

## Verbal Bullying in Harald Zwart's Film "The Karate Kid" (2010): A Critical Analysis

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the causes and effects of verbal bullying depicted in *The Karate Kid* (2010) using a descriptive method. The film portrays Dre, a transfer student from the United States, as a victim of verbal bullying by Cheng and his friends. The analysis is based on theories from Wardhana (2015) and Fujikawa (2016). The identified causes of verbal bullying include Cheng's hatred toward Dre's physical differences, Cheng's lack of self-confidence driving him to seek attention, and his resentment stemming from negative experiences with his teacher. The effects of verbal bullying on Dre include feeling intimidated, leading him to avoid Cheng, and feeling alienated, which causes discomfort in his new environment and a desire to return to the United States. This study highlights the complex causes and significant psychological impacts of verbal bullying, both in real-life contexts and fictional representations such as films.

**Keywords:** Verbal bullying, *The Karate Kid* (2010), Bullying causes, Psychology effect

### INTRODUCTION

In daily life, of course, humans need to interact through a medium that functions as a means of conveying information, ideas, emotions, skills, and so on. This process or means of delivery is commonly referred to and known as communication (Sudrajad, 2023). In Mulyana (2013), Gerald R. Miller states that "Communication occurs when a source relays a message to the recipient with the conscious intent of influencing the recipient's behavior." This communication formed a social group that would later be known as social communication. In general, social communication includes communication activities that occur naturally in social life, from waking up to going back to sleep. According to Sherif (in Abu Huraerah, 2007), social communication is defined as a social unit that involves two or more individuals who interact intensively and regularly so that a division of tasks, structures, and certain norms is created between them.

There are many media options that can be used as a tool for human communication. One of the most preferred mediums by many people is film. If you look at the definition alone, film is defined as a form of entertainment that provides an audio-visual experience to the audience, and provides the illusion of continuous movement (Arfani, 2018). However, movies are also used as a means for a person or group of people to get information, entertainment, and education (Yastanti & Hadiyansyah, 2019). Through a film, information can be widely disseminated to the audience who watch it while providing entertainment. In its performance, movies are considered a social phenomenon. Film is seen as an art form to depict an expression of its creator, telling a story with meaning that is then shown on the screen or cinema (Hornby, 2010). The story in this film usually raises critical issues that usually occur in people's daily lives to attract the audience.

One of the issues that exists around us, consciously or unconsciously in social communication, is bullying. Bullying, or what we often call bullying, can be done through actions or words that aim to bring down mentally or put pressure on the victim (Firdaus, 2023). In Sugijokanto (2014), it is explained that another purpose of bullying is to control a person, either through insults, threats, high pitches, or acts of violence. Acts of bullying can happen anytime, anywhere, and are carried out by anyone. This action is usually carried out in a position of power based on the arrival of a situation that is felt to provide personal benefits or satisfaction (Emza, 2015). According to Swearer (2015), bullying is aggressive behavior that can be carried out by individuals and groups that have a negative impact on the victim. Victims of bullying usually experience heavy pressure so that they become quiet and reluctant to socialize with others (Hudi, 2019).

Bullying is behavior that is carried out repeatedly by certain individuals or groups (Sirly & Novitasari, 2017). According to Sarazen (2002), bullying has become a major issue in society and a serious concern. Bean (1999) in Sarazen (2002) explains that bullying is an attempt to gain and feel "power," where the perpetrator realizes that this strategy is effective. There are various forms of bullying that often occur, such as physical, verbal, psychological, social, and cyberbullying (National Centre Against Bullying in the Queensland Government, 2010). In addition, bullying has various negative impacts. Research shows that not only victims, but perpetrators and witnesses of bullying also feel the bad impact. This was obtained by Shellard (2002) in Blazer (2005) who revealed that witnesses to bullying tended to experience levels of depression, anxiety, anger, post-traumatic stress, alcohol use, and decreased academic achievement. In addition, victims of bullying are also considered to be likely to face various psychological problems, such as prolonged depression; stress; feeling different from others; feeling intimidated; decreased self-confidence; to the emergence of the desire to end life (Fujikawa, et al., 2016).

Zakayah (2017) explained that there are 3 types of bullying, namely:

1. **Physical Bullying**

Physical bullying is a type of bullying that is seen directly because it involves physical contact between the perpetrator and the victim. Examples of physical bullying include: slapping, choking, stomping, stumbling, spitting, faking hits, throwing things, punishing by running around the court, punishing with push-ups, and push-ups.

2. **Verbal Bullying**

Verbal bullying is a type of bullying that can be detected because it involves the sense of hearing. Examples include: mocking, insulting, giving nicknames, yelling, publicly humiliating, accusing, ridicule, spreading gossip, slandering, and refusing.

3. **Mental Bullying**

This type of bullying is the most dangerous, since it is difficult to be clearly recognized by the eyes or ears if it is not done with care to detect it. This type of bullying is often done secretly and unsupervised. Examples of mental bullying include: looking cynically, looking threatening, being silent without speaking, disassuring, terrorizing, or sending threatening text messages through cell phones.

Bullying behavior can arise due to prejudice or negative attitudes between individuals who interact with each other. Bullying is not something that happens spontaneously, but is triggered by a number of factors. Based on Wardhana's statement (2015), the factors that cause bullying are as follows:

1. **Feelings of hatred**

Enmity and resentment in friendship relationships are often triggers for bullying.

2. **Lack of confidence and attention**

seeking Individuals who feel less confident tend to seek attention, one of which is through bullying. By bullying others, they feel more satisfied, strong, and dominant.

3. **Feelings of resentment**

A person who has been a victim of violence or oppression often harbors feelings of resentment that he wants to pour out on others, one of which is by bullying.

4. **Being negatively affected by the media**

Exposure to violence displayed in media, such as television or the internet, can be a bad example of encouraging someone to commit violence for no apparent reason.

Many factors cause verbal bullying behavior to occur, such as feelings of dislike for other people's strengths, envy, lack of confidence, which ultimately gives rise to behavior to oppress others. Victims of bullying will experience psychological problems such as prolonged depression, stress, feelings of difference, feeling intimidated, decreased confidence, and feelings of suicidal (Fujikawa, 2016). Difficulties in adjusting to the social environment also appear in the victim. The most extreme psychological impact of this is the possibility of psychological disorders in victims of bullying, such as excessive anxiety, always feeling afraid, depression, and thinking about suicide.

This phenomenon of verbal bullying does not only occur in everyday life, but is also often found in works of fiction, including movies. For example, in Harald Zwart's *The Karate Kid* (2010), we can see how verbal bullying affects the lives of its characters. Of course, this analysis was carried out with the aim of identifying the causes of verbal bullying and the impact of verbal bullying depicted in the film.

## **METHOD**

The researcher used a descriptive method to conduct research and analyze the selected film. The researcher quoted the theory from (Sugiyono, 2013) "The descriptive research method is a research method that is carried out to find out the value of variables, both individually and in groups without making comparisons or connecting between one variable and another."

This research was carried out through several steps. The first step is to analyze by watching a film that shows acts of verbal bullying in the scene. After that, the results of this analysis were re-evaluated and thoroughly researched using theories derived from books, journals, and other research articles to find the related problems of the film *The Karate Kid* (2010), directed by Harald Zwart.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher used the theory from (Wardhana, 2015) to analyze the motives of verbal bullying that occurred in movies. Here's a scene that shows the motive.

1. **Feelings of Hatred**



**Figure 1.** Bullying of Dre's Black Skin

Cheng : "Can I hold your hair?"

Cheng : "Get away from us!"

Cheng : "All of us."

In this scene, Dre meets Cheng and his friends after coming out of the room where he watches Meiyong play the violin. Cheng along with his friends suddenly bully Dre who is a transfer student from the United States. Dre who clearly has racial differences with the others, is bullied for having different body features, as in this scene, Cheng mocks Dre's hairstyle. The hatred that Cheng and his friends have for Dre is the driving force behind this bullying.

## 2. Lack of Confidence and Attention Seeking



**Figure 2.** Cheng interrupts Meiyong and tells Dre to leave

Cheng : \*speak Chinese

Meiyong : \*reply in Chinese as well

The verbal abuse committed by Cheng in this scene was not only directed at Dre, but also directed at Meiyong. Meiyong, who was talking to Dre, suddenly received physical and verbal abusive treatment. Dre who tries to help Meiyong gets an order not to help her, which leads to physical slaps and kicks. The motive for Cheng's behavior is because he wants to look cool in front of his friends and wants to get attention from the surroundings. Cheng bullies someone he thinks is inferior to him with the aim of increasing his status and making him feel more dominant.

### 3. Feelings of Resentment



**Figure 3.** The teacher's abusive treatment of Cheng

Teacher : "Mercilessly."

In this scene, it is finally revealed that Cheng's abusive behavior comes from his overflowing emotions due to the treatment of his teacher. In this final scene, Cheng becomes even angrier after receiving treatment from his teacher, although it is also clear that Cheng's emotions change when he starts to think that his bullying of Dre is wrong.

#### Effects of Verbal Bullying

The researcher used the theory of (Fujikawa, 2016) to analyze the effects of verbal bullying that occurred in this film.

#### 1. Feeling Intimidated



**Figure 4.** Dre hid from Cheng and his friends

One of the effects of Cheng's bullying on Dre was that Dre felt intimidated and couldn't go to school properly. Dre always hides when he hears, or sees Cheng who is with his friends because he has a fear of being bullied again if Dre is seen.

#### 2. Feeling Different



**Figure 5.** Dre complains to her mother

Dre : "I'm not happy, I hate here! I want to go home."

Dre, who has received bullying several times, doesn't like his new environment. In China, where he now lives is a foreign place to him and he doesn't like how he is different from others. Dre complained to her mother that she preferred her life when she was still living it in the United States.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the film *The Karate Kid* (2010), the researcher found several causes of verbal bullying committed by the film's antagonists against the protagonist. In this film, Cheng bullies Dre because of feelings of hatred when he sees the significant difference in Dre's physique from the rest of China. Cheng also wants to increase his confidence and make himself more dominant to look cool. This motive is what finally made Dre get verbally bullied.

Meanwhile, the impact of the bullying shown in this film is that Dre feels different from his surroundings and feels intimidated by the presence of Cheng and his friends. Dre, who wants to return to the United States and always hides when he is close to Cheng, shows that he does not like the treatment or verbal abuse he receives.

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