

Depression and Suicide: A Book of Poetry about the Impact of Being Bullied

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ABSTRACT

In this creative work, I want to write a narrative poetry about bullying. Bullying often occurs and goes unnoticed and I want to raise its awareness by writing this book of poetry that revolves around bullying. Bullying has negative impacts on the young and old, such as depression and suicidal thoughts. Depression is a mental illness that affects someone morally and can change their behavior. In this creative work, I want to show the effects of bullying for teenagers, specifically those in high school. The main character, Icha, is bullied due to her social status at school. After being bullied, she becomes depressed and starts to have suicidal thoughts. In the end, she cannot take the pressure anymore and commits suicide. The result is a book of poetry consisting of twenty poems about the story of Icha and her being bullied.

Keywords: Bullying; negative impacts; depression; suicidal thought; social status

INTRODUCTION

Bullying that leads to depression and even suicide is not an uncommon term nowadays and has happened around the world. According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), 30% of young teens in the world have been prone to bullying (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). While bullying can be seen as not a threat and what kids usually do to joke around, the effects of it can be dangerous. These effects can affect the victim in their adulthood. Being bullied can also lead to depression, mental health issues, and even suicide (Al-Bourini, Al- Raqqad, Al Talahin, Aranki, 2017). Victims of bullying need to seek psychiatric help immediately, or else it will affect their adulthood.

Adults who have experienced bullying will also carry its effect when they are working. They will have the same effects as they had when they were bullied, however, those effects will only be heightened and affect their choices as an adult (Arsenault, 2017). One of the few examples is having financial difficulties in deciding their lives (Arsenault, Maughan, Takizawa, 2014). It influences them from the early ages of adulthood until they are in their 50s. Research in the United States was conducted on adults who have experienced bullying in their childhood. Those who were affected by bullying turn out to have increased levels of anxiety disorders between the ages of 18 and 23. In addition, the research shows that they started drinking alcohol at the age of eighteen. Young adults who were bullied tend to have a higher hospital record due to stress (Arsenault et al., 2014).

Bullying is one of the most significant issues kids confront in the educational system and one of the biggest health dangers. Bullying is defined as “repeated acts of unprovoked aggression that are damaging psychologically or physically for the victim, and where the strength of the aggressor and the victim is unequal” (Al-Bourini et al., 2017, p. 44). It does not have to be only one

bully, but it can be more than one since bullying can leech off to others who see it and make them join in on the action (Al-Bourini et al., 2017, p. 44).

As a form of violence that causes injury to others, school bullying takes place when a student or group of students use their strength to harm others. It can happen at school or during various activities. The impact given from bullying is negative on its victim and can scar them for the rest of their lives (Al-Bourini et al., 2017). Bullying, which occurs among students at all levels of public school and has the potential to escalate into all forms of violence, involves physical and verbal violence as well as elements of power and control as well as the desire to determine the future of others from peers and other students. Verbal or physical hostility against the same individuals, their property, the environment, or the natural world is offensive and never justified (Al-Bourini et al., 2017).

Bullying can take several different types. These types of bullying are classified into certain conditions based on how the bullying impacted the victim (Al-Bourini et al., 2017). These types are physical bullying, verbal bullying, sexual bullying, psychological bullying, social relation bullying, and property bullying (Al-Bourini et al., 2017). However, based on research done in Yogyakarta, verbal and social relation bullying are more common than the other types of bullying (Marchira, Marela, Wahab, 2017). The research shows that 49% of the students experienced being bullied, with 47% of it being verbal bullying.

Bullying victims range from different factors. A person being bullied can be caused by one factor or a few factors (Ahmed, Elbeh, Galal, Metwaly, Shaaban, 2022). These factors can come from the individual themselves or from external factors that they have been around. These factors result in the bullies' ordering others or even intimidating others due to their power. The factors are gender, grade level, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, bodybuilding and physical characteristics, externalizing behavior, self-esteem, popularity and social skills, academic achievement, and physical disability (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Bullying is the cause, which means that there are also the effects. One of them being depression. As stated by the World Health Organization, "Depression is a common illness worldwide and it is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life." (2021). Another effect would be suicidal thoughts or ideation. This is a result if the effect of depression is not treated. Depression branches out to other mental illnesses, one of them being suicide ideation. Suicide ideation is a term that is used to define thoughts, wishes, and preoccupations that has to do with death and suicide (Duong, Harmer, Lee, Saadabadi, 2023). Meanwhile, the worst one of all, suicide attempts, have been recorded on victims who have been bullied many times. It is mostly in the adolescent or teenage years when those suicide attempts take in.

Bullying is a serious problem and I want to share its awareness. As stated by the effects before, bullying is dangerous and can even cause death by suicide for its victims. I hope this creative work can reach out to the victims to voice out that they are being bullied. Also, I wish for the readers who read it can also know the dangers of bullying and that they can lessen the chances of bullying happening. I hope that the readers do not see this creative work as poems that can be found easily on social media, but rather as a story that they can read and share with others.

The genre I want to use in this creative work is narrative poetry. It is a narrative poetry with the topic of bullying. It is a free verse poetry that fits modern literature, giving it more freedom of expression in the written form. Contemporary poetry is a form of free verse poetry that is used in the century where we are living (Sparks, 2022). It does not follow the usual iambic pentameter that has been used throughout the history of poetry. Free verse poetry does not have a sense of rhythm in them (Sparks, 2022). This with narrative poetry gives more space to expressions. It can leave the poem with a happy tone, a sad tone, and more as I put it in the poems. In this creative work, I end it in a sad tone.

The story of this creative work follows Icha, a 15-years old girl that deals with bullying at school. She starts off as a cheerful and friendly girl who comes from the countryside. She enters a high school in the city. However, due to her low socioeconomic status, she is bullied in the form of verbal and social relations. This leads her into being depressed and she starts to have suicidal thoughts. After months of constantly being bullied and with no one helping her, she decides to commit suicide by jumping off the school rooftop.

I am using secondary research for this thesis. I read and collect various articles and books found online about the topics for my thesis. What I read is not only from Indonesia but also internationally. The topic of my research, bullying, is widely used in other articles and books, so skimming them is not easy. Sources I found had a variety of different reasons for why bullying started, but I decided to choose the one that started in school and from an egotistical approach, where the perpetrator feels high and mighty.

In addition to secondary sources, I add my personal experiences back to my teenage years in junior and senior high school. I feel putting those experiences here can be a good example. I try to portray the feelings that I had been bullied and pour them into the main character of the story. In addition, I also put the bullies that I had back in junior high as a part of the bullies' personalities in this narrative poem. I feel by pouring the feelings of someone who had experienced the same thing, could enhance the reader's experience reading it.

CONCEPT OF CREATIVE WORK

This creative work is narrative poetry. Narrative poetry is used to tell a story through verses instead of sentences, unlike novels or short stories. However, it does contain the same aspect, which has the plot, characters, and setting (Craven, 2019). This creative work is made into a contemporary instead of the standard ones that use rhyme and meter. This is to suit the modern era where contemporary poetry has taken over and has gone in different ways from the traditional ones (Sparks, 2022). This narrative poetry collection can be seen from a real-life setting that is made up of a story.

There are two poems that inspire me to do this kind of creative work. The first one is "The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee" by N. Scott Momaday (1991). This piece is 180 degrees turn on the piece that I am going to make. However, because it is the opposite, I decided to make it as an inspiration. The poetry talks about someone who is living in bliss with nature. They feel at peace and one with nature, which builds their personality within themselves. They feel like they are a part of nature itself, a part of its cycle. This results in a happy-themed poem with a light mood. With the

repetition of “I am,” the person is proud to be one with nature. This inspired me to do something similar so I can make the readers entranced by it, but instead of nature and bliss, it is depressing.

The second one is “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe (1845). It is a narrative poetry that I took as an inspiration. It is a fictional narrative about a man who lost his loved one. The despair that he felt after losing her is immense and he is left weak and weary. He spends the rest of his nights reading books mindlessly. This leads him to even talk to a raven who is knocking at his door. I want to put the same number of struggles to the main character as to show that she is weak and weary after being left alone and bullied.

However, despite the similarities, a piece cannot truly be one without differences. I am taking a different approach than “The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee” by using a dark and despair-like mood. The next difference is that it is contemporary poetry that uses free verse rather than standard verses. As mentioned before, the verses follow a range of stanzas instead of the usual four verses per stanza like in “The Raven.”

Synopsis

Icha is a girl who just entered senior high school in the big city. She comes from the countryside, so everything is new to her. At first, she tries to befriend some of her classmates. However, due to her low socioeconomic status, the school bullies decide to torment her. They use their status as rich kids with a high social status to bully her and spread rumors about her. This causes the whole school to look down on Icha, making her an outcast. Because of the treatment of the others, she grows more depressed, even thinking about committing suicide by writing poems about it. Her depression starts to get worse until the point where she commits suicide in the end.

Poems

1. Smile of the Pure

She passes by a few students

With a smile on her face

They do the same

Engaging in a friendly chat

A good start

For the first time

2. Words of Malice

“Look at that poor girl”

One spoke

“Go back to your farm”

The other said

The words of poison

Spread like a plague

3. Stop It

Eyes glare wherever she goes

Whispers of lies around

Stop it

Stop it

She cannot take it anymore

But no one dared

To stop it

4. Jealousy Inside (Icha's Poem)

The smile of others

I cannot feel it

The warmth of friends

I cannot find it

Why can they smile

Why can they talk

I am only silenced

5. Goodbye (Icha's Poem)

Maybe it is time

To say goodbye

To everyone

To no one

A life

That won't be remembered

That won't be cherished

6. Final Wish

As she takes a deep breath

She makes her wish

Of no one will cry for her

Of no one will long for her

To end her useless life

From a single step

As she prays

Her final wish

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this creative work is to show the dangers of bullying and how it impacts the victims in a negative way. The narrative poetry shows how the victim, who starts off as a cheerful and friendly girl, commits suicide due to being bullied because she comes from the countryside. The main character, Icha, suffers from being bullied verbally and in social relations. This results in her being depressed and committing suicide at the end of the story.

Icha is a girl who comes far away from the big city. She has high hopes of going into school there. However, when the bullies know that she is from the countryside and has low socioeconomic status, they torment her by saying that she does not belong there. This continues further when even her classmates don't want to get close to her due to the bullies telling others about it. Icha feels alone and becomes depressed from being isolated by the others. She starts off writing poems about how she is sad and even about what happens in the afterlife, implying that she wants to commit suicide. The bullying keeps happening and Icha cannot take it anymore. She runs up to the school rooftop and commits suicide by jumping off the school building.

This creative work shows how verbal and social relation bullying are done. When the bullies decided to torment Icha, they used phrases. In the poem "Words of Malice," it is shown one type of bullying, which is verbal bullying. It also shows the factor behind the reasoning for bullying, which is low socioeconomic status. This is indicated by the line "Look at that poor girl" and "Go back to your farm." There are also other poems that I wrote to show another type of bullying, which

is social relation bullying. This is the continuation of verbal bullying. The poems “Alone Lunchtime,” “Chosen Yet Not Chosen,” and “Stop It” show how Icha is distanced from the other

classmates. She is shown to sit lonely in the corner, eating lunch by herself, and even not being chosen inside a group for group work. The purpose of those poems is to show how social relation bullying is done and also how it affects the victim.

There is another reason for this creative work being written, which is the effects of bullying. The poems in Icha’s poems, such as “Jealousy Inside” and “Goodbye,” show that Icha is depressed and wants to commit suicide. She does not think of herself, rather how others judge her. This is to show how depressed Icha really is until she wants to commit suicide. While in the poem “Final Wish,” she commits suicide from being bullied. The poem has lines that indicate Icha wishes no one to remember her. Finally, she commits suicide by jumping off the school building.

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