

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

The news environment and consumption patterns are fast shifting from a traditional news cycle to a more advanced information cycle (Bergström & Jervelycke, 2018). This is evidenced by the decline in the use of conventional news media on their traditional platforms, such as newspapers, radio, and television. On the other hand, social media is gaining popularity. It is proven by the increasing number of people who use social media to access news via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, news websites, etc. (Mitchell and Page, 2015, as cited in Bergström & Jervelycke, 2018). It enables people to access and participate in the news process by sharing, commenting, and posting (Holton et al., 2015, as cited in Bergström & Jervelycke, 2018). Due to the accelerating rate of news dissemination via social media, we need to look for credible sources to guarantee their credibility. One of many news portals is Soompi.com. Soompi is a Korean news portal with comprehensive K-pop culture news coverage. Since 1998, Soompi has been the most renowned and oldest internet platform in South Korea, according to (Poriskova, 2012). The website disseminates news on Korean celebrities, music, movies, and fashion, among other topics; it is one of society's acknowledged platforms and collaborates with Korea's leading entertainment agency (Poriskova, 2012).

Apart from the existence of a trusted news portal, the facts are frequently blended with gossip and hate speech, making it exceedingly difficult to ascertain the truth (Gunawan et al., 2018). This can lead to misinformation since unverified information can be categorized as gossip or rumors. This phenomenon of gossip became known as gossip culture as time passed, one type of word-of-mouth communication (Feeley, 2012). Gossip is an evaluative form of social communication that exchanges positive or negative information without a third party (Foster, 2004, as cited in Le & Workman, 2013). Gossip can be transmitted face-to-face (spoken words) or through other means (e.g., written words), such as electronic word-of-mouth (Le & Workman, 2013). Specifically, social media technology has spread rumors worldwide in a couple of hours (Lee & Workman, 2014). According to Stirling (1956), a predisposition to gossip can be influenced by culture, yet it is considered that gossip exists in all known societies. Indeed, gossip can have both beneficial and harmful effects. As for the positive impact, researchers have stated that gossip is vital for the social group's development and maintenance (Baumeister et al., 2004, as cited in Cole & Scrivener, 2013).

Meanwhile, the negative effect is that the individual in question will become a victim and experience unpleasant impacts, such as a negative reputation in public or even the community cancels the individual in question (Bok, 1983; Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996 as cited in Cole & Scrivener, 2013). This phenomenon is usually referred to as cancel culture.

Currently, the word cancel culture no longer sounds rare, or we might be among people who did this for a person involved in an issue or controversy. Eka & Nisa (2022) stated that cancel culture is how people in society control social norms

through mass boycotts, hashtags, petitions, mass reports, rumors, or gossip in order to eliminate someone's influence due to their behavior, action, work, or words that are not in line with norms, then triggering the public's responses. Everyone is susceptible to cancel culture, but influencers, public figures, and celebrities are more susceptible since their lives are more visible. This cancel culture phenomenon is available for public consumption by their supporters and followers on social media (Eka & Nisa, 2022). The media will aggressively expose scandals. From the news disseminated on social media, cancel culture demonstrates the speed of disseminating news about problematic behaviors or actions and causes a rapid response on a broad scale with the same enormous impact (Ng, 2020). From that, we can see that the effects of each mass boycott are harmful. If not dealt with "correctly," cancel culture can rapidly spread misinformation and have career-ending consequences (Martinez, 2021). However, according to the circumstances, the impact of cancel culture obviously varies. Some people deserve to be canceled and accept the punishment given by the public, while others may not deserve to bear the consequences of cancel culture, either because the target is incorrect or because the information being disseminated is false (Yap et al., 2022).

Numerous instances of canceled culture have occurred, including the case of J.K. Rowling, which started in December 2019. The case began when J.K. Rowling defended Maya Forstater, a woman who lost her job due to abusive remarks regarding transgender people. Nonetheless, Rowling was criticized by internet users for her transphobia statement (Heiltjes, 2021).

Transphobia, according to Raja Chakravarthi et al. (2021), is a sense of hatred or dread for transgender persons. J.K. Rowling also criticized the term

“people who menstruate.” In her tweet in June 2020, she stated that denying biological sex by those born female but perceived and identified as men and could menstruate would never make them entirely women. This approach has excluded transgender individuals indirectly (Heiltjes, 2021). This opinion also generates much debate. Public anger cannot be dammed anymore. Rowling enhanced her perspectives through tweets. According to Rowling's Twitter:

If sex isn't real, there's no same-sex attraction. If sex isn't real, the lived reality of women globally is erased. I know and love trans people, but erasing the concept of sex removes the ability of many to meaningfully discuss their lives. It isn't hate to speak the truth.

The idea that women like me, who've been empathetic to trans people for decades, feeling kinship because they're vulnerable in the same way as women - ie, to male violence - 'hate' trans people because they think sex is real and has lived consequences - is a nonsense.

I respect every trans person's right to live any way that feels authentic and comfortable to them. I'd march with you if you were discriminated against on the basis of being trans. At the same time, my life has been shaped by being female. I do not believe it's hateful to say so.

Rowling published a 3,600-word essay titled “J.K. Rowling writes about her reasons for speaking out on sex and gender issues” in response to the criticism. The essay offers, roughly speaking, an explanation and her opinions on transgender. She desired a secure environment for transsexual women (Heiltjes, 2021). She received diverse reactions to the essay, naturally ranging between the pros and cons. This is why she has experienced a culture of cancelation. Her scandal is one of the numerous incidents of cancel culture in Europe. Considering that the characteristics of each nation's population vary, the severity of the impact of cancel culture will undoubtedly vary from country to country.

In countries with high-context cultures, nonverbal messages play a significant role, and the majority of the meaning of a message is either internalized by listeners or exists in the context. Examples of nations with high-context cultures are Japan, Korea, and China (Bangun & Kumaralalita, 2022). South Korea ranked number 43 in the global rankings of individualism and collectivism (Bangun & Kumaralalita, 2022). South Korea is known for its solid cancel culture. No matter how little the incident, it might hinder their professional advancement, particularly in the entertainment industry. The entertainment industry in South Korea is one of the industries with the highest growth rate in the twenty-first century, thus it is not surprising that this industry is in the public spotlight (Sohn & Youn, 2016).

Every public figure and celebrity must avoid being part of a cancel culture because once individuals in South Korea become involved in a scandal, it could be difficult for them to reclaim their positive reputation in the public domain (Bangun & Kumaralalita, 2022). Even after months, they were canceled because of their negative reputation. In addition, the object cancellation would have disadvantages such as contract cancellation, a negative public reputation, paying compensation, contract termination, etc. In the worst-case scenario, it could lead to financial burden and mental stress (Yap et al., 2022). It is impossible to understate the effect. The individual who was canceled and could not bear the boycott's impact could have committed suicide. Only a handful of people who are involved to cancel culture cases that could overcome the impact and remain active in public again, such as the scandal involving Kim Seon-Ho in 2021, can be considered canceling cancel culture (Bangun & Kumaralalita, 2022).

Kim Seon-Ho is a Korean actor. Before the scandal, he was at the peak of his career. His most recent drama, *Hometown Cha Cha Cha*, proved popular and topped Netflix's list of the 10 most popular movies and television shows (Bangun & Kumaralalita, 2022). Nevertheless, the situation changed abruptly when the scandal appeared and involved him. Kim Seon-Ho's scandal began when a Pann user revealed she was being a former girlfriend of a Korean celebrity with the initial K. The public afterward learned that it was Kim Seon-Ho. She admitted that Kim Seon-Ho was forcing her to abort the kid she was carrying. Due to his reputation as a good man, the public was astonished by the controversy and disappointed in him. They wrote negative comments on social media, which portrayed Kim Seon-Ho's reputation and caused his cancelation. Kim Seon-Ho experienced negative impacts because of that. As time went by, the truth appeared and proved that Kim Seon-Ho is innocent. Instantly, netizens' popularity perceptions on Kim Seon-Ho's reputation shifted and turned positive. It led to a career revival. From that, we can see how the dynamic of netizens' popularity perceptions in portraying someone's reputation. The language netizens use and how they twist words in such a way certainly has a different meaning for everyone who reads it. It could implicitly have many meanings so that it could affect one another on how they perceive someone's reputation.

Consequently, this study analyzes the 170 selected netizens' responses in three Soompi articles that inform about scandals, reveal facts, and Kim Seon-Ho's career revival using the Transitivity System by M.A.K Halliday to analyze the ideational metafunction in construing the netizens' experiences and stances through their grammatical choices, and the Appraisal Theory by J.R Martin and P.R.R White

to analyze interpersonal metafunction in determining how the dynamic of netizens' popularity perceptions in portraying Kim Seon-Ho's reputation while and after the scandal, specifically in evaluating netizens' feelings and emotions as well as determine whether the implied meaning is decreased or increased. Text analysis employs the Transitivity System and Appraisal Theory as analytical tools. In this context, netizen comments' patterns, word choices, and structures indicate certain meanings. When talking or speaking, a person can have a positive or negative view of a speaker/writer or linguistic phenomenon (Winarni, 2012). Martin and White (2005) proposed "appraisal" as an expansion of Halliday's (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics idea (SFL). Halliday's SFL concept is the subject of an evaluation theory that examines the interpersonal implications of this concept as authors and presenters build distinct personalities for their works or intended audience (Martin, 2000). Social Semiotics is also applied to analyze how emoji contribute to meaning-making and how netizens' implied meaning can be described through emoji. The writer assumes that netizen responses portrayed Kim Seon-Ho's reputation while and after a scandal through their comments in response to news by describing Kim Seon-Ho's reputation which was able to portray public opinion to determine his reputation so it impacts his cancelation and career revival.

Several previous research on diverse topics has been undertaken. Martinez (2021) has investigated the impact of cancel culture on the publishing industry by using the controversial book *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins, the survey, and the specific sales data from NPD Bookscan as data collected. *American Dirt*'s scandal damaged Flatiron Books and the industry's reputation, as evidenced by increased sales and a few negative reviews.

The second prior research comes from Heiltjes's thesis (2021). He examined the online responses to J.K. Rowling's and Lionel Shriver's case in conjunction with contemporary concepts such as cancel culture and wokeness. The responses to Rowling's and Shriver's statements illustrate that the author's celebrity status considerably influences the public's response to authors and their controversies.

Another study has been conducted with discourse analysis as its focus. Bakher (2021) thesis examines how cancel culture determines whose representation and voice are heard using six online articles as her corpus. More deeply, she analyzed it using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach. The results indicate that the author of the article represents both the representation and the voice and that the articles have distinct tones.

The gap between the previous research and this study is that the recent research tries to analyze the cancel culture and career revival in forms of language, specifically the dynamic of netizens' popularity perceptions on the reputation of the object cancellation in the entertainment industry as well as their career. Thus, this study focuses on analyzing the comments from the three articles on Soompi.com.

Using Kim Seon-Ho's controversy in 2021, this study is expected to give media and cultural linguistic studies of cancel culture that occurred in a country with a solid cancel culture, such as South Korea. Therefore, discourse analysis helps identify the language used by netizens, which can portray the reputation formation, cancel culture, and career revival.

1.2 Research Question

1. How do the dynamic popularity perceptions in 170 selected netizens' comments on the three Soompi articles portray Kim Seon-Ho's reputation and lead to cancel culture?
2. How do the dynamic popularity perceptions in 170 selected netizens' comments on the three Soompi articles portray Kim Seon-Ho's reputation and lead to career revival?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

This study aims to:

1. Analyze how netizens' popularity perceptions portray Kim Seon-Ho's reputation and made him canceled by society.
2. Analyze how netizens' popularity perceptions portray Kim Seon-Ho's reputation and revived his career.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on analyzing Kim Seon-Ho's cancelation and career revival, especially the dynamic of netizens' popularity perceptions on his reputation through 170 selected netizens' comments on the three articles published on Soompi.com in 2021 using the Transitivity System, Appraisal Theory, and Social Semiotics. The articles are as shown below:

1. *Kim Seon Ho's Agency Issues Brief Statement After Actor Is Embroiled In Rumors* published by U. Kim on Soompi.com with 45 selected comments.

2. *Dispatch Reveals Details About Kim Seon Ho And His Ex-Girlfriend's Relationship* published by TimSoompi on Soompi.com with 94 selected comments.
3. *Kim Seon Ho Confirmed To Star In Upcoming Movie He Was In Talks For* published by U. Kim on Soompi.com with 31 selected comments.

1.5 Limitations of The Study

By analyzing this text, this study only focused on netizens' responses in the form of the dynamic of netizens' popularity perceptions on Kim Seon-Ho's cancelation, career revival, and his reputation reflected through Soompi's article's comment section without analyzing the three articles. Further studies need to be done by analyzing and examining the Transitivity System, Appraisal Theory, and social semiotics in analyzing emoji.

1.6 Significance of The Study

This research is expected to contribute in developing a gossip culture studies through media and cultural linguistic in the digital age, particularly cancel culture and career revival in the entertainment industry. This study will also be a reference for future research in comprehending how influential netizens' responses are in portraying the reputation and lead to cancel culture and career revival phenomena.