

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Trauma is a psychological and emotional state brought on by bad experiences with violence. According to Giller (1999), a traumatic event is one that creates tremendous stress and overwhelms a person's ability to cope. Most people have unforgettable experience that was good or bad in their life. The bad experience can cause trauma in some people. When a person suffers trauma, they may experience terrible memories that are difficult to forget, as well as nightmares, when looking at items associated to terrible events and recollections of painful experiences when looking at things related to these events. Sometimes someone who has traumatic experience will try hard to forget it and it will have an impact on his/her future life. Traumatic experience can alter a person's entire personality and characterization for the rest of their life. The source of the trauma itself can be physical or psychological.

Moreover, trauma in childhood is a painful experience for a person that can have physical and mental consequences. One of the effects of trauma on children is the individual's ability to form positive interpersonal relationships. Children who have a traumatic experience tend to be suspicious of people around them and have difficulty establishing social relationships. Besides the impact on mental, traumatic experience also have an impact on individual physiology. When dealing with situations that remind them of a traumatic event, individuals can show irregular breathing, excessive heart rate, or experience psychosomatic effects such as abdominal and headaches. In addition, mental health for a human was no less important than physical health, especially for a teenager. Mental health plays an important role in adolescents, which is a transition phase from children to adulthood so that there were many changes such as physical, hormonal,

cognitive or intelligence, emotions and behavior. Common types of mental health problems were depression and anxiety.

Meanwhile, mental emotional disorders are common before 24 years old. In many cases, suicide is a result of adolescent health problems. The problems faced require solving as an effort to self or adapt to problems and pressures. The concept of solving this problem is called coping. Children and adolescents need support and assistance from adults in dealing with anxiety after experiencing a traumatic event. From the fact above the author brings up the story of coping because it is very closely related to the lives of adolescent because they have very complex problems to cope. Each adolescent has a different problem and also a different way of handling.

Thus “*Coping*” originates from the word “*cope*” that is to say to overcome and master. According to Sarafino (in Maryam 2017), coping is an attempt to neutralize or reduce the stress that occurs. According to Haber and Runyon (in Maryam 2017), coping is all forms of negative or positive behaviors and thoughts that can reduce conditions that burden individuals so as not to cause stress. Coping strategies refer to various efforts, mastery, tolerance, reduction, or minimization of a difficult condition or event, both mental and behavioral. In other words, coping is a process in which people strive to cope with and conquer stressful situations as a result of the challenges they are dealing with by making cognitive and behavioral changes in order to feel more at ease.

The trauma case is not only to be concerned by the society but one of the novel authors who concerns about trauma is Stephen Chbosky. He comes from United States. Stephen Chbosky was born on January 25, 1970, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Chbosky attended Upper St. Clair High School and graduated in 1988. Chbosky earned his bachelor's degree in screenwriting from the University of Southern California in 1992. He

is most known for penning "The New York Times" and is an American novelist, screenwriter, and film director.

Stephen Chbosky's hit "coming-of-age novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999)" is one of his bestseller works. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is an autobiography novel. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* was initially released by Pocket Books' MTV Books brand on February 1, 1999. It went on to become the subsidiary's best-selling book, with 100,000 copies in print as of 2000, and was placed on school reading lists, as well as gaining a cult following. By 2012, the novel had been published in 16 countries and 13 languages, and it had ranked 16th on NPR's list of "100 Best-Ever Teen Novels".

The Perks of Being a Wallflower took five years to write and publish, with Chbosky developing characters and other components of the narrative from his own recollection. Introversion, sexuality, drug use, rape, and mental health are among the subjects explored in this novel, which also includes references to works of literature, film, and other pop culture in general. Because of the above mentioned theme, this book is banned in several American schools because of its contents. Besides that, Stephen Chbosky's novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* paints a vivid picture of adolescent life. The word "Wallflower" is very closely related to teenage life. Wallflower is a term for a shy person who is not popular because of lack of socializing, even though they usually have an intelligent and talented brain but cannot express it openly. This novel tells the story of a 15 year old teenager named Charlie. Charlie became a wallflower because of his past experiences. He was traumatized by sexual abuse by his aunt. He also felt a sense of guilt for his aunt's death. Charlie was also traumatized by his best friend's death at middle school.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower is based on Chbosky's personal experiences in the real world, with Charlie based on himself and other figures who support him based on people he has known or met in his life. Charlie is a teenager who has past trauma. He experienced many struggles against his trauma. In order to overcome his past anxiety, Charlie wrote a letter to his anonymous friend. He met a teacher named Bill. Bill was the first to advise Charlie about the importance of socializing. Bill taught Charlie about moral values that can be learned when he participates in his social environment, such as helping others and being open in making friends with others. Then he also found someone who could cope his past trauma. He learned a lot of new things from his seniors, Sam and Patrick. Sam and Patrick show another world that Charlie has never known.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower tells the life of Charlie, an introvert with a shy and clumsy nature. Charlie had just entered high school, after having had a bad year in middle school. Charlie was very nervous on the first day of High School. Charlie only has a friend named Michael, who committed suicide in the third year of middle school. Charlie's mentality got worse after the death of his friend. He often imagines bad things. He also tried to commit suicide several times, so his parents were rather worried and give special attention to Charlie. Charlie hopes for a pleasant high school period, he tries to make new friends and have a normal life. But it is difficult, because basically he is an introvert, quiet and clumsy. On the first day he did not get any friends. In fact, he even became the target of bullies from his seniors. He began to make friends with his senior Patrick, and Patrick's half-sister, Sam. Patrick has an eccentric and cheerful personality. Sam has a personality that is not much different from Patrick. With his eccentric personality, Patrick is a homosexual. He has a relationship with someone who is popular in his school, Brad. Even so, while in school they did not show their relationship.

His friendship with Patrick and Sam brought Charlie into a new environment. He met many people with various personalities, there were drug addicts, gothic enthusiasts, Buddhists, and there were punk lovers. That slowly opened up Charlie's world, and then he became very close with his friends. Charlie begins to have feelings for Sam, Charlie really loves Sam, but unfortunately Sam already has a boyfriend. Charlie did not want to disturb Sam's relationship with his boyfriend, Craig. One night Sam's close friend named Mary Elizabeth suddenly expressed his feelings to Charlie, they finally officially dated. At first Charlie tried to enjoy their relationship, but eventually he became uncomfortable. Mary Elizabeth is too talkative and like restraining Charlie, Mary calls Charlie all the time. Charlie starts getting tired of his relationship with Mary, but Charlie is also a dilemma, he doesn't want to hurt Mary. When playing the truth or dare game, Charlie instead makes a complicated situation. When Patrick instructs Charlie to kiss the prettiest female among his pals, he kisses Sam instead of Mary Elizabeth, who was standing right next to him; Mary Elizabeth was offended and left him soon away. The incident made relations between Charlie and his friends worsened. He returned alone for two weeks because Charlie had no contact with his friends.

Patrick's and Brad's secret relationship is exposed. Brad is beaten by his father to a pulp. Brad and his gang bother Patrick in school. It made Patrick angry and tried to hit Brad. Obviously Patrick lost because Patrick was alone and Brad with his gang. That's when Charlie came and helped Patrick. After that incident Charlie and his relationship began to return to normal, Mary Elizabeth was back to normal and she already has a new boyfriend. But unfortunately all Charlie's friends are seniors who will graduate soon. They had determined their dream campus, so that it would make Charlie alone again. Charlie comes home after helping Sam pack his things, Charlie's bad memories come back due to stress. He remembered the Aunt Helen who was his role model, who died from taking his

birthday present. Charlie considers all that is his fault. Charlie then attempts suicide but fortunately his family saves his life. Charlie was assisted by a psychiatrist at the hospital, and it was revealed to the fact that Aunt Helen had abused Charlie. Even though Aunt Helen was Charlie's role model, but on the other hand Aunt Helen was a person she really hated. A bad experience from his childhood that made Charlie have a kind of trauma when "having a relationship" with a woman. Finally Charlie managed to recover and get out of the hospital. His high school life returned to normal, but Charlie tried to change, he tried to participate more in his environment.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower novel has gotten some positive feedback from readers. According to actress Dobrev (CNN.com), the best thing about the Chbosky story is that, despite the fact that it concentrates on the challenges that new high school students encounter, it is nevertheless enjoyable. In maturity, everyone has the same story of love and grief, happiness and heartbreak. Even if we feel like we're the only ones with troubles at the time, everyone is dealing with something.

As well as, Vicky Smith (CNN.com) also voiced his opinion at the time of the novel's release. Because Charlie's middle school experience in the early 1990s included drugs, alcohol, sex, and abuse, the book was one of many tests about the dark side of adolescence. There is a genre known as "teenage problem novels," which includes books on teenage pregnancy and anorexia. Towards the end of the 1990s, many books were well-written but depressing, but the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is completely different from the others; it is not as bleak as the others, and it grabs a lot of people's attention. According to Smith, this novel drew a lot of attention from schools and libraries. "Perks" is no stranger to the American Library Association's list of works that are frequently protested, and the book is "viral" before anybody realizes what that means.

Again, According to Louise Burke (CNN.com), executive vice president and publisher of Gallery Books, the novel may appear low-tech, but it retains its relevancy, ranking 16th in the NPR 100 top teen fiction polls and debuting at No. 1 on the New York Times Bestseller List. Burke's conversations with the teenagers revealed that they appreciated the fact that the issue was addressed but not overly dramatized. It's interesting that a book that was released many years ago is much more relevant now.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower is the subject of this investigation. The book is intriguing. The story material presented is very sensitive, raised the issue that is currently rife, namely mental health. The story about Charlie is very complicated but realistic. How Chbosky described the figure of Charlie through his letters is really neat and profound. The reader gets carried away with Charlie's feelings, thoughts, and life. The lessons that can be learned from reading this novel is that trauma can be inherent at any time, even when trying to get rid of it. The effect is also different for each person.

The novel takes place between 1991 and 1992, and it begins with Charlie's letters to an anonymous correspondent. It began on August 25, 1991, and concluded on August 23, 1992. It's safe to assume Charlie penned that letter over the course of a year. Furthermore, the story is set on a school day until the Christmas holiday and the end of the semester. In two separate instances, Charlie is reliving a horrible event. The first time was on December 21, 1991, at Charlie's Christmas party, when he and his pals had a secret Santa. The second time was when Sam invited Charlie to a farewell party on June 22, 1992. It appears that the occurrence occurs during the beginning of the new semester.

In *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the location of the story takes place in Pittsburgh. Despite the fact that Charlie does not write his home location, there is evidence suggesting the work is set in the United States. When Charlie, Patrick, and Sam get home, the first evidence appears. They travel through Fort Pitt tunnel in Sam's pickup. Fort Pitt

Tunnel is a traffic tunnel beneath Mount Washington near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, according to Wikipedia.org. It connects the West End area on the southwest side to the South Shore neighborhood on the northeast side of the city. On the northeast end, the Fort Pitt Bridge links to Downtown Pittsburgh. The writer concludes that the setting of place in the novel happened in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. In addition, most of the setting in the novel is at school.

The social setting in which Charlie's family lives is that of a middle-class family. It can be seen from Charlie's parents' Camaro vehicle. Charlie's parents have two children: Charlie, who is still in high school, and Charlie's brother, who is a college student. His brother attended Penn State, which is regarded as one of the best universities in the United States. This indicates that his parents were from a middle-class family. In addition, his parents committed him to a psychiatric institution, where he spent two months. There was also evidence that they did not come from a low-income family.

Using Stephen Chbosky's novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the writer selects the subject of inquiry. The novel was chosen by the author because it depicts the traumatic experience of the story's main character, Charlie. Charlie is a new high school student. Adolescence is the most memorable period for some people. Adolescence is a time when they have a large number of friends who always support them, when they can express themselves in a variety of ways, and when they begin to be attracted to and love one other. On the other hand, Charlie believes that adolescence is a difficult period that he wishes to escape as soon as possible. Charlie is an introverted young man who is constantly uncomfortable in social situations. His traumatic past causes him to become even more introverted. At school, he is frequently bullied by his peers. Charlie always wrote an anonymous friend a letter in which he expressed his feelings. Finally, he discovered a buddy who could assist him in overcoming the myriad issues that had been holding him

back. His senior friends consisting of Patrick, Sam, Mary Elizabeth, Alice, and Bob were the ones who made Charlie feel considered. Mr. Anderson, in addition to being one of his teachers, plays an important role in his life. The novel also illustrates Charlie's psychology about the sexual abuse he experienced in childhood. He also felt a sense of guilt for someone who traumatized him. The fact that Charlie had a past event that was not easy and made him different from the children of his age made the writer really curious what could make him a wallflower and how he could overcome his past event. From that fact the researcher named this study entitled **"Coping with Traumatic Experience in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* Novel (1999): Individual Psychology"**.

B. Problem Statement

There are three problem statements that the researcher intends to analyze in this study, as follows:

- a. What are the symptoms of traumatic experience in the novel?
- b. How did the major character cope with traumatic experience in the novel?
- c. Why did the author address coping behavior of traumatic experience in the novel?

C. Limitation of Study

To collect data from the novel the writer uses several stages of collecting data consisting of first, the traumatic experience of Charlie. Second, Charlie's coping mechanisms. The author's motivations for examining coping mechanisms in traumatic experiences are discussed in the third section. The Fourth is story in the novel.

D. Objective of Study

Based on the problem statement above, there are three objectives of the study:

1. To identify the symptoms of traumatic experience in the novel.
2. To describe the major character coping his traumatic experience in the novel.

3. To examine the author's reason addressing coping behavior of traumatic experience in the novel.

E. Benefit of Study

The author expects that the readers will benefit from this study. The following are some of the benefits that readers can gain from reading this research:

1. Theoretically

- a. To provide some information those other researchers interested in analyzing this invention can use.
- b. To give contribution to other literary research, especially in the study of individual psychology.

2. Practically

Research benefits for researchers, as follows:

- a. This research will be utilized to meet the requirements for a bachelor's degree in education from the Department of English Education.
- b. As documentation for what has been researched by researcher and as a means of thanking all parties who support researcher in completing this study.