

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

According to World Health Organization (WHO), 800.000 people commit suicide every year. The average age is from 15 to 29. Suicide becomes the cause of 1.4% death in the world. It ranks at the 17<sup>th</sup> place for the cause of death. The 78% comes from developing countries around the world.

According to Statista's last update, in 2015, the crude suicide rate in Indonesia was 2.9 deaths per 100.000 inhabitants. It decreased from the previous update in 2010 which is 3.1 deaths per 100.000 inhabitants. However, World Health Organization (WHO) published the latest data in 2017, which stated Indonesia's suicide rate is 3.00 per 100.000 inhabitants or population. Suicide death in Indonesia reaches 7,355 or 0.44% of total deaths.

Indah Mustikasari writes an article on The Jakarta Post about mental health and suicide in Indonesia. According to her, Indonesia seems to have less suicide case than Thailand. However, many suicide cases are unreported, so the data is not 100% accurate. As Indonesia citizen are very religious, and that suicide is considered as a sin, the relatives are reluctant about reporting the suicide. This also happens because of the social stigma and taboos, which hinder people from talking about suicide openly, which is wrong.

There are some suicide cases that being published (as a news) in Indonesia. One of the cases is about a student of SMP Negeri 2 Manisrenggo that committed suicide in June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017. The cause is the mom's anger on her because the bad final score she got. She ended her life by hanging herself in the kitchen. Beside suicide cases, Indonesia also has a myth about suicide. There is a myth related to suicide in Gunung Kidul, Indonesia. It is called as *pulung gantung*. According to the myth, when the wind blows strongly and the birds chirps, means that there is someone who just committed suicide.

As the numbers of people who commit suicide do not decrease, remain the same, or even increase, people around the world start to put more awareness on that. The organizations that concern about suicide start popping up. Articles and books about suicide and its prevention are published.

There are a lot of website, network and online communities that help people who have problem with their mental health too, especially with people who have idea to commit suicide or have suicidal thoughts. One of them is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ([suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)). It is a network that provides free and confidential emotional support to people who are in suicidal crisis. It also will provide the prevention from the authorities by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness.

There is also another example, Your Mental Health Ireland ([yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie)). It is a place where people can learn about mental health, in Ireland. People also learn how to support themselves and the people they love. Your Mental Health is built by the HSE (Health Service Executive), the National Office for Suicide Prevention and organization partners in Ireland.

Beside the organization, there are also people who actually concern about suicide crisis, like the researchers, Steward Hali and Richard Beach, with their theories about the case. There are also people who show their concerns through different ways. Instead of doing research on it, they write a book, novel, or story about the issue. One of them is Jay Asher, the writer of *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel.

In his blog, Jay Asher writes the list of the books he wrote. His debut novel is *Thirteen Reasons Why*, that is a #1 New York Times and USA Today bestseller. The second book he wrote is *The Future of Us*, that was co-authored with Carolyn Mackler. The third book is *What Light* that was published in 2016 and became New York Times bestseller in instant. In 2017, he published his first graphic novel, *Piper*, which was co-authored with Jessica Freeburg, and illustrated by Jeff Stokely. From the books he wrote,

*Thirteen Reasons Why* is the most famous one. It also has its own website. The novel is adapted into a TV series on Netflix in 2017.

According to *Thirteen Reasons Why* website, the novel is about a girl who was being betrayed and bullied by her schoolmates that lead her to suicide. She recorded her reasons why she decides to end her life, which are her schoolmates that bullied her. She sent it to them, with 2 rules, listen the tapes, then pass it on, from the first person who cause her death, to the last one.

The story starts when Clay Jensen returns home from school to find out that he receives a mysterious shoebox-sized package in front of the door. There are a map and 7 loose audio tapes inside with number on each side. Later he finds out that the tapes belong to his death friend, Hannah Baker, who commits suicide. It is about how her life ended.

Clay listens to the tapes and does what Hannah tells him to do by following her directions. He listens to it and discovers how Hannah met her first love, Justin Foley, who turns her into a bully object. He also discovers on how Hannah meets her ex-best friend, Alex Standal and Jessica Davis, and how the break apart. He listens to all the tapes despite the fact how depressed and uncertain he is about it. But he listens to all the tapes anyway.

After listening to all the tapes, he finds out all of people who cause Hannah's death, also how he is included on her list. The first one is Justin Foley, the guy who steals Hannah' first kiss and also the source of the rumors that Hannah is a slut or a whore. The second is Alex Standal, who apparently is Hannah's ex-best friend. He put her name on a list as the "Best Ass in the Freshman Class". This makes Hannah have to experience sexual assault did by her schoolmates. The third one is Jessica Davis, her ex-best friend along with Alex Standal. She misunderstands Hannah and humiliating her in public. The fourth is Tyler Down, which Hannah accuses as the stalker and taking photos of her secretly. The fifth is Courtney Crimson, the girl who fakes her kindness toward Hannah and spreading lies about her having sex toys.

The next is Marcus Coley, who assaults Hannah sexually in public when they are on a date. The seventh is Zach Dempsey, who ignores her completely after stealing motivation letter from her. The eight one is Ryan Shaver, who publishes Hannah's poetry without Hannah permission that make her poetry as public joke. The ninth person mentioned in the tapes is Clay Jensen. However, he does not belong there; Hannah just wants him to know what actually happens to her. The tenth one is Justin Foley again. This time, it is because he hides the fact that he let Bryce Walker rapes his girlfriend, Jessica Davis, when she was unconscious. Hannah witnesses the rape, and she know that Justin does nothing about that. Reason number eleven is Jenny Kurtz. Hannah and Jenny go back from a party together. Jenny accidentally hits a stop sign but does not report it to the police. Little does they know, a car accident happens after that, that cause a boy death. Hannah believes that it is because of the fallen stop sign. She blames Jenny for that.

The next person is Bryce Walker. According to Hannah, Bryce rapes her in Courtney's party. However during that time, Hannah does not refuse or say something. But it against her will, so it is considered as a rape. The last one, the thirteenth reason, is Mr. Potter. The counselor who fails his job. He can prevent Hannah' suicide if he makes a move when Hannah confesses that she is suicidal. But Mr. Potter does not give her a solution at all.

After all the bad things happen to her, she decides to end her life. According to Hannah, the reason why she records the tapes is because she just wants to tell her story. However, the readers question her real intention. They believe that Hannah does not only want to explain her reasons, instead, she does it for revenge. If it is true that her intention is only to explain to them, then the people who get the tapes are unintentionally being bullied by her. Because listening to the tapes, make them feel vulnerable. However, if her intention is to hurt them back and make them remember all the bad things they do to Hannah, then what Hannah does is revenge, specifically, revenge suicide.

The book gets a lot of response for the great story. According to Jay Asher' blog, this book becomes New York Times bestseller with the categories of children's hardcover for 65 weeks, children's paperback for 72 weeks, young adult paper/digital for 61 weeks, young adult paperback for 24 weeks, young adult e-book for 1 week, and young adult hardcover for 5 weeks. It is on New York Times bestseller for 228 weeks in total. The book also becomes the #1 USA Today bestseller and Publishers Weekly bestseller.

Beside being the first bestseller in any categories, the book also gets a lot of awards, like California Book Award, Best Books for Young Adults (YALSA), Quick Picks for Reluctant YA Readers (YALSA), Selected Audio books for Young Adults (YALSA). It is also a Borders Original Voices finalist, Barnes and Noble - Top 10 Best for Teens, International Reading Association - Young Adults' Choices, Kirkus Reviews Editor's Choice, Book Sense Pick - Winter, Chicago Public Library Best Books, and Association of Booksellers for Children - Best Books. The last, it also gets State Awards – Winner, voted on by students in Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota.

*Thirteen Reasons Why* book also being sold and published in other countries. These are the countries that have Foreign Rights Sold of the book: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Catalan, Chinese Complex, Chinese Simplified, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latin America, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Vietnam.

In 2009, Jay Asher makes the novel into a stage play, for high school performance. In 2011, Universal Pictures purchased film right to the novel starring Selena Gomez, but it comes out as miniseries instead with Katherine Langford acts as Hannah Baker. Netflix and Paramount Television make the book to a miniseries, with Selena Gomez as the executive producer. It was released on 2017, while the second season aired in 2018.

The book gets a lot of responses, positive and negative, especially after the series aired. In *Thirteen Reasons Why* official website on Reader Reactions panel, there are thousands of positive feedbacks addressed to the book. While in Good Reads and IMDB, the book gets various responses. The researcher analyzes the feedbacks written in Good Reads about the book because it has various responses or reviews. The responses also focus on the books more than the series.

There are a lot of pro and contra of the book. Especially, because the book takes sensitive issue as the theme. There are a lot of readers who think that it is a book, which inspires people to stay strong for being a bully object or something similar to it. But, there are also a lot of people who think that the book romanticizes suicide. They think that the book more like supporting any suicidal actions than preventing people to commit suicide. A lot of people think this book is triggering, problematic and sending dangerous aspects about romanticizing suicide.

However, despite of the interesting plot and issue, the book is not being studied enough by the researcher. The researcher only finds one research about *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel's structural analysis. Even though it is interesting to study about the readers' responses toward the novel, there are no studies about that yet. That is why the researcher would like to fill that gap, and do a research on *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel's readers' responses.

As the result of the elaboration above, the researcher presents the research entitled **CONDEMNING THE SUICIDAL ACTION: READERS' RESPONSES TO HANNAH BAKER'S SUICIDE IN JAY ASHER'S *THIRTEEN REASONS WHY* NOVEL (2007)**.

## B. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the study, the researcher's focuses on the research problem are:

1. What is the dominant issue responded by the readers in *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher?

2. How are the readers' responses toward Hannah Baker's suicide in *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher?
3. What are the reasons of the readers' positive and negative responses toward Hannah Baker's suicide in *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher?

C. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the dominant issue responded by the readers of *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher.
2. To identify the readers' responses toward Hannah Baker's suicide in *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher.
3. To identify the readers' reasons of giving positive and negative responses toward Hannah Baker's suicide in *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher.

D. Benefit of the Study

a. Theoretical Benefit

The results of this research are expected to give theoretical contribution of knowledge as academic reference, especially in reader response analysis. It can be a reference for other researchers related to *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher.

b. Practical Benefit

This research is useful for the researcher to widen the knowledge and experience in writing and understanding the reader response analysis, in the process of conducting the research on *Thirteen Reasons Why*.