

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Mental illness and the sufferer of mental illness are often portrayed in movies and television. According to the research conducted in 2019, in movies, the portrayal of mental illness often depicted using disparagement, humor, and concealment (Smith, Choueiti, Choi, Pieper, & Moutier , 2019). From the total of 87 characters in popular movies, 47% of the sufferer was portrayed disparagingly, 22% humoredly portrayed, while 15% was using the concealment portrayal (Smith, Choueiti, Choi, Pieper, & Moutier , 2019). The continuous portrayals, especially the misinterpretation portrayals of mental illness, can affect the environment and sufferer. As explained by a study conducted by American Psychological Association, quoted by Beachum, most people were generally uncomfortable talking about mental illness, and still many people referred the sufferer of mental illness as "crazy people"(Beachum, 2010). It may happen because movies, as one of the most powerful tools, have a big power to increase the visibility of people with mental illness, which resulted in shaping the public attitudes and perceptions towards mental illness and the sufferer (Coverdale, R. , & D. , 2002).

The misinterpretation that exists among society can be caused by certain stereotypes of the sufferer of mental illness. As an example, narcissists will be stereotyped and/or portrayed as an attention seeker (Hanley, 2015). The portrayal of mental illness in movies is also inseparable from the movies that are intended

for children. The result of research conducted by Willey Periodicals in 2003 suggests that the portrayal of mental illness in children's movies is a common thing. Even though, sometimes the sufferer in the movie is implicitly shown and cannot be identified by watching the movie once. From forty-nine children's movies that were being reviewed to reveal the depiction of mental illness in movies, the material of mental illness is included in 33 movies, which takes part 67% (Wahl, Wood, Zaveri, Drapalski, & Mann, 2003). While another research conducted in 2004 revealed that most of the movies in Disney animated movies contain verbal references to mental illness, with an average of 4.6 references per movie and the overall percentage is 85%, in which 21% of them were the principal characters who suffered from mental illness (Lawson & Fouts, 2004).

Literary works, or in this research, movie, although it has been through the process of dramatization, it is still the reflection of the real world. Thus, the numbers of mental illness in movies are affected by the number of mental illness in real life. According to Bridges to Recovery, approximately 1:16 adults showed the symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder and can be diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. The evolvement of the term Narcissistic Personality Disorder or NPD came from Sigmund Freud, who believes that narcissism was a phase of development when a person does not transfer his or her self-love to other people or objects (Thurschwell, 2000). Narcissists will require constant adoration and recognition from their surroundings.

Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell in the book *Narcissism Epidemic*, show that narcissism has a quick increase since the 1980s. The study conducted in 2010 in the journal *Psychological and Personality Science* also found that the

percentage of college students from the score of their test in the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, increased more than half, to 30 percent, since the early 1980s. The dramatic growth of NPD is caused by social orders and/or fabrics that continue to deteriorate. The emergence of individualism in society, focus on the self and the individuals' inner feelings, and also the decline in social-norms, affect the decline in social fabrics. The rise of individualism is a signal of the situation where the community and family are no longer provide support as they usually did (Remes, 2016). Individualism also results in a decrease in the quality of communication with each other. Consequently, it became much harder to meet the basics need for meaningful conversation. As time goes, the question of what is best for other people will ironically change into what is best for ourselves, which becomes the very first foundation of NPD.

The existence of NPD in decades evolved the occurrence of the types of NPD. Loren Soeiro in 2019 explained that narcissism is not only a unitary concept. The number of subcategories that have been generated serves the shade in the nuances of NPD. NPD can be divided into two, which are positive types or pro-social and negative types or pro-social narcissism. Further explanation of the types of NPD is explained in 2019 by Lindsay Dodgson. She believes that NPD is divided into three types; exhibitionist or grandiose narcissism, closet or covert narcissism, and toxic or malignant narcissism (Dodgson, 2018).

The discussion of this paper focuses on one of the types of NPD, which is malignant narcissism. The term Malignant Narcissism or MN was first used by the psychologist Erich Fromm in 1946, as a severe mental disorder, and called the quintessence of evil (Fromm 1964). In 1992, Kernberg further explained that

Narcissists of Malignant develop the identification with powerful people, and rely on internal sadistic and powerful parental images.

The portrayal of NPD or specifically MN can be seen from the movies or even the movies that are intended for children. Some fairytale movies have portrayed the existence of Malignant Narcissism. Therefore, in this research, the researcher used children's movies as the object of analysis of this research. By considering some factors, the researcher took two live-action movies from the Walt Disney Company. The researcher believes that takes the sample of analysis using the villain characters is important because the sufferer of mental illness who is portrayed as villain characters can shape the perception of society towards mental illness. The fact that malignant narcissism can happen both to women and men also become a consideration for the researcher to take two villain characters from Disney live-action movies. In this research, the researcher uses the definition of "villain character" according to the literary term, which means the bad guy that can cause harm to their surrounding.

Even though Disney movies mostly are intended for children, adults also enjoy Disney movies. In another word, people of all ages are watching Disney (Mason, 2017). By that fact, Disney has bigger power to influence its many audiences by what is portrayed in their movies. Thus, the researcher believes that it is important to acknowledge the society of what is actually portrayed, or in this case the portrayal of mental illness, in Disney live-action movies. Live-action movies are chosen by the researcher because live-action movies are the closest medium to the human experience. Live-action movies can easily create and portray real emotion and empathy rather than animation movies (Draper, 2020). Hence, the researcher

is analyzed further how the live-action movies intended for children from Disney are portrayed the symptoms and existence of Malignant Narcissism, which can acknowledge and give insight to society of how movies portrayed the bad characteristics of the sufferer of mental illness.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background which has been written by the researcher, the researcher formulates the research questions of the problem which are:

1. How do Disney live-action movies portray the symptoms of Malignant Narcissism through the villain characters?
2. What are the impacts caused by the sufferer of Malignant Narcissism to their surroundings as portrayed through the villain characters in Disney live-action movies?

1.3 Research Objective

From the research question above, the researcher has the research objectives discussed to answer them. This research will describe the symptoms of Malignant Narcissism and the impacts caused by the sufferer of Malignant Narcissism portrayed in the villain characters of Disney's live-action movies.

1.4 Use of Study

This research will be important both for society and future researchers. Thus, the use of the study of this research is divided into two, as stated below.

1.4.1 Practical Use

This research can raise the awareness of society about the existence of mental illness, especially Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Malignant Narcissism. It can give society deeper insight and knowledge, about the definition of Narcissistic

Personality Disorder and Malignant Narcissism, the symptoms, and the portrayal in movies. The researcher also believes that the symptoms and impacts of Malignant Narcissism that written in this research will make society not talking about mental illness as a taboo thing anymore. Besides, the fact that movies show the construction of the same duality of reality proves that most probably, movies are mirroring the realities. In another word, movies can shape the realities and behaviors of people. Thus, the information of how movies portray mental illness and the symptoms of mental illness itself can acknowledge society and make the society behave in the right way. The information that is written in this research also can be used by future research who wants to analyze the same movies, topics, or issues.

1.4.2 Theoretical Use

The theory used inside this research can be used by other future researchers to conduct a deeper analysis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Malignant Narcissism. The symptoms and the causes of Malignant Narcissism that are written in this paper can give references for other people regarding the personalities of humans and how it develops. It also can be used for the researcher who wants to research psychological criticism.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the existence of Malignant Narcissism inside the movie Cinderella and Aladdin. The researcher chose those two movies considering the list of The Top 10 Disney Live-Action Remakes, Ranked According to Rotten Tomatoes by ScreenRant in 2020, as explained in the part Method of Research.

This research tried to reveal the symptoms of Malignant Narcissism in the villain characters of both Disney live-action movies. The characters that will be analyzed are the step-mother of Cinderella from the movie Cinderella and Jafar from the movie Aladdin. In Cinderella's movie, there are three antagonist characters, which are Cinderella's stepmother (Lady Tremaine), Anastasia, and Drizella. However, the most villain or antagonist character in Cinderella movie, who also had more scenes, is Lady Tremaine or Cinderella's stepmother. She even included in the Top 10 Most Evil Disney Villains (Wilson, 2020). Meanwhile, in the Aladdin movie, the only main villain character is Jafar, which is also included in the Top 10 Most Evil Disney Villains (Wilson, 2020). Thus, the researcher used Cinderella's stepmother and Jafar as the object of analysis. The symptoms of Malignant Narcissism and the impacts caused by the sufferer, which are Cinderella's stepmother and Jafar, as portrayed by the villain characters inside the movies, are analyzed and discussed in this research.