

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Trauma is a condition that occurs as a result of a bad event that befell of a person. Trauma to children is trauma that occurs to a child due to a harmful event that happens to the child in that time. People can be said to have trauma because they have to experience significant and excessive emotional stress. The person can not even control their feelings which causes trauma to almost everyone (Kaplan and Sadock, 1997). Several symptoms can be used as a sign if someone has ever experienced trauma. Common symptoms have painful memories that did not easily forget, recurring nightmares of the traumatic event, and memories of the traumatic event when viewing things related to the event that triggers their self. From a cognitive perspective, memories of traumatic events can trigger feelings of anxiety, excessive fear, and feelings of depression of someone (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In children, trauma symptoms can include difficulty sleeping, feeling afraid when they have to sleep alone, not wanting to be left alone even for a short time, being aggressive when asked to discuss the past, and easily getting angry suddenly. One of the most visible impacts of trauma on individuals, especially children, lies in the individual's ability to form positive and meaningful interpersonal relationships. The closest person or parents is a window for children to see the world as safe or dangerous place. Children who experience traumatic events in the form of violence by their closest people will view the world as a dangerous place. Therefore, a traumatized child may behave in unpredictable and extreme ways. He can be aggressive or even rigid and unnaturally submissive (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The author's concern in here is about trauma. Trauma experienced from childhood to adulthood. Worries about the trauma led Stephen Chbosky to write a book entitled *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by creating a character named Charlie, a character who experiences a bad event as a child that can cause a prolonged trauma into adulthood. Charlie also described how the trauma had a terrible impact on him, how Charlie lost his childhood memory because of the trauma he experienced. The trauma he experienced as a child it was sexual abuse done by the closest person, namely his own aunt. This trauma is what ultimately changes Charlie's character and self when he becomes adult.

The trauma in this book started when Charlie was a child. Charlie is sexually abused as a child, and his own aunt that did it. And the trauma of the children turned out to have a significant impact on Charlie itself. So much so that he was afraid to remember the bad memories and ended up forgetting the memory of being sexually abused by his aunt until he became an adult, which had a devastating effect on his mental health. Because of that, at first, he felt the trauma he experienced only happened because he was afraid of losing the people closest to him again like when he lost his best friend. He was scared to be alone. That is what makes him a timid person, a person who has difficulty communicating with others. Then at the end of the story, it is revealed that all the things that caused him to be less confident and lonely caused by the childhood trauma he had gone through, memories where Charlie experienced sexual harassment. Worse yet, the trauma caused by the closest person, namely his aunt, Aunt Helen, worsened the trauma because it was carried out by the most intimate person Charlie trusted. It makes him afraid to relate to other people, especially women.

This book more or less writes about Charlie where at that time, he was a freshman who had just graduated from junior high school. Charlie was known as a shy, aloof, geeky, and hard-to-social person. Still, he was someone who cared about his surroundings and tended to have a deep thought. The story begins with how Charlie tells about how he lost two significant people in his life because he loved them very much, namely aunt Helen and his junior high school friend. How it made him feel down, it also made his mental state worse. He even attempted suicide several times. When he finally entered high school, he expected something new in his life. Charlie wanted to make new friends and have a new life. Unfortunately, however, it's not easy because Charlie is basically a shy person who is difficult to socialize with, let alone make new friends easily. Predictably, on his first day at school, Charlie didn't get to know any new friends at all. Luckily it didn't last long because Charlie finally met his new friend, Patrick, and his half-sister, Sam. Patrick is a transsexual, and he has a boyfriend who is a member of the school soccer team named Brad. And Sam is a fun girl who is known by many because she is an easy-going person.

Charlie's friendship with Patrick and Sam brings Charlie into a new zone of life. Patrick and Sam take Charlie to get to know many people with different personalities and backgrounds, taking Charlie to events Charlie has never been to making him become more familiar with his friends. Slowly with Charlie's relationship with Patrick and Sam getting closer, Charlie finally realized how he was. He feels that he is in love with Sam, his best friend. Sam treats Charlie very gently and well until Charlie falls in love with her. Charlie at first only harboured it because he finally realized that Sam already had a lover, someone she loves. And Charlie did not want to interfere with Sam's relationship with her boyfriend.

At one time, Charlie met his intelligent classmate and was easy to

socialize with, namely Mary Elizabeth. Starting as ordinary friends, it turns out that Mary likes Charlie and decides to express her feelings for Charlie. Everything was fine at first, even though Charlie still had feelings for Sam, but he was also trying to accept his dating status with Mary, although the longer he tried, he still felt uncomfortable. Until one day, Charlie gathered with his other friends, Sam and Mary were also there, they played Truth or Dare, and Charlie got dare to kiss the woman he thought was the most beautiful. A surprise happened when Charlie chose to kiss Sam, and it caused one understanding to happen, making Charlie's relationship with his friends, including Mary, worse. Another problem came back when Charlie found out that Sam would graduate school and continue her studies outside the city. It made him realize that his friends were seniors at school, and they would graduate soon which Charlie would eventually be alone again. Being left by his friends causes Charlie to feel confused and confused, especially when he returns home after helping Sam clean up for the transfer because she will continue her education outside the city. Bad memories of the past when the people closest to him left him alone resurfaced, and Charlie relived the memories where his dear aunt Helen died because she took his birthday present and made Charlie feel that her aunt's death was because of him.

Because of this, he became back to the way he used to be, with a lot of silence and repeatedly replaying everything that happened in the past in his brain. Until his parents took Charlie to the hospital because they found Charlie naked in his room and when they asked what had happened to him, Charlie didn't answer at all. Charlie's recovery got helped by a psychiatrist in the hospital, and he realized that his past haunts him. How bad his memories were made him decide to bury the bad memories intensely. Even though he felt very devastated by his past experiences, he chose to try to forget the bad memories of his past. He wants to forget everything and live a new life without thinking about the bad memories of his childhood. He wants to live his life more freely and freely, no longer

bound by the bad memories of the past that continue to haunt him until he adult.

The responses obtained from the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* are very diverse. Most of the people who gave a positive response to this novel, according to the readers, this novel is significantly related to the life that is around the readers. The things that happen and the problems in this novel are interesting to read and find out how to solve them. Readers of this novel say Stephen Chbosky succeeded in debuting a novel that deals with real problems and determines critical, profound, and supportive thinking after reading this novel. They also think this novel touched them while reading. The issues Charlie faced deeply touched the readers. This novel is set in high school, but the story in it is about high school and various problems faced by teenagers in high school, how teenagers overcome the issues they face, for example, depression. Bullying, heartbreak, the conditions in which high school-age children have met a question, what do you want to do in the future, and others. Readers consider this kind of thing quite unusual because the issues in this novel are similar to and relate to adolescence in the real world.

Readers of this novel also highly appreciate Stephen Chbosky as the author who dares to raise the issue of trauma faced by teenagers in this novel. It was a big decision that impacted many people after people read this novel. The matters contained in this novel make many readers interested in this novel. In addition to the trauma that dominates this book, there are also romantic feelings, which are pretty complicated. These problems often arise in real life, so the stories in this novel are related to real life. Readers also get a lot of inspiration because of the beauty of the writings written by Stephen Chbosky.

Unfortunately, apart from getting a positive response, there are also some negative responses from this novel, such as readers who feel that this novel is dull. The issues raised are too trite because the problems that occur in the novel are considered too standard. There are even some schools in

America that prohibit their students from reading this novel. The Perks of Being a Wallflower novel was supposed to have content that was too harsh for a teenager, and it was feared that many students who were in a phase like Charlie did what Charlie did without proper supervision. Even though it received such a response, this novel is still a best seller for people, and many are still reading it because it provides exciting issues.

Based on the description above, what makes the writer interested in writing this research is, the first reason is that the issue raised by the novelist Stephen Chbosky raised an interesting topic. About a childhood trauma that turns out to have a pretty bad impact on a person's life. How can trauma cause a significant change in a person's behavior? The author is interested in this reason, so she decided to do research on this novel.

The second reason the writer wants to write for this research is Charlie's main character, how he faced his life with the trauma that haunted him since childhood. But even though he experienced this, Charlie still has a sense of concern for the people around him. Even though he looks shy and doesn't talk much, he observes many people around him, and even he thinks about it deeply.

The third reason is the plot in this novel. The plot story in this novel is quite interesting to know how Stephen Chbosky tries to show a storyline that tells the present that Charlie is facing, how Charlie is undergoing a new phase of life in high school which turns out to trigger a childhood trauma that is quite dark in the past. And a beautiful ending where Charlie tries to let go of whatever has happened in his dark past. It was a beautiful plot to discuss, not an easy decision for Charlie to make regarding his life.

B. Problem Statement

1. What are the indicators of childhood trauma in the novel The Perks of Being a Wallflower?
2. How is the implication of childhood trauma on personality development in the novel The Perks of Being a Wallflower?
3. Why did Stephen Chbosky specifically address trauma in The Perks of Being a Wallflower novel?

C. Objectives of the Study

1. To describe the indicators of childhood trauma in the novel The Perks of Being a Wallflower.
2. To explain the implication of childhood trauma on personality development in the novel The Perks of Being a Wallflower.
3. To reveal the reason why did Stephen Chbosky specifically address trauma in The Perks of Being a Wallflower novel.

D. Significance of the Study**1. Theoretical Significance**

The study expected to develop the body of knowledge to contribute, particularly for the literary studies on the Novel The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky.

2. Practical Significance

The study enriches the writer's understanding of the impacts of childhood trauma on personality development in Stephen Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower Novel.