

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

Child abuse is a serious universal problem. It can be physical, sexual, emotional, or just negligence to meet the needs of the child which could cause a serious psychological damage to the child. There are numerous empirical studies on this topic. However, there are not much criticism of the expression of child abuse in children's literature was found in the form of books, dissertations, or studies. Seeing that child abuse is a trouble that deeply impacts children around the world, it is crucial that it is represented in kids' literature. Literature lends itself to train approximately sensitive subjects for lots of reasons: fictional memories are interesting; kids every now and then locate it simpler to speak approximately literature than communicate approximately their very own lives.

One work that clearly portray child abuse is Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. This issue can also be found in J. K. Rowling's book entitled *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997). Long before Harry Potter became a talented and powerful wizard, he was an ordinary boy that lived in his aunt's house. His parents were killed by a dark wizard who happened to be his rival in the future. There, he was treated as a slave by all of the family members. When he knew that he was a wizard, his life was changed. Furthermore, there are some movies that examine this issue. A 2013 South Korean based on a true story movie entitled *Hope* (Sowon). The movie was directed by Joon-Ik Lee and written by Jong-Hoon Jo and Ji Hye Kim. Tells about an 8-year-old girl coping with an unpleasant incident that happened to her. She happened to be a rape victim from a male stranger which damaged her internal organs and affected her emotions. Another movie with a similar issue is a 2011 South Korean movie entitled *Silenced*, directed and written by Dong-Hyuk Hwang. This movie is also based on a true story that tells about a new teacher who is looking for justice for young deaf students who become the victims of sexual attacks by their teachers. These young deaf students are repeatedly beaten and raped which causes mental damages.

*A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* novel is divided into three parts. The first part shows the introduction of the three main characters' and the reason they live with Count Olaf. The second part tells about Count Olaf and other adult characters' abuse toward the Baudelaire children. The last part explains Baudelaire's action to save their life by ruining Olaf's plan. The first part began on a cloudy beach, where the Baudelaire's children—Violet, the eldest, a smart invention maker, Klaus, the middle, an avid reader, and Sunny, the youngest, bite—enjoying the day. Shortly, Mr. Poe, a banker, came with unpleasant news: Their parents have perished in an extreme fire. The whole house was shattered. So, Mr. Poe took them to be raised by Count Olaf—their distant relative whom they did not know.

The second part began one morning when Olaf ordered the children to cook dinner for him and his theater troupes. They tried their best to make the dinner but it was not what Olaf wanted. They argued and suddenly Olaf slapped Klaus face. He told his troupe that he did it to discipline the orphans, so they could obey their elders. The next morning, they came to tell Mr. Poe about the accident that happened a day before. Unfortunately, Mr. Poe was too busy and could not help them. He advised them to adjust themselves in their new home. He believed that was just Olaf's parenting techniques. The story continues the next morning when they see Count Olaf himself in front of their bedroom. He was weird, he said sorry to them because he might have acted a bit standoffish. He just wanted the three of them to feel at home. So, Olaf demanded the children to act in his forthcoming theater performance entitled "*The Marvelous Marriage*" and Violet will act as the bride. They rejected the request because they knew Olaf was planning something in the performance but not sure what it was. So, they decided to search through Justice Strauss's—Olaf's neighbor—book about the law of marriage. Klaus discovered that Olaf planned to marry Violet legally on the stage. He confronted Olaf. When he tried to tell his siblings, he found out that one of Olaf's troupes had kidnapped Sunny to make her a hostage and made sure that the rest of the children join the performance.

In the final part, the children tried to tell Mr. Poe and Justice Strauss that the performance was real, but failed. The show started. Right after Violet completed the marriage document by signing it, Olaf ended the show and announced that his plan had succeeded: He now legally controlled Baudelaire's fortune by marrying her. Luckily, Violet used her left hand to sign the document. So, the marriage was not legally accepted. Count Olaf was furious, his plan had been ruined. At the right time, one of his troupes turned out the theater's lights and let Olaf disappear in the darkness. When the situation got better, Justice Strauss asked the children to live with her, but Mr. Poe forbade it. He insisted that they have to be raised by their relatives, just like what was written in their parents' will. The story ended when the children moved to an aberrant future.

There are several responses regarding this novel. Lots of people fell in love with this novel after they read it. They think that this novel teaches the children that the world is not all about unicorns and rainbows. People who already read this novel think that this novel is depicted based on reality. There are a lot of arrogant, greedy, and money-oriented adults in this world. They use various plans to get what they want, including abusing young people. This novel describes the abuse toward young people that happens in 1990s society.

On the other hand, some people think that this novel is a bit creepy and mysterious for kids. In addition, the sorrow, tragedy, and fear was a bit overwhelming. Furthermore, some of the content inserts some violent acts towards young people, including slapping and threatening. Therefore, they did not recommend kids under 8 to read the novel.

The novel was written by Lemony Snicket, also known as Daniel Handler. It was originally published in 1999, by HarperCollins Publisher. The illustrator and cover artist is Brett Helquist. The novel has sold over a million copies and the foreign rights have been sold to publishers in 19 countries (Merkin, 2001). In 2017, as the celebration of the TV series, Netflix Tie-in editions of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* books were aired. The novel was revised in 2017, has 192 pages with a dimension of 12.7 x 1.98 x 17.78 cm. Daniel Handler was born in San Francisco, California on February 28, 1970. He graduated from Lowell High

School, San Francisco in 1988. Then, he attended Wesleyan University for college. In 1990, he began writing poetry, and not long after, he wrote longer fiction. He won an Olin Fellowship funding which allowed him to write his first novel, after graduating from Wesleyan. Handler spent the mid-1990s working on his novel. Encyclopedia of World Biography (“n.d.”) notes that Handler hated extremely happy books as a child. “If a book had a dreamy ending, he’d throw it, it drove him crazy” Handler’s father, Louis.

There are three reasons the present researcher chooses this novel to be an object of the study. The first reason is that the novel has a different perspective about a children-adults relationship. When most children believe that there are no bad adults in this world, Snicket is trying to invalidate this assumption. He illustrates Count Olaf as a bad, cruel, violent adult that loves money. He will do anything to take what he wants. Lucky for Olaf, he was adopting the Baudelaire children, the heir of a rich family that happened to lose their parents in an extreme fire. However, it was an unfortunate fate for the Baudelaire children.

The second reason is because of the genre. Snicket epically illustrates the different children novel genres. He tried to make a mysterious and bit creepy storyline which was rarely written. This can be the attracting point of the novel. Furthermore, this storyline can happen in real life which can contain a good value for the reader.

The last reason is because of the concern of this novel. Unlike other children’s books, *A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* novel has unusual issues in literature. This novel contains an abusive act toward children which happens as the result of the desire for money. This issue still happens in society. To get everything adults want, they often act arbitrarily toward children. This novel also explored the frustration of being a minor.

The reason why the present researcher chooses the title “CHILD ABUSE REFLECTED IN A *SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS*: A SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE APPROACH” because the present researcher wants to know how child abuse reflected in the novel based on sociology of literature approach. The researcher also wants to give a clear depiction of child abuse in children literature.

In addition, this novel also gives a message about not underestimating and abusing young people in any way. However, the judgment of adults will always happen in any way and cannot be blamed because that is one part of the process when people are growing up.

### **B. Problem Statement**

The main problem of the study is how child abuse is reflected in the novel. The problem of the study is examined further into the following research questions:

1. What are the types of child abuse reflected in the work based on sociology of literature approach?
2. How is child abuse depicted in the work based on sociology of literature approach?
3. Why did the author of the novel specifically address child abuse in the work?

### **C. Objectives of the Study**

The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the types of child abuse in the novel based on sociology of literature approach.
2. To describe how child abuse is depicted in the novel based on sociology of literature approach.
3. To reveal the reasons why child abuse is specifically addressed in the work.

### **D. Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to give contribution to the following parties:

1. To reader, this study is expected to give a new information and deeper understanding in literature especially about child abuse from sociology approach.
2. To other researcher, this study is expected to provide some references in literature especially about child abuse from sociology approach.