

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Ugliest is a dystopian novel published in 2005, in New York lifetime, and wrote by Scott Westerfeld. Scott David Westerfeld is an American author, born in Dallas, Texas on May 5, 1963. Scott Westerfeld best known for his series Ugliest, Pretties, Specials, Extras, etc. Most of his works raised the theme of ideal beauty, identity, and individuality with dystopian genre. The ugliest novel is set in a world where individuals mandatory cosmetic surgery upon reaching a certain age typically around sixteen to conform to societal standards of beauty. This novel provides a thought provoking and dystopian perspective on beauty standards. This novel also presents the beauty's obsession with physical attractiveness through plastic surgery. The beauty standard is not just about appearance but also about social control, acceptances, manipulate of identity and to enforce conformity to a standardized notion of beauty predetermined by the governing authorities.

Dystopias are imaginary and imperfect world that reflects fear, failures, and possible outcomes of society (Salman, N, 2021). Dystopian literature which employs societies overwhelmed with dependency and oppression, creates the best medium to examine the way the individual divest himself of the social

boundaries. *Uglies* can well be tagged as a dystopia since it depicts a society in which the protagonist does not want to live because of a series of negative features (Galdón Rodríguez, 2018). In *Uglies* novel, the dystopian literature portrays the most totalizing governmental systems for an individual to transcend its social boundaries and form a self-identity. Dystopian novel have several common characteristics and themes such as a oppression, rebellion, environmental destruction, question of identity, etc (Salam, N, 2021). In *Uglies* novel founded that the government creates a perfect world of sameness by doing surgery and doctrines its citizens that they are all the same. They are equal after achieving beauty ideal and removing all the differences. The citizens are encouraged with the idea that being pretty or having the same look is the only way to make people equal.

In addition to the cultural demands to look pretty, there are many other factors that also influence the main character in this novel to having plastic surgery. These factors may also be psychological such as a low self-esteem, acceptance of family and friends, self-acceptance and finding a good partner. The importance of physical attractiveness discovers the assumption that attractive people have more socially desirable personality trait is acquired a more prestigious job, a competent partner, and a happier marriage (Behravan et al,2018).

Basically, beauty standard come from society, therefore beauty standard

does not harbor any positive nor negative value. Beauty standard might become toxic when a person cannot let go of their obsession with the flaws on their body (Purwonto et al., 2022). A person may experience anxiety, depression, or body dissatisfaction. The majority of people perceive cosmetic surgery as mainly aimed at enhancing appearance when there are no underlying medical or physical issues with the person's looks initially. A woman's choice to have surgery was a way of them taking back some control over their bodies. However, Anxiety and depression increased in the years following surgery (Dean et al., 2018).

The notion of beauty has historically captivated human imagination, serving as a source of inspiration, aspiration, and even obsession. Beauty becomes more nuanced reflecting changes in social and emotional development. Being obsessed with our faces and body and need to look good in public have become a common vogue in different societies around the world. Looking good is important things that can help people make good impression, and other people's assessments of us make many people try to appear better. Sometimes the appearance and beauty of the skin is the main factor in life (Behravan et al., 2018). The impact that culture can have on the standard of beauty is that many people undergo plastic surgery. This has become a trend throughout the world to achieve the goal of looking pretty.

The story in this novel encourages readers to think critically about societal norms and environmental issues depicted in the novel. At the beginning

of the story set the teenager's journey of self-discovery. In the dystopian society, the teenagers at the age of 16th have to undergo plastic surgery to become pretty. Pretties are society's idealized version of beauty, with symmetrical features, flawless skin, and physical attractiveness. These things happened because society thinks that by being pretty, teenagers will get a luxurious life.

In this novel, Scott Westerfeld visualizes the beauty standard as a complex and oppressive force within society. He visualizes the beauty standard as a societal construct that is often enforced through various means, including technology, cultural norms and manipulation. These things effect obsession with achieving the societal standard and leading to feeling low self-esteem. The problems in this novel are very interested to analyze. The way culture effect the teenager to obsession to fulfill the beauty standard and the way it's affect her life, seen from psychological view. This thesis will discussed it with the tittle The Beauty Pageant Obsession of the teenager Described on Uglies Novel by Scott Westerfeld.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem described by the researcher, the researcher found several problems:

1. The causes of beauty standard to the teenagers in Scott Westerfeld's Uglies.
2. The effects of beauty obsession on teenager personal identity in Uglies Novel
3. The teenager overcoming the beauty standard

1.3 Review of Related Studies

In conducting the research, the writer finds a few research related to the novel and theory. The first related study is an international journal conducted by Umniah Muhammed Abdulkareem (2023) with entitled *Beyond Skin-Deep: The Relationship Between Beauty Ideals and Identity Crisis in Scott Westerfeld's Uglies*. This research applies the theory of Erik Erikson's identity development and Henri Tajfel and John Turner's social identity theory. As the result of the analysis the standards of beauty can result in individuals facing personal and societal identity crises as they are pressured to conform to a specific beauty standard upheld by media and societal norms. This pressure often leads to feelings of inadequacy, diminished self-esteem, and a negative body image. These beauty ideals can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and discrimination based on appearance, fostering feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about one's societal acceptance. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact of beauty standards on personal and social identities and strive towards fostering diverse and inclusive societies that celebrate all forms of beauty.

The second related study is conducted by Nuray Salman with the entitled *The Concept of Individuality in Scott Westerfeld's Uglies and Lois Lowry's The Giver* (2021). This research discusses the concept of individuality in terms of achieving the transcendence in two dystopian novel: *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

and *Uglies* by Scott Westerfeld. This thesis examines an individual's condition in a social organization and which role maturity plays in achieving this transcendence. The researcher found that in *Uglies* novel equality is provided by having same appearance. The citizens are encouraged with the idea that being pretty or having the same look is the only way to make people equal. Thus, the aim of the operation is to turn equally beautiful or precisely, equally equal. As a result of this research, numerous people who see others as role models imitate, they want to look, wear, live and even think like others. Illustrating a world where everyone acts, thinks, and looks the same, Lowry and Westerfeld shows the drastic possible outcomes of this wish.

The third related study is by Tuti Handayani (2018) with her thesis entitled *Beauty Obsession of the Main Character in Sarai Walker's Dietland*. This research applies the feminism theory Beauty Myth by Naomi Wolf. As the result of the analysis the main character meets individuals with diverse outlooks on life, particularly regarding beauty and happiness, which significantly impact her perspective. These people play a crucial role in transforming the main character's views on beauty and happiness, indicating the profound influence of one's surroundings on behavior. Previously exposed to unsupportive and negative influences, the main character became fixated on societal beauty standards. However, through the support of her new environment, she undergoes a positive change in attitude towards beauty standards. Sarai Walker's "Dietland"

illustrates how societal definitions of beauty can affect women's lives and mind, highlighting the insecurity women face in determining what is true beauty, as perceptions of beauty varies among individuals.

The fourth is a journal by Siti Khodifatul Fauziah entitled *Confronting Beauty Standards in Scott Westerfeld's Uglies (2021)*. The journal focuses on the issue of beauty standards criteria and the way the main character confronts it. In *uglies*, Westerfeld depicts two types of teenagers that one of them praise the standards of beauty and the other confront to it. Westerfeld portray Tally character as the teenager that has influenced and victimized by the beauty standards. It is shown by her desire to be pretty. The reason the character has the desire to be pretty because the society creates the certain beauty criteria that everyone must follow. In this novel, as a result of this study shows that beauty standards which is created by society drives the teenagers to an excessive beauty obsession and makes them as the object to end up the operating. However, the main character can confront it by self-love and making decision.

The fifth is a journal conducted by Citra Nareswara Pramesti and SugengPurwanto (2023) with entitled *Toxic Beauty Standard Reflected in Prakasa's Imperfect: A Psychoanalysis*. As the result of the analysis that the be as is of beauty standard is neutral, corresponds to each individual's preferences in what they see as beautiful. However, the fixation on the beauty standards could become toxic if one cannot let go of their obsession with the flaws that are visible

on their body. The body neutrality movement emerges as a response to address this issue, encouraging people to focus on the functionality of their limbs instead the aesthetics of their bodies.

The sixth is an article by Kristi N. Scott and M. Heather Dragoo entitled *The Baroque Body: A Social Commentary on the Role of Body Modification in Scott Westerfeld's Uglies (2019)*. This article examined the changing nature of the body with social dynamics from a humanistic perspective. The world created by Scott Westerfeld suggests that while body modification is for many today an expression of individuality or chosen community, it is creating a new and coercive “normal body”. Once extreme body modification measures are adapted, new rogues will push the boundaries again to stand out as individual. Beauty standards reflect a cycle of rebellion and conformity. The transformation from ugly to pretty also alters Tally and Shay’s identities and they lose their sense of subjectivity.

The seventh is an article by Amanda Crandall Sharp with the entitled *The Relationship Between Body Dissatisfaction and Cosmetic Enhancement Surgery (2018)*. This research focused on increasing trend toward cosmetic surgery to achieve a perceived ideal body image and meet psychological and social needs. The study examined the relationship between the surgeries undergone, level of body dissatisfaction, and preoccupation with appearance. Childhood teasing and societal pressure can have long lasting effects on the way that individual perceive themselves and others around them. There are certain body image concerns that are portrayed, in particular weight, complexion, and pubescent concerns are considered a norm, these

perceived norms appear to be related to a variety of behavior and attitudes including body image. Recently, many people choose to undergo plastic surgery enhancements in an effort to meet desired standards, or to fulfill psychological and social needs. And it has been increased every year.

The eight research is conducted by Elena Rozalia Petre (2022) with the title *Young Adult Dystopian Literature in the English Subject: Uglies (2005) and Flawed (2016)*. This research examined the recurrent themes in dystopian fiction. The genre of dystopian fiction has been largely studied, and significantly contribute explains the main themes and features. The result of this study can shed some light on the characteristics of 21st century dystopian fiction. Most of dystopian authors admitted that dystopian always have a negative side of the perfect world. Society is a common feature in this genre. In *Uglies* Scott Westerfeld present a equality among citizens, which is not only provided through politics or economics but also with a compulsory operation that avoids ugliness, and therefore, all types of discrimination everyone is to be pretty.

The ninth journal is conducted by Ruth Kaziga, Charles Muchunguzi, Dorcus Achen, and Susan Kools entitled *Beauty is Skin Deep: The Self-Perception of Adolescents and Young Women in Construction of Body Image within the Ankole Society (2021)*. The paper focused on the Adolescent Response to the socio-cultural construction of body image. It aimed to understand the self-perception of adolescent of their body image within Ankole society. Adolescent and young women become increasingly aware of their bodies through images presented to them through social

structures during their developmental stage that can drive unhealthy behaviors. As a result, adolescent's perception of beauty was influenced by several factors that included beauty expectation, beauty comparison and relationship that keep them oscillating between traditional and contemporary beauty ideals. Finding suggest that young adult could benefit from social shifting of focus from physical appearance to other valuable development assets.

1.4 Research Questions

Related to the background of the research, identification of the problem, and scope of the research, the research questions will focus on these questions:

1. What are the causes of the beauty obsession to the teenager in Uglies novel?
2. What are the effects of beauty obsession on teenager's personal identity?
3. How does the teenager in Uglies novel overcome the beauty standard?

1.5 Scope of the Research

In this research, the scope of the research focuses on analyzing the beauty pageants obsession among teenagers as depicted in the Uglies novel using psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud. The writer limited the discussion into several topics. Firstly, the writer examines the causes of the teenager obsession in the novel. Secondly, the writer finds out the effects of beauty obsession on personal identity in Uglies novel. Lastly, the writer investigates how the

teenager's overcome the beauty standard.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

In general, this research aims to enhance the analysis of the teenager in *Uglies* by Scott Westerfeld. This research will specifically focus on these problems:

1. To analyze the causes of beauty obsession to the teenagers in the novel
2. The effects of beauty obsession on teenager personal identity
3. To analyze how the teenagers in the novel overcome the beauty obsession

