

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Literature brings lessons of knowledge about literature and a broad imagination for people to learn and imagine. Also, literature has feelings and intelligence which derive from some literary works: poetry, prose, and art. However, literature can be subjective which is considered as the main topic of discussion (Kusch, 2016). Mathew Arnold (as cited in Pantic, 2006) believes that literature should deal “with the complexity of moral dilemmas set against the relativity of experience” (p. 413). For example, a person might believe that crime is evil in any situation. By reading the story of Robin Hood, people might want to change their perspective in looking at a crime that is contextualized. Although people know that literature is not real, only fiction, they can learn values of life from the story.

This can lead to children who want to learn more about literature, especially disabled children. Like other children, they want to know and learn about literature which makes their interest grow to love wonderful stories, and poems. Furthermore, parents have done great things for their children in their lives, including disabled children.

Therefore, it becomes their responsibility to make their children able to live independently until they become adults. Commonly practiced, parents send their disabled children to a special school to learn and adapt with other disabled students. However, some parents educate their disabled children in an inclusive school for some reason. In an inclusive school, teachers, staff, and the principal are responsible to make disabled students able to learn and play with normal students.

Stubbs (2008) stated that disabled students should be placed in the same class with 'normal' students in inclusive education. Also, teachers, staff, and the principal can help disabled students when they have a problem with their friends, family, education, and more. Furthermore, inclusive education promotes a quality of school improvement, in different cultures and contexts, special educational needs, inclusive lifelong learning, early childhood to adult inclusive non-formal, informal, alternatives, and families. Also, it can benefit all children to learn and play together in the school which creates an inclusive society between them as students and teachers (Stubbs, 2008).

Unfortunately, inclusive education might also create a moral dilemma. On one hand, disabled students feel like they are being accepted into the mainstream of schooling which can create further arguments, discrimination, and bullying among the school and the pupil. This can affect their emotional problems, which may even cause trauma or other worse situations and makes it impossible to carry out learning activities in the class (Flemming et al., 1993).

This happens to Auggie when he was mocked, and harassed by normal children in the novel entitled “Wonder” written by R.J. Palacio (2013). The story revolves around a boy named August Pullman who had a rare facial abnormality. He had been home-schooled in his home due to his disability. When Auggie reached 10, his parents enrolled him in a private middle school, called Beecher Prep. In there, he met normal children and a boy named Jack Will who later became friends. However, he was bullied by his classmate named Julian. This became a problem for Auggie which made him sad and disappointed. Therefore, his school will prevent bullying and discrimination toward Auggie.

Some studies have been conducted to explore this novel about disabled students (Mita, 2022; Widuri et al., 2022). However, several aspects have not been explored. The novel has left many things for the researcher to learn more about school systems that accept disabled children in school and expands the perspectives by focusing on the people surrounding the main character in supporting him to be accepted, especially in a school context. In this case, the researcher is interested in exploring how the inclusive school system works in this context. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to learn about the school system which accepts disabled students in the novel “Wonder”.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

- What are the challenges of inclusive education in the novel “Wonder”?
- How do the characters cope with the challenges?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the challenges of inclusive education in the novel “Wonder”
- To explore how the characters cope with the challenges.

1.4 Limitation and the Scope of the study

In this study, the researcher analyzes the school system in the novel “Wonder”, where the scope is to explain how the school system can accept a disabled child such as Auggie. However, the researcher would limit the study by taking numerous pieces of data from the novel, not other resources. Furthermore, pieces of data will focus on how Beecher Prep and other characters handle obstacles or challenges which are caused by Auggie’s classmate to him.

1.5 Significance of the study

Although literature is a literature analysis in nature which does not happen in real life, it can capture the reality of life in all its aspects. It is expected that this study can contribute to a better understanding of the inclusive school system in accepting disabled children as it was experienced by Auggie in “Wonder”. However, it is also expected that all readers of this thesis, especially pre-service teachers, can learn the application of this system, which is something new in an Indonesian context.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The theory of schools accepting disabled children describes how the school system gives the allowance to them who are able to learn and play with normal children. Some researchers stated that inclusive education assumed that all children have a right to learn every lesson in the classroom which brings a better atmosphere between them and the teacher (Cobley, 2018; Florian, Black-Hawkins & Rouse, 2017; Hehir, et al, 2016; Schuelka & Johnston, 2012; UNESCO-IBE, 2016) (as cited in Schuelka, 2018).

The main point of inclusive education is that the system should adapt to the child, not the child to the system (Stubbs, 2008). It is important to make all children learn every lesson together in the classroom and not to be discriminated against despite their disability which has become the priority of inclusive education. (Stubbs, 2008; Schuelka, 2018). This indicates that teachers and staff of inclusive education must serve and help disabled students with respect and proper manners which becomes an important objective in this research.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

As a means of clarification, the following concepts are explained.

- A. Wonder (2017): A novel capturing experiences of a boy who enrolled in an elementary inclusive school to learn and play despite having a physical disability.
- B. August Pullman: A boy who has a rare facial abnormality which has expand imagination as an astronaut and meets various incidents in his life.
- C. Rare facial abnormality: A physical disability which happens in a face that is not aligned.
- D. Physical disability: An inability which affects the body.
- E. Inclusion: “A particular emphasis on a group of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement.” – Mel Ainscow (2005)
- F. Inclusive Education: An education where normal and disabled students learn a lesson together in a classroom.

1.8 Thesis proposal organization

- Chapter 1 proposes about the researcher conducting the study, problem statements, objectives of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and definition of key terms.
- Chapter 2 discusses the literature, inclusive education, and previous studies.
- Chapter 3 elaborates the research methodology. It consists of: research design, data source, research data, instruments, data collection, and data analysis.
- Chapter 4 discusses results and discussion.
- Chapter 5 elaborates the conclusion of the research and suggestions.