

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this thesis consists research background, research problem, research objective, research significance, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Verbal bullying is a form of bullying where individuals use language, such as insults, mockery, or threats, to intentionally cause psychological harm or intimidate others Gladden et al. (2014). The language used in verbal bullying is often hurtful, consisting of insults, scornful remarks, harsh words, unpleasant language, and other terms. Examples of verbal bullying include cursing, disgracing others in public, judging, making up stories, and insulting. Further, Rana et al. (2020) stated that verbal bullying involves using language, including insults, teasing, or name-calling, with the intent to cause harm or intimidation to someone.

People who use abusive language tend to bully because of personal experiences with verbal bullying. Those who engage in bullying want to express their emotions by subjecting others to the same mistreatment. This is reinforced by Salman et al. (2021) who stated that there are common factors, including physical appearance, health conditions, physical well-being, power differentials, and lower socioeconomic status. These characteristics can create the impression of vulnerability, making someone who is the target of bullying an easy target. Furthermore, cases of verbal bullying can be found anytime and anywhere, not only in real life but also in TV shows or movies. An example of verbal bullying that occurs in real life is commenting on someone's physical

appearance. Other example of verbal bullying, similar to this are commonly found in TV shows or movies.

Related to the explanation above, verbal bullying can be depicted in TV shows or movies. One example of such bullying can be found in the movie "The Greatest Showman", directed by Michael Gracey. "The Greatest Showman" movie portrays the experiences of circus performers who were victims of verbal bullying. The film explores the reasons and effects of this behaviour, as well as the emotional and psychological impact that verbal bullying had on artists. Verbal bullying is a common experienced among PT Barnum's circus members. Circus members may be targets of verbal bullying because of their appearance or physical abilities, such as being overweight, physically disabled, or lacking athletic ability. This aligns with what Carter (2018) stated that circus performers got the term "freak" to highlight the abnormality or uniqueness of circus performers and emphasize their physical differences from ordinary humans. That's why circus performers may be perceived as different or outside of mainstream society, making them more vulnerable to bullying.

The previous research related to verbal bullying portrayed in movies has been carried out by previous researchers. Pratiwi & Nugroho (2023) in their study titled "The Impacts of Bullying on The Main Character in The Movie "Laal Singh Chadha (2022)" by Advait Chandan" found that verbal bullying is considered more dangerous in the long term. It can significantly damage a child's self-image and self-esteem, resulting in depression, anxiety, and other related issues. Also, the previous research by Nurmalia et al. (2021), titled "Type, Cause, and Effect of Bullying in A Girl Like Her", stated that verbal bullying is an act intended to embarrass or demean the victim. This behavior is

often motivated by the bully's low self-esteem and the desire to establish a sense of superiority. Moreover, Ningrum & Bahri (2020) conducted research the title “The Impacts of Bullying To The Main Character In The Movie *Carrie*: A Literary Psychological Analysis” found that verbal bullying was the most dominant type of bullying in the movie, and it can have significant negative effects on the victim's self-image and self-esteem, leading to psychological distress, depression, and anxiety. It is considered to be more insidious compared to physical bullying, as its effects may be long-lasting and can deeply impact a person's well-being.

The movie 'The Greatest Showman,' directed by Michael Gracey, is loved by many because it looks amazing and tells a special story. It is set in America a long time ago, in the 19th century, and it is all about how P.T. Barnum became famous with his circus. When the movie is watched, it feels like being right there with Barnum, seeing all the exciting things he created. The story is about following the dreams, fitting in, and doing what's right. Hugh Jackman plays Barnum, who really wants to be successful but also has some tough choices to make. In the movie, the circus is like a small town where everyone knows each other. Sometimes, the audience makes fun of the performers because they look different. Barnum, who is in charge, does not always stop them. But the performers stick together, showing how important it is to have friends who support when people say mean things. In the movie, there are lots of different characters, each with their own backgrounds and talents. For example, Zendaya's character, Anne Wheeler, is really good at acrobatics, while Keala Settle's character, Lettie Lutz, has an amazing singing voice. Together, they make up a diverse group of performers in Barnum's circus. This shows how having a mix of different people can make something really special, and it highlights

the importance of working together as a team. The movie does a great job of making the characters feel real and relatable. For example, the struggles and successes of characters like Phillip Carlyle, played by Zac Efron. He's dealing with pressure from society and also trying to figure out his feelings for Anne. Then there's Charity Barnum, played by Michelle Williams, who stands by her husband no matter what challenges they face. Each character goes through changes and learns more about themselves as the story unfolds.

The main struggle in "The Greatest Showman" is about balancing big dreams with doing what's right. P.T. Barnum wants to make the most amazing show ever, but Barnum has to deal with lots of problems along the way. Some people do not like what Barnum is doing, Barnum has to decide if it is okay to use his performers for his show, and there are times when Barnum feels let down by people he trusted. These challenges put his dreams at risk and make him question what really matters. In the movie, there's a lot of excitement and tension as P.T. Barnum and his team work hard to show everyone how great they are. The story moves forward with lots of thrilling moments, like the amazing songs and the times when the characters overcome tough challenges. Everything builds up to a big, dramatic ending where Barnum has to face the results of what he's done, but also finds hope in the love and support of his family and friends.

Unlike the previous research that explored similar themes across different movies, this research takes a distinctive approach. Instead of focusing on the general long-term effects of verbal bullying, such as damage to self-image and mental well-being, this research specifically analyzes how mean words are used in PT Barnum's circus, particularly in the movie "The Greatest Showman. The goal is to uncover if there's

anything unique about the portrayal of verbal bullying in this circus setting. Therefore, the title of this research is 'Analyzing Verbal Bullying Experienced by PT Barnum's circus Members Portrayed In "The Greatest Showman" Movie Directed by Michael Gracey"'.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the research background, the following research problem are stated as follow:

- a. What are the verbal bullying factors portrayed in "The Greatest Showman" movie, directed by Michael Gracey?
- b. What are the types of verbal bullying portrayed in "The Greatest Showman" movie, directed by Michael Gracey?
- c. What are the effects of verbal bullying that occur to PT Barnum's circus members?

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives of this study are set up in relation to the mentioned research problem. They are formulated as follows:

1. To find out what factors portray verbal bullying in the movie "The Greatest Showman", directed by Michael Gracey.
2. To identify what types of verbal bullying are portrayed in the movie "The Greatest Showman", directed by Michael Gracey
3. To explore the effects of verbal bullying on PT Barnum's circus members in the movie

1.4 Research Significance

It aims that this research would be useful for learners and future research projects, with the following implications:

1. For learner

This research is important to learners because it can raise their awareness of bullying, encourage them to gain empathy and critical thinking, encourage them better understand other cultures, and provide them with information about verbal bullying's dynamics and how it impacts its victims that are relevant to their careers.

2. For researcher

The study can contribute to the existing literature on bullying by examining the reasons of verbal bullying experienced by a particular group of people, particularly the circus performers shown in "The Greatest Showman," the study can contribute to the corpus of knowledge about bullying.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this research focused on verbal bullying depicted in "The Greatest Showman" movie, and the analysis is limited to the context of PT Barnum's circus group members portrayed in "The Greatest Showman".

1.6 Definition of Key Term

1. **Verbal bullying** is defined as type of bullying that using word to intimidate, or humiliate someone else. Barus et al. (2023) stated that verbal bullying manifests in various ways, including name-calling, insults, mockery, swearing, and the spread of rumors. Its focus is often on an individual's looks, abilities, or personal traits. The language employed in verbal bullying usually aligns with the words or phrases commonly used by children or adolescents in their peer group. Contributing factors to verbal bullying encompass economic status, seniority, school dynamics, and individual or group characteristics.
2. **Circus members** is defined as people who work for a circus organization are known as circus performers and present their skills to an audience through various acts. Toulmin (2018) stated that circus performers are performers who have developed in every era, and have artistic creativity in combining diverse and adaptive performance style and culture.
3. **The Greatest Showman movie**, released in 2017, is a movie about the creation of the Barnum & Bailey Circus by P.T. Barnum. It features an ensemble cast including Hugh Jackman, Zac Efron, and Zendaya, and was directed by Michael Gracey. The story of Barnum's journey from poverty to circus fame is told, with singing and dancing throughout. The movie explores themes of ambition and self-belief, resonating with audiences.