuals. The research findings explain that experiencing trauma at a young age could contribute to lower self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy might lead to depression and anxiety. Individuals who have experienced childhood trauma often show signs of low self-esteem, as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety. Some may choose to deny their traumatic past, while others may construct a false self-image and resort to alcohol or drug misuse as a way to avoid the negative effects of their traumatic experiences. Early interventions, along with tailored treatment approaches, can potentially alleviate trauma-related symptoms and offer effective support. The study highlights the importance of interventions, treatment strategies, and social support in improving resilience, addressing problematic behavior, and managing psychiatric conditions (Downey & Crummy, 2022).

While in another study entitled “Shame and PTSD Symptoms” shows that the risk of developing PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) are linked not only to ongoing PTSD symptoms through their influence on fear but also through their

association with shame. While the findings are preliminary, they emphasize a crucial distinction: PTSD cannot be solely attributed to a dysregulated fear response. Fear is a natural response to physical threats, essential for survival. However, shame represents a distinct response to threats, particularly threats to social integration or one's standing in society. These social aspects are as vital to individual well-being and human development as physical safety. And in the context of trauma and social interactions, this study suggests that PTSD may result from both fear and shame responses to traumatic events. Trauma often involves threats not only to physical safety but also to one's emotional and social well-being. These emotional responses can significantly impact how individuals interact with others. Understanding this interplay between fear, shame, trauma, and social interactions is crucial for a comprehensive grasp of PTSD and its effects on individuals' lives, paving the way for further in-depth research into these relationships (La Bash & Papa, 2014).

The similarity between the study mentioned above and this research lies in the discussion of symptoms of trauma in individuals. However, the difference between the two studies lies in the research subject. The study mentioned above uses real-life cases, whereas this research utilizes the American movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* as its research subject.

In both studies, the focus is on understanding and discussing the symptoms of trauma experienced by individuals. However, the key distinction is that the former relies on real-life cases, while the latter employs the American movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* as its research material.

E. Research Methodology

This American Studies research involves examining a case from two perspectives or theories. The study utilizes both psychological and sociological approach, with a focus on Sigmund Freud's theory of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for the psychological aspect, and Sheldon Cohen's theory of Social Support for the sociological aspect.

In supporting the success of a research, there are stages that must be carried out as an initial framework for a research process. One of them is to choose a research method that matches the research topic. The research method is based on three main aspects such as rational, empirical, and systematic. Rational means that the research process and the subjects discussed in the study can be assessed in a reasonable way or human reasoning. Empirical means that the processes carried out during the study can be seen, felt, or observed by the human senses. While systematic means that the steps in research are logical or through a structured process (P. D. Sugiyono, 2015).

Since the research relies on the ability of narrative techniques, therefore qualitative method is used as the main method in this research. Qualitative method is a method that used to analyze or examine natural objects. Natural objects are objects as they are that are not manipulated by the presence of the researcher. In qualitative methods, data analysis is an inductive or in the form of facts found in the field until it is constructed into hypotheses or theories (D.Sugiyono, 2013).

1. Data and Source of Data

Data is an important element in analyzing a study. In supporting the analysis

process in this study, researcher used two data, such as primary data and secondary data. Primary data is mental evidence research through the movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. The data that is attached in the form of scenes, dialogues, and body language in accordance with the objectives of the study in this study which are the impact of childhood trauma on the main character and what kind of support that he needs.

While secondary data in this study is used as a supporting role in analyzing primary data. Secondary data is presented in the form of scientific journals, articles, and official government websites related to this research and published within the last 10 years.

2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

In this study, researcher used two different data in the process, which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is the main data obtained through the movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. The process and technique of retrieval primary data is first, researcher watched *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* film entirely. Then, after quite understood the content and topic of the story in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the scenes are sorted into two different topics which are in the scale of two objectives of the study that are discussed in the discussion chapter. The sorted scenes are attached to the analysis discussion along with the minutes which will then are analyzed using secondary data in the form of journals or other sources.

3. Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

The data analysis is a systematic and structured process to find and compile data that has been obtained from the results through research materials. The purpose of data analysis is to organize data, then explain it into several parts, do synthesis, arrange it into patterns, sort out which parts are important to learn, and then make conclusions (P. D. Sugiyono, 2015).

The researcher used a qualitative method in this study to apply psychological and sociological approach. The method is used to analyze and investigate the impacts of childhood trauma on the main character and the support that he needs during the post-traumatic events. In analyzing primary data that obtained through the movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, researcher applied two main theories as references. The researcher selected the scenes in the film that show indications of all objectives of the study. The scenes that are analyzed are the scenes that clearly provide patterns or characteristics of PTSD (Post- traumatic Stress Disorder) shown by the main character in the movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and the forms of support in supporting the psychological recovery period of characters after traumatic tragedies. By using qualitative methods, researcher used journals that discuss these two topics as a support to analyze primary data and structured in the form of a distinct and descriptive narrative.

F. Presentation

This research is divided into four chapters. Chapter one is introduction which includes background of the study, problem formulation, objectives of the study, review of related studies, research methodology and presentation. Chapter two consist of several sub-chapters, such as the theoretical approach which consist of a psychological and sociological approach. And then there is theoretical framework which is filled by theory Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and theory of Social Support. Chapter three is analysis of the research questions, and the last chapter is the conclusion and suggestion.