



**BULLYING AND HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED BY CHRISTOPHER
BOONE AS A VICTIM IN HADDON'S *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF
THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME***

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for S-1 Degree in Literature

In English Department, Faculty of Humanities

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer honestly state that, he completed this study by the effort of his own without taking and imitating other results of studies from anyuniversity, S-1, S-2, S-3 and diploma degree. In addition, the writer also does not quote all of the materials from sources other than those stated in the bibliography.

Semarang, October 21, 2020



Wildan Muhammad Azfar

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?.”

Surah Rahman

“Don't ever lie to people who always make you laugh; his heart would take a long
time to heal”

This paper is dedicated to

My beloved parents and me

Nabilah, my motivation to finish this project.

APPROVAL

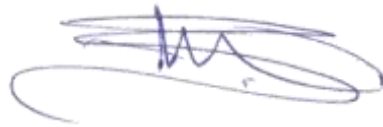
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Bismillah, all praise to Allah Swt, who has always given me health, blessing, and strength so that I can accomplish my project entitled “Bullying and Harassment Experienced by Christopher Boone as A Victim in Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in The Night-Time*”. Secondly, may shalawat and salambe upon our prophet Muhammad SAW who always give goodness in the world. On this occasion, I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who have helped me and supported me from the beginning of this project until its completion.

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I realize that this project is far from perfection and I will gladly receive any constructive criticism for this project. As the writer, I hope that this project will be useful for the people who read it for any kind of purposes.

Semarang, October 21, 2020



Wildan Muhammad Azfar

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ABSTRACT

This paper is written to analyze the bullying and harassment experienced by Christopher Boone, the main character of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, due to his condition as someone with mental disorder. The purposes of this paper are to analyze the theme of the novel, the conflict Christopher experienced throughout the novel, and the bullying and harassment Christopher received due to his condition. In writing this paper, the writer used library research to gather the necessary data, and textual methods to analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The result of the analysis shows that Christopher experiences verbal bullying and verbal harassment, and in most cases, the doers are strangers to Christopher.

Keywords: bullying; harassment; disability

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Society is not always fair. As a social being, human always interacts with other human, but sometimes the interaction is not always as good as expected. Sometimes human can act selfishly to one another. Most of human beings think that they have the same rights, but in reality, some people are treated differently. In many societies, some groups of people that are viewed differently may receive unjust treatments from the other members of the society. The difference may come in the form of race or ethnic difference, gender difference, sexual orientation difference, religion or belief difference, or as reflected in Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, a neurological condition difference.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time offers a different perspective to mental disorder. Many novels view mental disability or mental disorder as a hindrance, or even as something pitiful, but this novel presents the disorder simply as a different condition. Unlike the other novels, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* does not focus on the society's view on mental disorder; it simply focuses on the life of Christopher Boone, the protagonist. The novel is also very enjoyable and easy to understand because the writing style of the novel is very clear and informative.

The novel can be analyzed through sociological aspect. The writer tries to analyze the bullying and harassment in Christopher life. By analyzing

Christopher's way of life, the writer intends to show that Christopher's disorder is not a disadvantage, but rather a factor that distinguishes him from other people.

The novel helps the writer understand that even people are in difficult situation and treated differently by the other and underestimated by the other, they are still able to compete with other people, on the other hand, what makes them different can motivate them to get stronger and continue life.

1.2. Research Problems

The research problems in this study are as follows:

1. What is the characterization of Christopher, Ed, and Judy Boone in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*?
2. What are the conflicts experienced by Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*?
3. What are the acts of bullying and harassment Christopher experienced due to his condition in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*?

1.3. Purposes of the Study

The research problems in this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the characterization of Christopher, Ed, and Judy Boone in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.
2. To analyze the conflicts experienced by Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.
3. To analyze the acts of bullying and harassment Christopher experienced due to his condition in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.

1.4. Methods of the Study

In conducting the research for this study, the writer applies content analysis. Content analysis is a type of analysis done by evaluating textual materials to specify characteristics within texts (Dawson, 2002:118). Content analysis can be used to make inferences about the meaning that the text contains. The writer uses the appropriate sociological theories to analyze the events in the novel by understanding the unfair treatments received by Christopher Boone in the novel. To analyze the intrinsic elements of the novel, the writer uses close reading method. According to Eagleton (2008:38), close reading “suggests an attention to this rather than to something else: to the 'words on the page' rather than to the contexts which produced and surround them”.

The writer also applies library research method to collect data for the study. According to George (2008:1), library research is a method used by writers to investigate written sources by using certain tools, rules, and technique. There are two kinds of data source; they are primary and secondary data. This study uses the Mark Haddon’s novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* as the primary data source. Besides, the study uses other sources outside the novel to support the primary data such as, books, journals, theses, online documents and internet source to improve the knowledge.

2. BIOGRAPHY AND SUMMARY

2.1. Biography of the Author

The information for writing this biography of Mark Haddon is obtained from Famous Authors websites: <https://www.famousauthors.org/mark-haddon>.

Mark Haddon is a famous English literature artist. He is very well talented in writing literature, particularly in writing novel, he is also good in writing poetry, illustration, and abstract painting. His major work in literature is a novel entitled, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

Mark Haddon was born in Northampton, England in September 26, 1962. He went to Uppingham School for education and then he continued to Merton College, Oxford to study English Literature. He became a caretaker for disabled people in Scotland after he finished his study. His literary writing mostly inspired by his experience in dealing with autism and sclerosis people back in Scotland. He also did variety jobs, such as mail officer, theater man, as a cartoonist and illustrator. Illustrated version of his works can be found in many periodicals. A comic strip entitled “Men – A User’s Guide” is also an illustration of his work.

Some times after, Haddon moved to Boston, Massachusetts and stayed there with his wife for a year. After that they moved back to England to continue his passion in abstract painting and sold his art. After that he began to write children’s book as his start in writing. He also wrote and illustrated for kid’s show in television. His first children’s book was published in 1987 entitled Gilbert’s Gobstopper and it also followed by several books that he illustrated originally by himself.

Haddon is also the author of a famous comical children's book series, *Agent Z Meets the Masked Crusader*. He wrote the first book for the series in 1993. The series itself tells about three boys named Ben, Barney, and Jenks, and Agent Z is the three boys' secret identity. In 1996, one of the titles of the series, *Agent Z and the Penguins from Mars*, was adapted into a sitcom.

In 2003, Haddon published his first adult mystery novel entitled *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. The novel features a 15-year-old with a disorder that is similar to high-functioning autism as the main character. Many people guess that the novel's protagonist is someone with Asperger's Syndrome. However, according to Haddon himself, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is not about Asperger's syndrome, but rather on how it affects the life of the person suffering mental disorder and the difference it causes.

Haddon also wrote another adult novel entitled *A Spot of Bother*. The novel was published in 2006. He also penned the screenplay for two of BBC's TV series, *Fungus the Bogeyman* and *Coming down the Mountain*. Haddon also penned *The Talking Horse and the Sad Girl and the Village Under the Sea* and *The Talking Horse*, a poetry anthology released in 2005. Throughout his career, Haddon has accepted several awards, one of which is the Whitbread Book of the Year.

2.2. The Summary of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*

Christopher John Francis Boone is a boy with special needs. He has many Behavioral Problems and difficulty in communicating with other people. The exact name of his disorder is never mentioned in the novel, but it is stated that

Christopher has many Behavioral Problems. He also finds people confusing, as he cannot understand facial expressions well.

The society where Christopher lives in is not a really tolerant one. Christopher and the other students from Special Needs school often gets bullied or harassed by other children from outside of the school. However, Christopher never takes any notice on their efforts because he does not care about other people's words.

The novel begins when Christopher finds a dead dog lying in the middle of his neighbor's lawn. Christopher strokes the dog and wonder who killed the dog. Mrs. Sheers, the owner of the dog, sees Christopher with her dead dog she decides to call the police. Then Christopher has to spend some hours in jail because he assaults the police officer. Christopher's father then gets him out of the jail and he warns Christopher not to meddle in other people's business.

On the next day, Christopher breaks his promise to his father and starts investigating about the interesting case. He also writes his investigation in the form of a narrative story in a journal. However, Christopher listens to himself that he is only doing this for school project, as he is given an assignment to write a short story. He then asks his neighbors to find out information about the dog's death. He chooses Mr. Shears, the man who left her neighbor Mrs. Shears two years ago, as his prime suspect. When Christopher's father finds out that he has been asking the neighbors around about the dog, he gets mad, and makes Christopher promises not to do that again.

Christopher promises so to his father, but on the next day, he breaks his promise again. He has a conversation with one of his neighbors. From that conversation, he discovers that before he leaves Mrs. Shears, Mr. Shears had an affair with Christopher's mother. He also documents this information in his journal.

Not long after, Christopher's father finds the journal out. He is very angry about the book. He hides the book from Christopher. A few days later, Christopher searches for the book in his father's bedroom. He finds the book alongside a stack of letters addressed to him from his mother. After reading some of the letters, he discovers that his mother is actually still alive. This means that his father has been lying to him the whole time – he tells Christopher that his mother is dead because of a heart attack.

Christopher's father then apologizes to Christopher. He also admits that he is the one who murdered the dog because he is angry with Mrs. Shears, the dog's owner. Christopher then decides that he cannot trust his father anymore, because he has murdered a dog and he might murder him too. He runs away to London, where his mother lives with Mr. Shears. In his journey to London, he encounters many problems, mainly because he never travels by himself, he has no idea how to navigate public transportation, and now he has to be in a crowd for quite some time. He is also followed by a police officer because Christopher's father reports that Christopher runs away from home.

After quite a few hours, Christopher manages to reach his mother's apartment in London, where she lives with Mr. Shears. Christopher tells his

mother that his father told him that she is dead. His mother is shocked to hear this. At midnight, Christopher's father comes to the apartment to bring Christopher home, but Christopher's mother tells him to go home and that Christopher can live with her. However, Christopher and his mother ended up going back to Swindon, the town where Christopher lives in the beginning of the novel. Christopher's mother rents an apartment there, where she lives together with Christopher. Christopher is eager to be back, because he wants to take his level A math exam at school.

Christopher's father tries to make Christopher trust him again. He does so by buying him a puppy. After that, Christopher starts spending some time at his father's house. He still hasn't trust his father completely, but the puppy makes him willing to go there.

The novel ends with Christopher receiving his level A math exam results – he gets the best score possible. He then thinks that he can do anything, including attending university, because he has traveled to London by himself and solved the mystery of the dog's murder, which are things that are outside of his comfort zone.

3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

3.1. Intrinsic Elements

3.1.1. Character and Characterization

According to Holman, character is a term used to refer to a person in a fictional story (1985:74). Meanwhile, Holman defines characterization as the aspects of characters and the way the characters are presented and revealed by the author of the literary work (1984:75). As stated by Holman (1984:75), there are three fundamental methods of characterization in fiction:

1. Direct exposition, either in an introductory block or throughout the work, illustrated by action;
2. The presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author;
3. The representation from within a character, without comment of the character by the author.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the first type of characterization is direct characterization, while the second and third type of characterization is indirect characterization.

3.1.2. Conflict

According to Perrine in *Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense* (1984:42), conflict is a mismatch of actions, thoughts, wishes, or wills. From that definition, it can be inferred that a conflict may be concrete or abstract. A story may feature physical

conflict, emotional conflict, or even mental conflict. It is also possible that more than one kind of conflict is presented in one story.

According to Lukens in *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature* (2003:100-104), the most commonly found conflicts in literature are:

1. The conflict between an individual and himself;
2. The conflict between an individual and another individual;
3. The conflict between an individual and a particular society; and
4. The conflict between an individual and nature.

From the four types of conflicts above, it can be concluded that conflict can be categorized into two groups: internal conflicts, which occurs inside a character's mind, and external conflicts, which involves a clash between a character and an external factor, such as other characters, the society where they live and its rules, or even nature.

3.2. Extrinsic Elements

One may define extrinsic elements in literature as the factors that influence or have a role in the producing of a particular literary work. By identifying the extrinsic elements of a literary work, readers will have easier time in analyzing a literary work and comprehending the context. The extrinsic elements analyzed in this study is taken from the sociological aspects of the novel, specifically on the issue of bullying and harassment.

3.2.1. Bullying

Bullying is an action that repeatedly and over time intentionally inflicting injury on another person (Meyer, 2009:2). Bullying usually happens when there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Conn, 2004:30). In the case of bullying, the victims usually feel that they are too weak to retaliate to the bully (Conn, 2004:30). As stated in the report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, bullying may happen verbally, emotionally, or sexually, and is most commonly done by name-calling, threatening, or shunning the victim (Stuart-Cassel, et al., 2011:165). Conn (2004:32) states that insults and verbal intimidation are very commonly done by the bullies to attack their victims.

3.2.2. Harassment

As stated by Conn, in her book *Bullying and Harassment: A Legal Guide for Educators*, harassment is a form of discrimination that can be shown in the form of verbal or physical behaviour. The harassment of an individual is usually based on certain characteristics that are hated by the harasser, such as race, skin colour, sexual orientation, religion, or the disability of their victim (Conn, 2004:78). As stated in the official webpage of Canadian Human Rights Commission, harassment generally persists over time, but a serious one-time incident can also be considered as harassment.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Character and Characterization

4.1.1. Christopher Boone

Christopher Boone is a boy with special needs. The novel never specifies the exact name of his disability, but it is mentioned that he has many behavioral problems. He is also a student in special needs school. Christopher also directly states that he does not understand human expression well, therefore, he does not communicate well with other people.

Christopher is a smart boy. He is exceptionally smart in mathematics. This is proven in the end of the novel, as quoted from Christopher: “And I got the results of my Maths A level and I got an A grade which is the best result...” (Haddon, 2014:266). No other students in Christopher’s school has ever taken a Maths A Level exam before, therefore it is also possible that when it comes to mathematics, Christopher is the smartest student in his school.

Even though Christopher is not really a social person, he likes animals, especially dogs. Christopher directly expresses his feelings about dogs in the novel: “I like dogs. You always know what a dog is thinking. ... Also, dogs are faithful and they do not tell lies because they cannot talk” (Haddon, 2014:4).

Christopher does not like when a person tells lie to him or anyone else. He also states in the novel that he cannot tell lies. However, at some points in the novel, Christopher contradicts himself, because he tells lies to his father during his

investigation on Wellington's murder. This proves that Christopher himself can be dishonest at times.

4.1.2. Ed Boone

Ed Boone is Christopher's father. He lives in Swindon with Christopher. He cares a lot about his son but sometimes he can get a little impatient and temperamental with Christopher. In one of her letters to Christopher, Judy admits that Ed is a good father to Christopher, and compared to Judy, he is a better parent to Christopher. At most times, Ed does seem like a good father: he still manages to take care of Christopher while running his plumbing business, he knows what Christopher likes and dislikes, and even though he can be very harsh when he is mad to Christopher, he always apologizes to him. However, Christopher himself never expresses any appreciation or positive emotion about Ed. In fact, in the latter half of the novel, Christopher seems to detest his father due to the fact that he lies to him.

4.1.3. Judy Boone

Judy Boone is Christopher's mother. For the first half of the novel readers think she's dead, since that's what Christopher knows from his father. Actually, she ran away with her affairs, Mr. Shears. The reader does not really know much about her until Christopher finds the letters from his mother. In one of the letters, Judy states that "I was not a very good mother". She also admits that she often gets very angry with Christopher, and that she can be impatient sometimes. After

reuniting with Christopher, Judy initially seems happy, although after some times, she gets impatient with Christopher again.

4.2. Conflict

4.2.1. External Conflict

4.2.1.1. Person versus Person

Christopher also gets in conflict with his father, Ed. When Christopher finds out about Ed's lies about Judy's death and that Ed confesses to murdering Wellington the Poodle, Christopher loses his trust towards his father and becomes terrified of him. At one point in the novel, Christopher decides to run away to Judy's apartment in London. This conflict results in Christopher leaving together with Judy, as explained in section 4.1.1. Honesty and Trust.

At the end of the novel, Ed tries to make amends for his mistake and make up with Christopher by giving him a dog – a Golden Retriever named Sandy (Haddon, 2014:266). Christopher also spends some nights with Ed when Judy caught flu (Haddon, 2014:267). Therefore, it can be inferred that the relationship between Ed and Christopher gets better.

4.2.1.2. Person versus Society

Due to his disorder and behavioral problems, Christopher finds it difficult to understand other people, be involved in the society he lives in, and to behave in public. Society is not always kind to Christopher either – many people judges Christopher and other people with disorder or disability. As an example, a boy

named Terry once calls Christopher a “spazzer” (Haddon, 2014:33). All these factors make it difficult for Christopher to adapt to the society where lives in.

In the novel, this conflict is never resolved. While Christopher manages to achieve the highest possible score in his Maths A level exam, which he takes to prove to other people that he is not stupid, the novel does not show any notable changes in the way the people around Christopher views him.

4.3. Extrinsic Analysis: Bullying and Harassment

4.3.1. Christopher’s Disability

Christopher is portrayed as a boy with a disability. The novel never specifies the exact type of disability he has, but it is stated in the novel that Christopher has many Behavioral Problems. Among the Behavioral Problems Christopher has are not eating or drinking anything for a long time, not liking being touched, screaming when feeling angry or confused, groaning, and not talking to people for a long time (Haddon, 2014:59).

From the novel, it can also be concluded that Christopher finds social interactions to be a difficult and uncomfortable thing to do. In the novel, Christopher says, “I find people confusing” (Haddon, 2014:19). Christopher reasons that it is because people sometimes expresses their thoughts not through words, but rather through facial expressions or sighing, which may have different meaning depending on the context, and he cannot understand those different expressions (Haddon, 2014:19).

It is also implied that Christopher finds facial expressions to be confusing. Once, one of Christopher's teachers at school shows him drawings of different facial expressions, and Christopher can only identify a picture of smiling face as "happy" and a picture of frowning face as "sad". When the teacher shows him drawings of other expressions, he is unable to say what the pictures meant. Christopher's inability in understanding facial expression may be one of the causes of his lack of social skill.

Overall, it can be concluded that the disability Christopher has is not a physical disability, but a mental disability that influences his behavior, his way of thinking, and his capability in doing social interactions with the people around him.

4.3.2. Bullying

As someone who is considered as different – abnormal, even – in his society, Christopher Boone becomes a victim of bullying. In the whole 271 pages of the novel, the process or incident of bullying is not too prominent, but it is still quite noticeable. The novel itself is written through Christopher's point of view. Given that Christopher lacks social skill and that he does not care about other people, it is only natural that the novel does not focus on the acts of bullying.

As explained earlier, Christopher has a disability that affects his behavior and his capability in doing social interaction. Christopher is known to attend a special education school, which is an educational institution for children with Special Needs. It is implied that the society where Christopher lives in is not very

tolerant. This is proven by the many unpleasant treatments Christopher and the other students from the school receive from the people around them.

Most of the time, Christopher is not treated nicely by other people around him. While the novel focuses on Christopher and not on the society, the readers can see a few instances where Christopher, or other children with Special Needs, were treated in an unpleasant manner. As an example in the novel, when the special needs children are getting off the bus, the children from the school down the road would shout, “Special Needs! Special Needs!” at them (Haddon, 2014:56). Such things happen quite often. By shouting at them and ridiculing them, those children are verbally attacking other children with special needs. This kind of bullying is categorized as verbal bullying, because the aggression of the perpetrator is done through the act of name calling, insulting, teasing, or making insulting remarks for an individual or a group. Therefore, in this case, the victims of the verbal bullying act are Christopher and the Special Needs students, while the perpetrators are the children from the school down the road.

In the novel, Christopher’s teacher, Siobhan, also says that people used to call the Special Needs children from their school with insulting words like spaz, mong, or cripp (Haddon, 2014:56). Therefore, it can be inferred that the Special Needs children from the school are often verbally bullied by other people – presumably by the ‘normal’, non-disabled people from the society where they live in – because of their disabilities.

4.3.3. Harassment

Due to his disability, Christopher sometimes engages in strange or repetitive behavior. When done in public, this may attract attention from other people around him. Sometimes, people react to this by making offending remarks toward Christopher.

As an example, when Christopher is in a train ride to London, he is humiliated by a stranger because of his strange behavior. At that time, Christopher is overwhelmed by the crowd in the train, so he decides to get into a shelf because he thinks that being in a small space makes him feel safe. The incident happens when a man sees Christopher sitting in the shelf and calls him a “train elf” and tells his friend to “feed him some nuts” (Haddon, 2014:206). The man’s act may not be enough to be categorized as bullying because the act of bullying is done repeatedly, but it can be said that the man is verbally harassing Christopher.

Throughout the novel, Christopher repeatedly receives insults from several other characters, even authority figures such as policemen. In the latter part of the novel, when Christopher is at the train station, he is very confused because he does not understand how to buy a train ticket to London. When Christopher asks other people for direction or instruction, he gets insulted, teased, or laughed at, because those people see him as a naïve and disabled. As an example, a police officer laughs at him and calls him “a prize specimen” (Haddon, 2014:188) because he does not know what ‘quid’ is and he does not know where to buy train tickets. A man also says that Christopher is “mad as a fucking hatter” (Haddon,

2014:226) because he behaves strangely. While these remarks may seem harmless at first, these remarks could escalate to verbal bullying, which could emotionally affect the victim in a horrible way. Christopher may not react to those remarks, but it is still not an appropriate thing to do. The way those characters verbally insults him shows their ignorance and lack of tolerance.

Christopher does not receive harassment from strangers only. Even people who know him can harass him. A boy named Terry, whose brother is another student from the school that Christopher attends, verbally harassed Christopher by insulting him and his disability. Terry told Christopher that “[Christopher] would only ever get a job collecting supermarket trollies or cleaning out donkey shit at an animal sanctuary and they didn’t let spazzers drive rockets that cost billions of pounds” (Haddon, 2014:33). From the quotation, it can be concluded that Terry verbally bullied and harassed Christopher by calling him names and verbally abusing him.

5. CONCLUSION

Christopher is described as a fifteen-year-old boy with a disability that hinders him from doing social interaction. On top of that, Christopher also has Behavioral Problems. He also finds it difficult to understand and differentiate human emotion. His disability and the way people reacts to it causes him to experience conflicts in the novel. His parents, Ed and Judy, are often overwhelmed by him, and at times, they get impatient with him. While his parents love him, their temperamental nature sometimes cause them to act harshly to Christopher.

Christopher is also bullied and often gets harassed. He often gets verbally bullied by the other children in his neighborhood. Sometimes, he is also verbally harassed by people, even strangers.

However, it can be seen that the acts of bullying and harassment he has received does not affect him. Even though people are not always nice to him, he still manages to do what he wants to do: unveiling the mystery of Wellington's murder, traveling to London by himself, and getting the best score on his level A Math test.

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