

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of Study

Bullying is a phenomenon from various kinds of groups that can directly affect all elements of society each year. According to Sanders, C. E. (2004) states that the explicit definition of bullying based on a unifying theory that includes ecological and evolutionary contexts states that bullying includes aggressive behavior that leads to certain goals where the action can harm other individuals in the context of a power gap. We recommend that bullying should be based on the assessment of these three elements of bullying. The three elements of bullying include goal-direction, power gap, and danger. For that reason, we need to review and convert the cost-benefit breakdown of bullying as a principle for intervention to be successful. Bullying is a violent act that is carried out continuously and there is no balance between the forces between the parties.

Bullying can occur anywhere, but the place where bullying often occurs is at school. According to Banks, R. (1997) stated that bullying in schools is a universal case that can have negative consequences for the global school atmosphere and students' rights to study in a peaceful environment without feeling anxious. Bullying can also have lifelong negative effects, both of which can be detrimental to the bully and its victims. Although many of the researchers carry out formal research on bullying that occurs in Scandinavian countries, Great Britain and Japan, issues related to bullying have been written and discussed in various formal school settings.

One of the writers who is concerned about bullying in schools is Susin Nielsen. Susin Nielsen is a writer who comes from Canada. She often wrote novels for children, teenagers and adults at a young age. One of Susin Nielsen's novels is *The Reluctant Journal* of Henry K. Larsen. The novel is classified as a young adult novel. This novel was first published in 2012 and

it deals with the effects of school shooting on the shooter's family. So, at first the writer picked up the title because at the time Susin was reading a book by Wally Lamb entitled "The Hour I First Believed". After she has read all the pages of Wally Lamb's novel, she plans to involve one of her characters in the real-life tragedy of the Columbine high school shooting. In the novel there are sentences that make her feel sad; she explained that one of the shooters had a brother. Susin never imagined how depressed the surviving family member would be from a child who had committed such a horrific act of.

One of the novels by Susin Nielsen which clearly describes the phenomenon of bullying that it occurs in schools with her novel entitled "*The Reluctant Journal*". The novel was published in 2012. *The Reluctant Journal* tells about a shooting that occurred in Columbine Middle School in 1999. In this novel, the author describes an act of bullying that occurred against Henry Kasper Larsen at a Columbine High School. Henry K. Larsen is the main character in this novel who is a sympathetic protagonist. Therefore, he is liked by many people and there are several supporting characters in the novel. This novel begins with his brother Jesse who takes his father's hunting rifle and commits suicide after he gets bullying from his friend. Then the lives of Henry and his family changed completely after the incident happened to their family.

This novel tells about Henry K. Larsen who is 13 years old. Her therapist recommended Henry to take notes on his thoughts and feelings after the "IT", as a result he rarely wrote a diary anymore. However, this very hilarious Henry's diary entry on one page brings tears to the eyes of the next pages. Henry has a special voice and it is different from other narrators. He felt a messy atmosphere ranging from anger, confusion, sadness, shame, and getting lost after "IT" happened. He has moved house with his father to Vancouver. This was done to improve their new life. But in reality, his family barely managed to get past the hurdle. Henry thinks that someone else is influencing them to stay away so he doesn't get a place for himself or

interpret his emotions after "IT". The last thing Henry anticipated that he would tell anyone about "IT", not his amazing new friends like Farley and Alberta or his therapist, or his two new neighbors. However, events at school and at home force Henry to explain about Jesse and the "IT" that can change everyone's life forever. (Nielsen, S. (2016)).

In this novel there is a character who is present at a gruesome murder school. This novel mentions that one of the shooters had an older brother. After his older brother took his father's gun to school to kill himself so Henry K. Larsen was transferred to a completely new city and a new school to escape anger by his old friends and neighbors. In this new city, Henry struggles to keep his knowledge of "IT" from tarnishing his new friends' views of how Henry actually behaves when he is at home. Ever since Henry was moved to a new city, he has begun to understand what it means to lose a loved one who has committed suicide.

Before Henry turned 13 years old, his life was so happy. However, the happiness suddenly stopped when his older brother, Jesse, took his father's hunting rifle. Until finally, his brother died because he had committed suicide. Because of this incident, Henry and his family were ostracized by the residents where they lived and in the end Henry's family was forced to move to another city to continue their life without any disturbance. In fact, in the new city they did not know the residents there at all. One day, Henry decided to do therapy. However, the therapist suggested that Henry write a diary in his diary. At first, Henry rejected the therapist's suggestion, but gradually Henry agreed to write a diary in his spare time. Before long, Henry began to like to keep a daily diary of what he was going through. From this incident, Henry made friends with a number of strange characters, both at school and in his modest apartment building. Even though they don't know about his past, they still want to help him in navigating the waters of life after he understands IT. Susin Nielsen has succeeded in creating a fantastic new character in Henry. This novel has a lot of humor and tells about a chaotic family.

Many perceptions from readers who flatter this novel include: (1) Jayne Downes who argues that “great book which will create empathy in a reader on themes of bullying, family breakdown, suicide, grief and then moving on with your life”, (2) Rose Ann stated that “I just loved the writing, the characters, the story....all of it”, and (3) Eleanor said that “what a beautiful, sad and insightful book! I absolutely loved it and nearly cried many, many times”.

In this case there are some readers who also provide criticism in order to build a better story, namely: (1) Trisha said that “Gosh! Tough read, even with all the humour and affection. Well written with terrific pacing and reveals. Henry is a great narrator (coz I couldn't find a way to say person who journals), no matter how reluctant he is”, (2) Kelaine stated that “Very dark topics...bullying, school shooting, suicide, survivors guilt..yet told in a darkly humorous way, alternating tears and laughter”, and (3) Madalan revealed that “I didn't really find it interesting, the story had too many cliché plots”.

This novel is packaged in softcopy form, so it is not known how many novels have been sold because until now the novel has not been marketed in hardcopy form. Until now, this novel has not received any requests from readers to be translated into other languages, except English. Besides the novel has not been packaged in hardcopy form, this novel has not been packaged in the form of a film. The novel has awards and is nominated for a Snow Willow award and a TD Canadian Children's Literature Award.

In this study, researchers are interested in studying the novel for several reasons. Then, the reasons are classified into three parts. There are characterizations, plots, and themes. The first reason is about Henry K Larsen, who is the main role in this novel who has a unique character in himself that creates many puzzles for him.

The second reason is based on the plot of this novel. Researchers are interested in the plot of this novel. The storyline in this novel uses a backward plot. Start by sharing the reasons why Jesse Larsen was never accepted into a pod. The third reason is about the theme of this novel, namely the impact of

bullying on the main character. The development of good character causes this novel to provide reasons for the impact of this bullying, which is reflected in the depiction of Henry K. Larsen's life. This novel contains many mysteries that drain the emotions of those who read this novel.

Based on the background above, researchers are interested in doing more research on the novel *The Reluctant Journal* by Susin Nielsen. To discuss the problem above, the authors raise it into the form of a thesis entitled, “Bullying in Schools and Its Impacts on the Mental Health of the Victim Reflected in Susin Nielsen’s *The Reluctant Journal* (2012): A Psychological Perspective”.

## **B. Problem Statement**

Based on the statements above, the writer formulates the research problem as follows.

1. What indicators of bullying are contained in the novel *The Reluctant Journal* by Susin Nielsen?
2. How bullying is depicted in the novel *The Reluctant Journal* by Susin Nielsen?
3. Why did Susin raise bullying in the novel *The Reluctant Journal* by Susin Nielsen?

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

Based on the problem formulation above, the research objectives are as follows :

1. To identify indicators of bullying in *The Reluctant Journal*.
2. To describe bullying in the novel *The Reluctant Journal*.
3. To reveal the author’s concern for bullying cases that have occurred in several countries and are contained in the novel *The Reluctant Journal*.

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

1. Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute a body of knowledge to provide a role, especially for literary studies in Susin Nielsen's novel *The Reluctant Journal*.

## 2. Practical Significance

This study adds to the writer's interpretation of the impact of bullying on the main character in the novel.