

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes background of this study, research questions, aims of the study, research methodology, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Through reading novels, readers can enhance their sense of empathy and moral. Reading novels can be beneficial since it trains readers' imagination and sensitivity of human conditions and experiences (Yanklowitz, 2014). Readers can imagine the characters in the novel and their characterization as well as the narrative events to learn more about humanity. In a more specific context, novel as a form of narrative shares more complexity than short story since novel depicts human's life events more comprehensively. Young adult novels, for example, portray life events and experience about how it feels like to be a young adult such as *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Chbosky (2000) and *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Asher (2007).

Young adult novels are mostly concerned with coming of age journey, telling the life of young adult protagonist and how they deal with their issues. Millard (2007) states that coming-of-age story tells a young adult protagonist's progress from naive or callow (inexperienced) trait to maturity. This kind of novel also portrays frequent self-consciousness of a young adult. Coming of age journey as portrayed in young adult literature can be very challenging for the young adult character because it presents the character with various unpredictable problems so that they can learn and grow up. Young adults may experience issues and change in terms of traits. One of the most recent novels depicting this complex issues of young adults is *Thirteen Reasons Why*.

McClurg (2017) reports in *NY Times* article that *Thirteen Reasons Why* is awarded as the best-selling book. The novel talks about how Hannah Baker ended her life by committing suicide. Before her death, she addressed her thirteen reasons why she killed herself in a series of tapes to people whom she thought guilty for her suicide. The novel begins in one day a shoe-size brown box arrived at Clay Jensen's front yard, and he starts to have preoccupation regarding what the tapes are about. Clay feels shocked after hearing his dead crush's voice,

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Hannah, which overwhelms his thoughts. Further, the narrative reflects Clay Jensen's point of view and consciousness mainly as he listens to all the tapes. After Clay listens to the tape, he feels that his life will never be the same because his dead crush's voice will always be there to remind him his mistakes regarding her death. In his listening to and interaction with the tapes, Clay experiences psychosocial issues such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and tendency to avoid parents that are typically experienced by young adults. The psychosocial issues presented in the novel attracts the writer of this study to see further Clay's psychosocial development, and how he copes with the psychosocial issues as part of his journey to adulthood.

Psychosocial issues are common to occur in young adults. Derived from two words, namely 'Psychological' and 'Social', psychosocial issues refer to psychological and social problems. The problems are commonly about misbehavior and issues: anxiety, depression, skills of handling problems, and supports from social environment (Holm, 2017). In addition, Stephans (2013) also enlists the psychosocial issues such as bullying and suicide. Bucher and Hinton's (2010) add that psychosocial development exposes the psychosocial issues as well such as argumentative behavior aggressive behavior, preoccupation, and shifted affiliations. Most of the problems are not necessarily overwhelming conflicts, some problems are actually a young adult's way to start their path to reach independent adult status (Hinmann, 2013).

Young adults can try to solve their problems alone such as by reacting properly in a certain social circumstance or asking for forgiveness if they do something inappropriate. However, young adults can also ask for other's help since young adults may be incapable of handling issues because of their innocence (Millard, 2007). Young adult novels present the story of a young adult protagonist with a naïve trait whose historical knowledge will be revealed as time moves on in the story. Seeing Millard's point of view about how innocent or naïve young adults are, adults can give support in order to help them to be more experienced in handling issues on their journey to adulthood.

There are previous studies regarding a young adult's psychosocial issues and *Thirteen Reasons Why*. For example, Caskey and Anfara (2007) promote urgency of designing educational programs which help early young adults (ten to fifteen years old) with their developmental tasks. The educational programs can be such as role-playing drama to help them express their emotions and peer-group task to help them develop socially. In line with

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Bucher and Hinton (2010), the study also explains young adults' development emotionally or psychologically, socially, physically, and cognitively. Meanwhile, Exter-Cortens and Jenney (2018) reveal issues of toxic masculinity and mental health of a young woman in *Thirteen Reasons Why Netflix Series*. Further, Chisholm and Trent (2012) promote critical perspectives of bullying to their pupils. Firstly, they ask the pupils to read *Thirteen Reasons Why* to make them understand the issue of bullying in the novel. Then, they ask them to fulfill some exercise to test their knowledge and response toward bullying. The result is the students are aware of bullying and have the ability to handle social tasks or situations. Last, Ducker (2018) shows how hyperemotional listening and cognitive mapping in *Thirteen Reasons Why* creates an emotional landscape of Clay. Further, the study also focuses on Clay's emotional experience and Hannah's voice. Ducker says that the novel may affect readers to have immersive reading experience and imagine themselves as Clay along with his construction in first-person point of view. The previous studies hence show that research which focus on Clay Jensen is possibly still understudying. In addition, most of them focused on the Netflix series adaptation of the novel and Hannah Baker. Specifically, study of Clay's psychosocial development has not been particularly conducted. Hence, the present study would like to see how Clay develops psychosocially and how he deals with the psychosocial issues. This study analyzes Clay's narrative events based on Bucher and Hinton's (2010) view of young adult development. Bucher and Hinton (2000) actually classify the development into three parts: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial. To limit the scope of the study, this study focuses only on the psychosocial development of Clay.

## **1.2 Aims of the Study**

This study attempts to discover Clay's development as a young adult psychosocially. This study intends to explore the narrative events revolving around Clay in order to discover his psychosocial issues and find out how he copes with the issues as part of his psychosocial development. The narrative events which address his psychosocial issues and how he handles them will be selected as data collection.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Since the aims of the study are to reveal a young adult character's psychosocial issues and development, therefore the research questions are as follows:

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1. What are the psychosocial issues experienced by Clay Jensen?
2. How does Clay Jensen deal with the issues?

## **1.4 Research Methodology**

### **1.4.1 Research Design**

This study is conducted with descriptive qualitative approach and seen as textual analysis. It is descriptive because this study is meant to address Clay's psychosocial issues and describe his psychosocial development. It is suitable for this study to use qualitative method because this study is a descriptive research which mainly deals with words, phrases, clauses rather than numbers (Flick, 2009)

### **1.4.2 Data Collection**

The data are collected based on Jay Asher's (2007) *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel. This study highlights narrative events of Clay Jensen which address psychosocial issues and how he copes with the issues to indicate his psychosocial development. The selected events are also put as data to the table for analysis.

### **1.4.3 Data Analysis**

After the data are properly collected into table for analysis, the ways to analyze the data are as follow:

- Framing and interpreting the selected narrative events of Clay which reflect his psychosocial issues or and how he deals with them.
- Discovering what psychosocial issues being addressed and how he deals with the issues.
- Providing the results of findings: what are the psychosocial issues experienced by Clay, his tendency to cope with the issues, and whether he develops psychosocially based on Bucher and Hinton (2010) view of young adults' psychosocial development.
- Presenting the conclusion, along with suggestions for further study.

## **1.5 Clarification of terms**

### **1. Young Adults**

Young adults are twelve to nineteen-year-old people who are experiencing a transition from childhood to maturity (Millard, 2007).

### **2. Narrative Event**

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According to Koppa (2014), narrative event refers to an occurrence in a narrative or what does the narrative present. He states that to see something as an event is to realize that something happens or occurs in the narrative.

### 3. Issue

The term 'Issue' refers to concern, development, argument, problem, effect, after-effect and complication. Roberts and Jacobs (2004) state that most stories have major issues that come from misunderstanding, misinformation, unfocused ideas and goals, difficult situations, problematic relationships, and challenging situations.

### 4. Psychosocial

Manoux (2003) explains that psychosocial encompasses two categories of variables: results of socialization or social factors and psychological attributes such as depression, hostility, and hopelessness. Therefore, psychosocial means psychological traits in relation to social factors or results of socialization.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Currently, the writer of this study is a student of English Language and Literature study program, and he is interested in analyzing a novel to see its patterns, ideas, and messages. Hopefully, this study can make the readers more aware of young adult issues and specifically psychosocial development, urgency of giving good supports to young adults, and contemporary real-life issues being portrayed in the novel such as bullying, low self-esteem, and suicide.

Studies which have the character Clay Jensen in Jay Asher's "Thirteen Reasons Why" novel as the subject have not been frequently studied. Therefore, this study is beneficial to people that may research Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* further.

## **1.7 Organization of the Paper**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I explains introduction of this study: background, research questions, aims of the study, research methodology, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper. Chapter II reviews Bucher and Hinton's (2010) point of view of young adult literature and development, Roberts and Jacobs's (2004) view of fiction and its main elements, and some previous studies. Chapter III shows research methodology, data collection, and ways of analyzing the data along with its examples of data. Chapter IV

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reveals findings and discussion. Lastly, chapter V presents the conclusion of the study and suggestions for further research.

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