

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of The Study

Animated movies have long been a powerful medium for communicating complex emotions and psychological concepts. The number of platforms based on audio-visual entertainment services makes animated movies accessible anywhere and anytime. Many benefits come from watching animated movies, one of which is being a practical learning medium. Animation is a suitable learning method to convey messages to the audience in a fun and innovative way and can help improve learning skills (Praveen & Srinivasan, 2022).

As a practical learning medium, animated movies help convey material logically and emotionally. They have recently gained significant attention and proved an effective instructional tool to enhance individual learning (Baglama, 2018). Animated movies offer widely felt emotions to explore psychological concepts such as happiness, anger, fear, disgust, anxiety, grief, and others. Everyone shares grief as a form of emotion, and it has been the subject of research in various psychological theories.

Some theory researchers discuss the representation of grief applied to healing. The theory of the *Dual Process Model* emphasizes that the grieving process involves two types of responses that alternate with each other in its application (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). The first model is loss-oriented, which explains that emotional experiences caused by a loss, such as sadness, regret, and longing, can occur. The second model is also related to the previous, restoration-oriented model,

which focuses more on adjusting after loss to a new life (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Engel (1961) examined the natural process of suppressing grief, similar to healing physical wounds, such as shock, denial, awareness of loss, and recovery. This process is carried out at different times, according to the wound or grief experienced by each person.

Other research emphasizes that grief is not something that must be resolved but must be integrated into one's life by using the metaphor of growing around grief to describe how individuals learn to live with loss without necessarily forgetting it (Tonkin, 1996). Kübler-Ross (1969) emphasized the Five Stages of Grief theory, which is experienced by individuals to deal with loss, consisting of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. This theory is widely applied to various forms of loss, and these stages are not always linear and can vary between individuals. However, there has been no research analyzing the Inside Out movie in the context of grief in children using the five stages of grief theory visually and narratively, which is a gap in this study. The theory to be analyzed can explain in more detail each stage applied by each character in a film.

In this research, Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief theory provides the grieving process, describing the range of emotions experienced by individuals in the face of loss or life changes with significant adjustment consequences. Each stage (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) is a part of a continuum of emotions that help us learn to live with the loss experienced by every human being. These stages provide a conceptualization of how the complex emotional feelings of grief are processed. The five stages are tools to help us frame

and identify what we are feeling. Not everyone goes through all the stages or follows a predetermined order during grief (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

Through relatable characters and immersive narratives, some movies can depict the emotional journey of loss, allowing children to witness denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance in a way they can understand. The loss of someone who loved or a life change in life creates a new and imaginative environment in which children can cope with their feelings. This is in line with psychoanalytic theory, which not only helps them recognize but also resolves grief, providing emotional support that fosters resilience and emotional maturity in children, and changing the audience's perception of sadness and happiness by combining the two emotions in the film's narrative (Arendale, 2022).

In addition, most genres of animated movies tend to deal with complex emotions, such as fear, anxiety, happiness, sadness, and resilience, in a way that is easily accessible to young audiences. Emotional elements in animated movies can create a more meaningful and memorable learning experience, helping children remember vocabulary and language structures more effectively (Hofmann, 2018). Therefore, animated movies can help children understand their emotions by showing characters facing difficult circumstances and finding a way out. Friendship, self-discovery, and overcoming adversity are often applied to children to start their emotional maturity process. Children can explore themes such as identity discovery, interpersonal relationships, and social norms, which can help them make sense of their experiences in life (Hofmann, 2018). Animated cartoons can help adolescents think critically and get a more complex picture of the world

by presenting various visual points of view and stories they can easily relate to, thus eliminating stereotypes.

Most of the animated movies that children watch come from the Walt Disney film studio. The studio has produced a wide range of films that represent cultures and various emotional human experiences. Yessica (2022) claimed that death and grief are the human experiences that Disney films often use in their plots. In her study, she compared two animated movies that discuss grief in the application of their characters. *Coco* (2017), the first movie, depicts grief as a process of understanding and honoring loss through family memories and traditions. The movie emphasizes the importance of celebrating the lives of those who have gone, showing that grief can be overcome by maintaining a lasting emotional connection between the living and the departed. Meanwhile, *Onward* (2020) shows how grief can motivate one to search for meaning and understand the importance of family relationships, even when the loss cannot be entirely overcome.

Among the several Disney films that explore the theme of grief in their characters, *Inside Out* (2015) is one of the animated movies that effectively convey an understanding of human emotions through vibrant animation and imaginative storytelling. In addition to presenting emotions as something abstract, the film also personifies the emotions characters experience, following human emotions such as Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust, as characters with clear roles and functions in Riley's mind, the main character, and portrays emotions according to their names. This approach enables the audience, particularly children, to recognize that diverse emotions are a natural part of life. Each emotion plays a crucial role in shaping identity and helping individuals navigate life's challenges. Through a strong



emotional narrative and creative visual representations, the *Inside Out* movie successfully changed how audiences perceive emotions by illustrating how sadness and happiness can coexist to foster healthier emotional growth (Arendale, 2022).

Many studies have unraveled *Inside Out* (2015) from various perspectives. Chakravorty and Tilak (2021) stated that *Inside Out* portrays sadness as an essential and natural emotion in human life. Through the emotional character of Sadness, the film shows that sadness is not a negative emotion to be avoided but rather an important part of self-understanding and emotional connection with others. Sadness helps Riley, the main character, accept the changes in her life. Similar to this view, Zaltina, Rasiah, and Sofyan (2022) analyzed Riley's personality using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory, which divides the mind into id, ego, and superego. This research suggests internal conflicts that reflect these three psychological aspects. Joy represents the ego that tries to balance Riley's emotions, Sadness represents the superego that brings empathy and deep understanding, and characters such as Anger, Fear, and Disgust represent the id, which responds impulsively to discomfort. The film is presented not only visually displaying the inner emotions but also depicting the psychological dynamics that can shape a child's personality in sadness caused by problems in his life.

Not only viewed from the psychology aspects but *Inside Out* was also examined to explore and teach emotional intelligence. Kanjilal and Vijayalakshmi (2019) highlighted that *Inside Out* uses anthropomorphic characters to personify emotions in an approachable and memorable way, helping audiences, especially young audiences, to understand and appreciate the role of each emotion, even those often viewed negatively, such as sadness. They also discuss how the character

dynamics in *Inside Out* underline the importance of balanced emotional experiences. These experiences suggest that suppression of emotions can lead to an unhealthy relationship with one's feelings, whereas acknowledging all emotions can foster emotional resilience and well-being (Kanjilal & Vijayalakshmi, 2019).

Concerning emotional intelligence, Ali (2017) presents a creative intervention to facilitate an emotional intelligence approach to improve the emotional intelligence of its readers by using the *Inside Out* (2015) movie as the primary medium in his study. In this context, the psychoanalytic theory of the five stages of grief by Kübler-Ross can be applied to understand the emotional journey of the characters in the film and how this can be translated into a counseling intervention. He suggests creative interventions like those shown in *Inside Out* that can help readers, especially children and adolescents, recognize and express their emotions.

Hussain (2022) explored the psychological and emotional experience of grief through Kübler-Ross's theory by analyzing the autobiography *When Breath Becomes Air* by Dr. Kalanithi. The text highlights Dr. Kalanithi's journey as a doctor, which provides a unique perspective on the emotional impact of his illness and the grief he had to experience. The analysis applied the five stages of grief, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and

Based on the previous discussions, the research also explores the importance of animated movies as a powerful tool for representing complex emotional and psychological concepts, particularly grief, through the lens of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief, as Ali previously mentioned. According to UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children* (2021), 1 in 7 adolescents aged 10-19 worldwide

have a diagnosed mental disorder. The leading cause of death in this age group is suicide. In Indonesia, *Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak* (KPPPA) has surveyed the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing that around 13% of children experience depression. This is due to factors such as online learning, social isolation, and family pressure that contribute to the increase of mental health problems in children. Animated movies such as *Inside Out* (2015) serve as entertainment and practical learning media, especially in helping children and adolescents navigate emotional transitions, such as grief or loss. By examining how *Inside Out* represents these psychological stages, this study aims to investigate the depiction of the five stages of grief in the *Inside Out* animated movie, which leads to the main question.

### 1.2. Research Question

With the focus on the application of the five stages of grief theory to the *Inside Out* movie, here are two potential research questions:

1. How does *Inside Out* portray the five stages of grief?
2. How do the five stages of grief affect the main character of the movie *Inside Out*?

### 1.3. Objective of the Study

This research aims to explore the representation of grief in the *Inside Out* animated movie by portraying Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief. Specifically, this study aims to analyze how the movie communicates each stage of grief through the main character of Riley and her emotional journey. Additionally, the study

investigates the impact of these stages on Riley's psychological development, relieving light on how a child processes grief and emotional distress.

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

This research focuses on the representation of grief in the *Inside Out* animated movie, which is examined through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief theory in the script and movie through visual elements that depict emotions and the grieving process. Focusing on the main character, Riley, and other emotional characters in the *Headquarters*, namely Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust, represent the stages of grief. This research does not cover all psychological or cultural aspects of grief. Instead, the writer focuses on the literary context of the *Inside Out* animated movie script using Kübler-Ross' theory as the main framework.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is relevant in connecting the representation of human emotions, especially grief, in animated movies with deep psychological theories, such as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief. Grief is represented in narrative and visual contexts, potentially guiding audiences' emotional understanding, especially children, and providing new perspectives for educators and therapists using animated media as an educational and emotional therapeutic tool. This study contributes to academic discourse in film studies, media psychology, and literature by linking the movie's depiction of grief to Kübler-Ross's framework, offering a unique case study on how complex psychological concepts can be communicated to young audiences. Additionally, it highlights the role of



parental guidance in emotional education, using the *Inside Out* movie as a reference for helping children navigate complex emotions. Ultimately, this research encourages further exploration of grief and emotional coping mechanisms in children's media, enriching both academic understanding and practical applications for mental health education.

