COPING WITH CHILDREN BULLYING REFLECTED IN CHARLES DICKENS’

OLIVER TWIST:

AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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by:
BAYU WARDHANA
A 320120256

DEPARTEMEN OF ENGLISH EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
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By

BAYU WARDHANA
A 320120256

This publication article has approved by:

Consultant

Dr. M. Thovibi, M.S.
NIK. 410
ACCEPTANCE

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BAYU WARDHANA
A 320120256

Accepted by the Board of Examiner
School of Teacher Training and Education
Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

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The researcher

Bayu Wardhana
A-320120256
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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the study are: 1) to analyze characteristics of children bullying in Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist; 2) to analyze children bullying depicted by Charles Dickens’s Oliver Twist; and 3) analyze how Oliver Twist coped with bullying. The type of the study used by the researcher is descriptive qualitative research. In this research, the researcher applies Psychological approach mainly Individual Psychology Theory of Alfred Adler. Individual Psychology Theory of Alfred Adler is used as a means to analyze the novel, in order to find out the main characters’ why and how becoming bullying victim and its influence on his life, and how he coped with bullying . The results of the research show that there are 4 (four) characteristics of children bullying in Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist, namely an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim, repeatedly incidence and duration, intentionality and proactive character of the aggression, and the intent to do harm. Children bullying depicted by Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist comes in term of physical bullying, verbal bullying, and social bullying. Oliver Twist coped with bullying was analyzed through six basic principles of individual psychology, those are inferiority feeling, striving for superiority, style of life, social interest, creative power and fictional finalism.

Keywords: coping with, children bullying, individual psychology, approach
1. Introduction

*Oliver Twist* is a novel by Charles Dickens illustrating the life of the child labor during the Industrial Revolution. Child labor is a shamefully significant history in England. Dickens himself is also one of those who take part in that dark history. A huge number of children, especially from the orphanages and workhouses, “were bought by factory owners,” thus the children “became known as pauper apprentices” (“Workhouse Children”).

Mistreatment faced by the main character, Oliver, shows that the novel shows children bullying. According to Glew, Rivara, & Feudtner (2000), bullying is a conduct or behavior carried out by a person or a group involving the use of force to intimidate, to abuse, or to dominate aggressively other people who are powerless. Bullying is often used by the aggressor to maintain status in community she/he/they live. The act is usually done repeatedly (Glew, Rivara & Feudtner, 2000; Pellegrini, Bartini & Brooks, 2000). The act of bullying includes ‘harmful’ attitudes such as bad name-calling, hitting, kicking, stealing, fighting, destroying properties, etc (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Raun Simmons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Bullying can result on injury, depression, anxiety, and even other hazardous impact such as mental illness and death on the victim (Roberts, 2000).

The first bullying faced by Oliver happened when he worked in Mr. Sowerberry’s workhouse. One of his mates, Noah Claypole, bullied him. Oliver attacked him and incurred the Sowerberrys’ wrath. Desperate, Oliver run away at dawn and traveled toward London. The next bullying toward Oliver happened in London. Outside London, Oliver, starved and exhausted, met Jack Dawkins, a boy his own age. Jack offered him shelter in the London house of his benefactor, Fagin. It turned out that Fagin was a career criminal who trained orphan boys to pick pockets for him. After a few days of training, Oliver was sent on a pickpocketing mission with two other boys. Here, Oliver was forced to be a criminal. The novel portrayed the dark side of London, the brutal backdrops of a parish workhouse and the crime-plagued streets of London.

The bulk of the novel explores the issues of crime and morality through its graphic portrayal of life among London’s thieves, pickpockets, and prostitutes. The psychological aspect of character in a literary work is so various. One of the psychological topics which are very interesting to discuss is the neurotic personality and its cause. In the field of psychology, the neurosis is caused by many factors. One of them is caused by the disturbances in interpersonal relationship of human in his childhood. Apparently, this disturbance is very responsible to the later development of someone personality, since its influence needs and the strategies that adopted to cope those needs.
The researcher thinks that this novel is very interesting to be analysed. It is a unique drama which offers a personality of Oliver Twist and bullying. The researcher is interested to search Oliver’s effort to cope the bullying. Therefore, to get better understanding of the subject matter, the researcher applies An Individual Psychological Approach Theory.

2. Research Methods

The subject of the study are Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*. In conducting the research, the researcher uses a descriptive study, particularly library study. Literary study belongs to descriptive study. By means of this study, the researcher will analyze how the structural elements make a single unity. It is done by collecting the data, and then analyzing and interpreting them on the basis of certain criteria, namely the characteristics of coping with children bullying in Oliver Twist’s novel. The data include the novels themselves covering; the narration, the dialogues of the characters, and the events. They become the primary data for the analysis. The secondary data includes the information, critics, review about the novels.

In order to analyze the novels, the researcher uses Alfred Adler’s Individual Psychological Approach. The researcher analyzes characteristics of children bullying, children bullying depicted by Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, and how Oliver Twist coped with bullying of the main character viewed from individual psychological approach.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the research include the analysis of three problem statements such as: (1) the characteristics of children bullying in Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*; (2) children bullying depicted by Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*; and (3) the way Oliver Twist coped with bullying.

3.1 The Characteristics of Children Bullying in Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*

3.1.1 An imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim.

The bullying of Oliver, the main character of *Oliver Twist* takes place throughout his years in workhouse and affects him profoundly. In this novel, the aggressors are Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Sowerberry.

Oliver Twist ninth birthday found him, a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 1).
'Ah! I dare say he will,' replied the lady pettishly, 'on our victuals and our drink. I see no saving in parish children, not I; for they always cost more to keep, than they're worth. However, men always think they know best. There! Get downstairs, little bag o' bones.' With this, the undertaker's wife opened a side door, and pushed Oliver down a steep flight of stairs into a stone cell, damp and dark: forming the ante-room to the coal-cellar, and denominated 'kitchen'; wherein sat a slatternly girl, in shoes down at heel, and blue worsted stockings very much out of repair (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 4).

There is an imbalance power, as Oliver as a victim is powerless to face bullying toward him conducted by the two persons above.

3.1.2 Repeatedly incidence and duration

In *Oliver Twist*, repeatedly bullying incidence happens when Olive stays in undertaker’s shop. He was bullied by his mate, Noah Claypole. Noah did bullying toward Oliver. He treated Oliver badly and always mocked toward Oliver. Noah Claypole was Oliver’s peer in undertaker shop. He was an overgrown, untidy, cowardly bully Oliver.

that for many months he continued meekly to submit to the domination and ill-treatment of Noah Claypole: who used him far worse than before, now that his jealousy was roused by seeing the new boy promoted to the black stick and hat-band, while he, the old one, remained stationary in the muffincap and leathers. …(Dickens, 1838. Chapter 8).

3.1.3 Intentionality and proactive character of the aggression.

Although Jack Dawkins treated Oliver well, he includes as a bully because he explod Oliver to be child worker, a pickpocket, and sent him to work to Fagin. He intentionally wanted Oliver to live miserably as a pickpocket. Fagin (the Jew) includes as a bully in *Oliver Twist* because he bullied children in his gang, including Oliver Twist, and exploited the to be a pickpocket. Fagin is the main antagonist character in this novel.
You're a clever boy, my dear," said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly. "I never saw a sharper lad. Here's a shilling for you. If you go on, in this way, you'll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here, and I'll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchiefs. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 2)

……Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play, had to do with his chances of being a great man. But, thinking that the Jew, being so much his senior, must know best, he followed him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 3)

The bullying was also happened to the children in Fagin’s gang. The children in Fagin’s gang were the boy robbers. They lived miserably in Poor House and did pickpocket to self-preservation. They include as victims of bullying because they were exploited by Fagin to do pickpocket work for him. One of the worse consequences of poverty and being deprived of life's essentials is children bullying.

3.1.4 The intent to do harm

In the novel, this characteristics is reflected through character of Bill Sikes. Bill Sikes bullied Oliver in terms of exploited him as a pickpocket in the gang. He treated Oliver badly.

He disclosed when he had done so, a broad heavy countenance with a beard of three days' growth, and two scowling eyes; one of which displayed various party colored symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 16).

3.2 Children Bullying Depicted by Charles Dickens’s Oliver Twist

3.2.1 Physical Bullying

Oliver Twist novel describes physical bullying with a portrait of greed, laziness, and arrogance of charitable workers like Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann. As a victim of children bullying, Oliver suffered from children exploitation in workhouse. Oliver Twist spent the first nine years of his life in a badly run home for young orphans and then is transferred to a workhouse for adults.

What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only
covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. But now that he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once—a parish child—the orphan of a workhouse—the humble, half-starved drudge—to be cuffed and buffeted through the world—despised by all, and pitied by none. (Dickens, 1938. Chapter 1).

In general, charitable institutions only reproduced the awful conditions in which the poor would live anyway. In Victorian era, it was common to see children worker. Because they were considered less profitable, they were cheap-paid. Oliver became cheap-pain worker in Mr. Sowerberry’s shop. Mr. Sowerberry’s shop was not too large, dirty, dark and untidy place.

3.2.2 Social Bullying

It was portrayed in London, where children in Oliver’s age became robbers and criminals. The children are socially positioned in low class. They worked in group, did pickpocket and gave the money to their master, Fagin. Fagin’s house was a messy place. The place was very dirty, narrow and vile.

The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirty. ……..Several rough beds made of old sacks, were huddled side by side on the floor. Seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes, and drinking spirits with the air of middleaged men. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 9)

The explanation above shows that a bad condition still happened to Oliver as a poor orphan boy. He was still abused by people around him. There was no place proper for him to call as a home.

3.2.3 Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying in *Oliver Twist* is done by Noah Claypole toward Oliver. Noah Claypole, made disparaging comments about Oliver’s mother, Oliver attacks him and incurs the Sowerberrys’ wrath.

‘Yer know, Work’us,’ continued Noah, emboldened by Oliver's silence, and speaking in a jeering tone of affected pity: of all tones the
most annoying: 'Yer know, Work'us, it can't be helped now; and of course yer couldn't help it then; and I am very sorry for it; and I'm sure we all are, and pity yer very much. But yer must know, Work'us, yer mother was a regular rightdown bad 'un.' (Dickens, 1838, Chapter 3).

Verbal bullying was also done by Mr. Bumble toward Oliver. When he is in the workhouse, he asks for more gruel. Instead of giving him addition gruel, Mr. Bumble mocked him.

'Please, sir, I want some more.'

......

'What!' said the master at length, in a faint voice.

'Please, sir,' replied Oliver, 'I want some more.'

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arm; and shrieked aloud for the beadle. The board were sitting in solemn conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair....

(Dickens, 1838, Chapter 2).

Because of this, Mr. Bumble tries to sell him. He is then apprenticed to a local undertaker, Mr. Sowerberry. Because one of his mates bullies him, he runs away to London.

3.3 The Way Oliver Twist Coped with Bullying

The way Oliver Twist coped with bullying refers to the application of the individual psychological theory proposed by Alfred Adler. The theory consists of six basic principles of individual psychology, those are inferiority feeling, striving for superiority, style of life, creative power, social interest, and fictional finalism.

3.3.1 Inferiority Feeling

In *Oliver Twist*, inferiority feeling of Oliver was caused by his social condition. He was orphan, humble, poor, and physically dirty. The condition above made Oliver being bullied by others. He was bullied by Mr. Bumble because he was weak and wanted more gruel. Unfortunately, Mr. Bumble did not give him gruel, but mocked him. Then, he was bullied by Noah Claypole because he was orphan. Noah made bad comments about his mother. Thirdly, he was bullied by Bill Sikes. Bill treated him badly. Oliver was captured by Bill Sikes and Nancy and taken back to Fagin’s house. It is shown in some statements in the novel, for instance.
Weak with recent illness; stupified by the blows and the suddenness of the attack; terrified by the fierce growling of the dog, and the brutality of the man; overpowered by the conviction of the bystanders that he really was the hardened little wretch he was described to be; what could one poor child do! (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 15)

3.3.2 Striving for Superiority

Striving for superiority constitutes one’s effort to become better and achieve ideal goal. As Oliver’s effort to gain his goal, he met Jack Dawkins, a boy his own age. Jack offered him shelter in the London house of his benefactor, Fagin. It turns out that Fagin was a career criminal who trained orphan boys to pick pockets for him.

Oliver was rendered the more anxious to be actively employed, by what he had seen of the stern morality of the old gentleman's character. Whenever the Dodger or Charley Bates came home at night, empty-handed, he would expatiate with great vehemence on the misery of idle and lazy habits; and would enforce upon them the necessity of an active life, by sending them supperless to bed. On one occasion, indeed, he even went so far as to knock them both down a flight of stairs; but this was carrying out his virtuous precepts to an unusual extent (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 10).

3.3.3 The Style of Life

The Individual’s style of life is largely determined by the specific inferiorities, either fancied or real, that person has. The style of life is a compensation for a particular inferiority. In the Oliver Twist, Oliver had bad life because he was humble and lonely.

The condemned criminal was seated on his bed, rocking himself from side to side, with a countenance more like that of a snared beast than the face of a man. His mind was evidently wandering to his old life, for he continued to mutter, without appearing conscious of their presence otherwise than as a part of his vision.

'Good boy, Charley—well done—' he mumbled. 'Oliver, too, ha! ha! ha! Oliver too—quite the gentleman now—quite the—take that boy away to bed!' The jailer took the disengaged hand of Oliver; and, whispering him not to be alarmed, looked on without speaking.
'Take him away to bed!' cried Fagin. 'Do you hear me, some of you? He has been the—the—somehow the cause of all this. It's worth the money to bring him up to it—Bolter's throat, Bill; never mind the girl—Bolter's throat as deep as you can cut. Saw his head off!' (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 52).

For Oliver, he had unique ways to pursue his goal. Oliver’s goal is that he wanted get better life. So he was always doing efforts that he thought his life would be better.

3.3.4 Creative Self

The doctrine of creative self asserts that man makes his own personality. In *Oliver Twist*, Oliver is creative person who want make his life better than before he always struggle to be good man and not became crime anymore, his creativity to be better person can show by Oliver when he struggle to escape by Fagin’s gang and join with Mr. Brownlow. Mr. Brownlow is struck by Oliver’s resemblance to a portrait of a young woman that hangs in his house. In Mr. Bronlow’s house, Oliver feels secured.

But, for many days, Oliver remained insensible to all the goodness of his new friends. The sun rose and sank, and rose and sank again, and many times after that; and still the boy lay stretched on his uneasy bed, dwindling away beneath the dry and wasting heat of fever. The worm does not work more surely on the dead body, than does this slow creeping fire upon the living frame. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 12).

Creative power is used by Oliver to cope with bullying. It has function on controlling one’s life, final goal, and contributing on the development of social interest. Oliver used his creative self to solve his problem.

3.3.5 Social Interest

Social interest means a striving for a form of community. In *Oliver Twist*, Oliver was a sociable person. He was friendly person. He had good relationship with other people, although sometime he showed bad attitude just for the sake of himself. In order to cope with bullying, Oliver made friend with Mr. Sowerberry and Mr. Bronlow.

There's an expression of melancholy in his face, my dear," resumed Mr. Sowerberry, "which is very interesting. He would make a delightful mute, my love." Mrs. Sowerberry looked up with an expression of considerable wonderment. Mr. Sowerberry remarked it;
and, without allowing time for any observation on the good lady's part, proceeded. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 6)

…Oliver’s offence having been explained to him, with such exaggerations as the ladies thought best calculated to rouse his ire.” …‘Now, you are a nice young fellow, ain’t you?’ said Sowerberry; giving Oliver a shake, and a box on the ear. (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 10).

At the end of the story, Mr. Brownlow became Oliver’s parent. Mr. Brownlow behaved with compassion and good habits.

3.3.6 Fictional Finalism

In Oliver Twist, fictional finalism of Oliver in coping with bullying is described clearly when he went to London. He was so desperate with his misery, and he decided to leave Mr. Sowerberry’s house and headed London.

London!—that great place!—nobody—not even Mr. Bumble—could ever find him there! He had often heard the old men in the workhouse, too, say that no lad of spirit need want in London; and that there were ways of living in that vast city, which those who had been bred up in country parts had no idea of. It was the very place for a homeless boy, who must die in the streets unless some one helped him. As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped upon his feet, and again walked forward (Dickens, 1838. Chapter 8).

It can be seen that the final goal of Oliver Twist is getting a better life from his miserable childhood.

4. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis in the previous chapter, the writer comes to the conclusion of this research. Firstly, there are 4 (four) characteristics of children bullying in Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist, namely an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim, repeatedly incidence and duration, intentionality and proactive character of the aggression, and the intent to do harm. Those characteristics of bullying are goes throughout elements of bullying, namely, bullies or aggressors and victims.
Secondly, children bullying depicted by Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist comes in term of physical bullying, verbal bullying, and social bullying. Physical bullying reflects in physical exploitation, as cheap-paid workers, boy robbers, and verbal bullying. As a victim of children bullying, Oliver suffered from children exploitation in workhouse. Oliver Twist spent the first nine years of his life in a badly run home for young orphans and then is transferred to a workhouse for adults. Oliver Twist’s social bullying also depicted in terms of children robbers. It portrayed in London, where children in Oliver’s age became robbers and criminals. They worked in group, did pickpocket and gave the money to their master. Verbal bullying in Oliver Twist is done by Noah Claypole toward Oliver. Noah Claypole, made disparaging comments about Oliver’s mother, Oliver attacks him and incurs the Sowerberrys’ wrath.

Thirdly, Oliver Twist coped with bullying was analyzed through six basic principles of individual psychology, those are inferiority feeling, striving for superiority, style of life, social interest, creative power and fictional finalism. In Oliver Twist, subjective perceptions of Oliver in coping with bullying is described clearly when he went to London. He was so desperate with his misery, and he decided to leave Mr. Sowerberry’s house and headed London. As Oliver’s effort to gain his goal, he met Jack Dawkins, a boy his own age. Jack offered him shelter in the London house of his benefactor, Fagin. In Oliver Twist, inferiority feeling of Oliver was caused by his social condition.

The study the coping with children bullying in Oliver Twist using an Individual Psychological Approach. This study gives some pedagogical implication such as: the result of this study can give more understanding about an individual psychological approach. This research gives clear example to analyze literary works, so it can facilitate other students to learn individual psychological analysis theory. Then the result of this study can be used by high school students and university students. They can learn more about theory of personality. And for high school students, they can deepen their reading comprehension.

Therefore, the researcher suggests and invites the other researchers to study this novel and analyze it using Psychoanalytic approach, because there is something that interesting from Oliver personality, the life survive of a man who was in poverty and humble life. Finally, the researcher expects that this research paper contributes to the readers references relate to the knowledge of literary study and to knowledge about Charles Dickens’ works.

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