



HUMANISM AGAINST BULLYING IN SOHN WON PYUNG'S *ALMOND* NOVEL

Magdalena Ivena Angeline^{1*}, Maria Vincentia Eka Mulatsih²

¹Sekolah Santa Maria, Jl. Jendral Soedirman No.188, Bancar, Purbalingga, Central Java 53316, Indonesia

²Universitas Sanata Dharma, Mrican Tromol Pos 29, Yogyakarta 55002, Indonesia

*mv_ika@usd.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Korean Pop culture has millions young followers around the world including Indonesian. Starting from music, Korean style also emerges in the form of its drama and novel. One of valuable Korean works which is worth to analyze is *Almond*. Beside this novel has been translated into 13 different languages, it contains humanism values. This study reveals humanism classifications in *Almond* by applying a theory proposed by Copson (2015). Since this study deals with literature, library research is applied. The researchers collected the data from the novel by reading and highlighting parts based on Humanism theory. After that, the results of classification were analyzed using formalism approach and delivered qualitatively. This research found that Yoon Jae, the main character, fulfills most of the classifications of humanism, namely starting with human being, valuing truth, death, tragedy, the pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connections, the origins of morality, and the aim of morality in the story. Some of the humanism classifications were reflected in Yoon Jae when experiencing bullying, namely: valuing truth, having personal development, and making connections. He managed to get through bullying when he started to feel the pursuit of happiness and when he started doing the aim of morality. Yoon Jae's humanism action managed him to survive from bullying and to continue his life like an ordinary person.

Keywords: almond; classification; humanism

INTRIDUCTION

Humanism is originally from a Latin word “humanus” which means human nature. It includes the attitudes, rights, and obligations of humans that are used to help humans live with other humans or other living creatures in the world. Generally, humans can change their attitude so they can also change their humanism (Sakamoto, 2014). In addition, every human has had humanism since birth that can be nurtured so that humans can uphold the values of other human beings (Trevathan, 2011). Unfortunately, many people are not aware of the importance of humanism and they choose to ignore humanism in themselves. This unawareness causes many crimes against humans and other living creatures to occur and it is very detrimental. The cause of crime occurrence relates to a lack of humanism in humans. One of its forms is bullying. Ironically, bullying takes place a lot in the world of education and it is carried out by students in schools (Greene, 2006). As reported by Kompas, there were 41% of students in Indonesia who have experienced bullying. Some were perpetrators and the rest was the victims. Many of the victims of bullying have also experienced trauma, felt depressed or helpless wherever they are (Juvonen, 2015). Thus, the studies of humanism need to be carried out so that many people realize the importance of humanism and minimize the actions that violate humanism.

From various ways to study humanism, reading the works of literature is considered to be attractive. In fact, the emergence of Korean popular culture has gained many Indonesians not only to follow it but also to read a novel entitled “*Almond*”. It happens because this novel is recommended by Kim Nam Joon as the leader of the famous South Korean boy group named BTS. From all round the world, Indonesia has 20% of BTS fans based on sragenupdate.tangan-rakyat.com. This novel has aroused the interest of many young people, touched readers' heart and inspired them. One of most visited blog writers said that there were many humanism values in the novel *Almond* (Rahmah, 2020). Readers can learn to see other people from different sides and not to be judgmental because humans are

extraordinary creatures. It leads to empathy when readers can know others more deeply and increase humans' awareness to be more careful when uttering some words to avoid hurting others. "Almond" is a best seller Korean novel which has sold 250,000 copies in South Korea, written by Sohn Won Pyung. First publication of this "Almond" novel on March 31st 2017 in South Korea. This novel has been translated into 13 different languages including English and Indonesian. "Almond" has won many book awards even the awards from outside South Korea such as 10th The Changbi Young Adult Literature Prize and The Best Translated Fiction Novel award in 2020 Japanese Booksellers' Award.

"Almond" has the theme of psychological fiction and mental health issues. Everyone has two "Almonds" (his real name is "Amygdala") in their head that are far from behind ears to head, "Almonds" is the part of the brain used to manage emotional reactions, and the "Almonds" of the main character named Yoon Jae don't work properly so he cannot feel emotions from himself and from people around him. This disease is also commonly referred to spectrum alexithymia. People who have this disease cannot express or feel emotions and they are also difficult to feel the emotions of others. Yoon Jae not only feels a life of suffering because of his disease but also suffer from a broken family and bullying actions done by his school friends. The novel tells the readers how Yoon Jae faces all of his problems and how he survives with the disease he suffers. "Almond" gives many inspirations for the readers. This novel also gives many lessons about life values for the readers. Some of the inspirations that can be taken from the novel are do not give up easily in life, do not bully others, be sincere and care about people around us. Those many values and influences from the novel are one of the reasons why this novel can stay in the best seller novel position for several weeks in South Korea.

One review from JeyJingga's blog says that Almond novel improves empathy from readers. The author of this blog describes the actual evidence of humanism experienced by children when they grow up, as shared by Yoon Jae (the main character of the novel "Almond"). Yoon Jae grew up in various difficulties, such as seeing the death of his family in front of his eyes, being bullied by his friends, not being accepted in his environment. Those are the reasons that this novel contains a sense of humanism, as adults must pay attention and embrace the children around them who are growing. Not only Almond, Korean novels became the central discussion in some previous researches. Three of them were conducted by Adelodun et al., Chung et al., and Kwon et al. (Adelodun et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2018; Kwon et al., 2017). Kwon et al. (2017) had a novel in relation to Korean pig population. Adelodun et al. (2021) also assessed food waste generation and composition using novel in Korea. Chung et al. (2018) analyzed a novel nomogram for screening the risk of developing diabetes. Based on that, this study discusses the real action of the humanism classifications experienced by the main character in "Almond" novel which also describes the sadness of humanism experienced by humans nowadays. There were many reviews that underlined "Almond" novel as a medium to teach humanity as this novel has a background story which is bullying in school experienced by the main character. It has a close relation to lack of humanism. Based on the importance of the humanism awareness in this 21st century era, a research question can be formulated as follows: "What forms of humanism classification are reflected in the main character of Sohn Won Pyung's Almond Novel?"

METHOD

To solve the problem and answer the research question, the researchers analyze and identify the humanism as reflected in the main character of Almond novel by using documentative technique. The results of data analysis are presented in a qualitative way. Qualitative data refer to one of the results which is descriptive text (Grbich, 2012). The approach of the study is one of the important procedures to collect and analyze the data in the research. The researchers choose a theme approach, because humanism is included in the theme of a text. Theme approach serves to personalize the reading experience and develop critical thinking (Bracken, 1968). Since this study discusses humanism as its theme, this approach is applied. The researchers did some steps in conducting this study. First, the researchers read the Almond novel carefully and gathered the data from the content of the novel. After

that, the researchers classified the data based on humanism theory proposed by Copson. Theme approach was applied to analyze the data. The results of analysis were presented qualitatively based on the classifications.

In relation to the theory, there is a study that applies to Copson's humanism theory. It discusses about the relation between Moslem and country (Zulkifli, 2020). The use of Copson's humanism theory in that study is to see if there is humanism in the religion people. Humanism is an attitude of human life that shows every individual has rights and responsibilities in their personal lives and humanism contains humanism classifications (Copson, 2015). In this study, the researchers use the theory for identifying the humanism in Almond novel. There are five classifications of humanism, namely: understanding reality, understanding ourselves, the good life and the whole person, morality and practical action. The first classification, namely: understanding reality is divided into four parts. There are understanding reality, naturalism, science - free inquiry, and valuing truth. Starting with the human being begins from the basic knowledge of the human sense and the essential function. That sense of the human being has been owned by humans since birth and has always been helpful in daily life. Naturalism refers to natural phenomena that influence humans' life. Behind humans' life in this world, there is an invisible world. Humans who believe in that build this world and another visible world so that they can communicate with some non-human beings such as ghosts, angels, or gods. Science and free inquiry investigate things that exist in the world, especially items related to human life, then propose theories to explain these investigations. Experiments are held which are designed to refute or strengthen theories that humans have made, and this human activity is usually called the "scientific method". The last part of this classification is valuing truth. It is essential because the truth is used to understand and appreciate the fact humans have made that. Truths that humans have made have many uses, both in terms of medicine, labor or culture, so the truth must be proven and appreciated.

The second classification, namely: understanding ourselves is divided into two parts. There are coming back to the human being and death. Humans are products of nature that have existed since a long time ago. Humans also develop and change following the development of the universe. Although humans are only small creatures in this big universe, they are essential because humans have self-awareness and common sense. The second is death. It is a life fact that cannot be avoided from human life. Humans have to face death even though they are afraid, which is the reality that a humanist must face. In this era, humans consider death is a reality that this life is limited.

The third classification is the good life and the whole person. It consists of five parts, namely: tragedy, the pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connections, optimism and realism. Tragedy cannot be avoided and kept away from human life. It can be painful, incomplete, and felt to be worthless in daily human life. For humanists, tragedy can usually be referred to as despair and it happens a lot in human life. Pursuing happiness is a required thing for humans, but sometimes there are some disagreements opinions for pursuing happiness in life. According to Epicurus, the pursuit of happiness can be filled with physical pleasures and pleasures such as good food and drink, sex, and exercise that makes the body healthy. Happiness can also come from creativity, relationships with other people, intellectual intelligence.

The third part of this classification is personal development. According to Fowler, the fact that human life is "becomes richly, diverse, creative and adventurous." Hence, humans need personal development to become richly, diverse, creative, and adventurous, and compete with other humans in this universal. The next is making connections. It has been done for generations from a long time ago. Making connections is not only humans making connections with other humans but also with other natural worlds such as plants, animals, mountains, rivers, and other natural objects. The last is about optimism and realism that exist in human life because humans need to have hope and confidence in their life.

The third classification is morality. Morality can be seen a long time ago and has been owned by human ancestors and passed down from generation to generation until now. Morality is also owned by

animals and must have existed in humans since the human was born, then developed as humans grew up. It aims to measure the extent to which humans take actions, whether human activities follow the purpose of human life. There is a group of people, and they are Christians, who accept the view of humanism at a certain point, namely morality. The morality relates human's welfare that the action done is right or wrong. The last humanism classification is a practical action that proves that humans have responsibility for themselves and other humans around them. This relates to the practical actions taken by humans, actions dealing with other people, psychological, personal contribution in their environment through actions that can make other humans feel happy. This action shows that this individual has a high humanistic attitude or not.

The second theory for this study is about character since this study analyzes the main character of Almond novel. Abrams (as cited in Mulatsih, 2020) defines a character as a person who exists in the literary work. The main character is the character who always appears in the story of the literary work, and he is the most widely told figure, both as the perpetrator of the incident as well as the incident (Nurgiyantoro, 1998). Four kinds of character are flat, round, protagonist (main), and antagonist (minor) characters. A flat character is a simple character that is usually told in a single sentence while the round character is a character who typically experiences many incidents in the story plot (Firglerowicz, 2016).

This study focuses on the part one, two, and three of the novel for answering the research question. Part one is important because it contains the introduction of the story. The researchers find the climax part in the part two and three. Those parts include the main character that should experience some events which lead him to change. The main character should find something new about himself, and the main character should experience catharsis or new viewpoint about himself (Ballon, 2005). For answering this research question, theories of character, main character, and kinds of character are applied first. Then, after finding the main character of the novel and the types of main characters, the researchers applied humanism theory to see humanism action done by the main character. The four classifications of humanism identify the humanism actions. They include understanding reality, understanding ourselves, the good life and the whole person, and morality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this discussion part, the researchers identify only part one, two and three of Almond novel. Part one contains the introduction of the main character. The name of the main character is Yoon Jae. He is one of people who does the action and always appears in the Almond novel story. He is also the most widely told figure in all chapters of the story. Moreover, he has a round characteristic because he experiences many incidents in the story. Part two and three include the three important elements that should be in the climax.

There are four classifications of humanism theories applied in this part. The first is understanding reality (starting with human being, valuing truth). The second is understanding ourselves (death). The third is the good life and the whole person (tragedy, the pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connections). The last is morality (the origins of morality, the aim of morality).

There are four classifications in understanding reality. It starts with human being, naturalism, science and free inquiry, then valuing truth. There are two classifications which are reflected in the main character named Yoon Jae of Sohn Won Pyung's in Almond novel. The first is human being and the second is valuing truth. Each classification is explained as follows: starting with human being is owned by humans since their birth, such as human sense. There is already something wrong with the human sense and the essential function of the main character named Yoon Jae, he cannot feel emotions within himself and also from other people. As mentioned in the story; "I was always different from other kids-different from birth even, because: I never smiled" (Chapter 4). He cannot feel emotion from himself and another human. In addition to his previous statement, he also adds: "The kid in this photo is crying because his mommy is gone. How would he feel? Not knowing the answer, I look up to Mom sitting

next to me” (Chapter 4). His human sense does not work well, it is usually called with alexithymia, as mentioned “The doctors diagnosed me with alexithymia, or the inability to express your feelings” (Chapter 6) and “One of the symptoms of having small amygdalae is that you don't know how it feels to be afraid” (Chapter 6).

From the evidence of the sentence mentioned above, Yoon Jae has something different from humans in general in humanism classification. He does not have perfect human sense but he already has something that makes him a human being. There is something different from Yoon Jae which makes Yoon Jae already fulfills the one humanism classifications, namely starting with human being. Although he has a disease which does not enable him to smile and feel others' feeling, he is still a human being. This main character starts with human being. It means that he realizes that he is also a human. The second is the valuation truth. It is essential because the truth is used to understand and appreciate the fact that humans have made it. Yoon Jae and his family are valuing the truth that Yoon Jae has alexithymia, they try to understand and appreciate the truth about Yoon Jae's life even though it is painful. They also overcome that painful truth with their action as mentioned in the story; “Maybe it's because you're special. People just cannot stand it when something is different, eigoo, my adorable little monster.” Granny hugged me so tight” (Chapter 3).

The truth about Yoon Jae in the novel shows the second humanism classification, namely valuing truth. Yoon Jae can accept the truth that he has a disease and happens in his life. Not only appreciate it, Yoon Jae can also accept and move on with his life with his illness as reflected; “Mom also created a human emotion game where she would suggest a situation, and I'd have to guess what the related emotion should be” (Chapter 9). Yoon Jae has fulfilled two humanism classifications as parts of understanding reality, namely starting with human being and valuing truth. By fulfilling them, Yoon Jae already has humanism. It is a good start when Yoon Jae has also fulfilled the valuing truth classification where he realized that the truth in life is not always happy and this can be used by Yoon Jae to take the advantage of it in living side by side with other humans.

The second humanism classification is understanding ourselves. There are two classifications, namely coming back to human being and death. The forms of humanism classification are reflected by the main character named Yoon Jae in part one and two of the novel. It refers to death. Death is a life fact that cannot be avoided from human life. Humans have to face death even though they are afraid. It is the reality that a humanist will face. One of the beloved family members of the Yoon Jae's family dies in this story, assaulted by a man in the restaurant where they celebrate Yoon Jae's birthday. This death incident is described in some sentences; “Both Granny and the man were dead” (Chapter 18) and “Mom and Granny were gone, that much was clear. Granny was gone in both body and soul, and as for Mom, the only bit of her left was her shell” (Chapter 18).

The death that happened to Yoon Jae's grandmother makes the story in this novel more natural. This classification of humanism is inevitable in human life, including in Yoon Jae's life. Yoon Jae must face the fact of the death of his grandmother and grow to live independently and use humanism to survive alone. The next classification in humanism is understanding ourselves. When humans can understand themselves as human beings, they realize other humans around them. This awareness belongs to understanding ourselves classification. Yoon Jae experiences the death of his grandmother, which he uses to begin to understand that there is an emotion around him called sadness. The death and tragedy experienced by Yoon Jae are very important in humanism, since they are parts of humans' life. In humans' life, there will be sadness that falls them. Humanism in this case is beneficial that enables humans to realize that sad or tragic experience occurs and it is natural. The act after experiencing sadness determines the next classification of humanism, namely: the good life and the whole person.

The third of humanism classifications is the good life and the whole person. There are five classifications, namely: tragedy, the pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connection, and optimism and realism. The forms of humanism classifications which are reflected in the main character named Yoon Jae of Sohn Won Pyung's *Almond Novel* in part one, two and three are tragedy,

the pursuit of happiness, personal development, and making connection. Tragedy can be painful, incomplete, and felt to be worthless in daily human life. Moreover, tragedy can usually be referred to as despair and it happens a lot in human life. Tragedy happens in the story when they celebrate the Yoon Jae's birthday and suddenly there is a man who holds a knife and hammer. He hurts some people in the restaurant. This tragedy is described in the sentences; "In sharp contrast to his outfit, he held a knife in one hand and a hammer in the other" (Chapter 17) and "He swung his hammer down on Mom's head. One, two, three, four times" (Chapter 17). From those sentences, Almond novel contains a humanism classification, specifically Tragedy. The tragedy experienced by Yoon Jae is a painful one since he witnesses the tragedy. Besides, his disease can also be included as a tragedy. Through the tragedy in the story, Yoon Jae learns to use his humanism to survive after experiencing the tragedy that falls upon his family and himself. Experiencing not only happy moments but also tragedy can create a whole person.

Besides tragedy, the pursuit of happiness is a part of humanism. It can be filled with physical pleasures and other kinds such as good food and drink, sex, and exercise. Happiness can also come from creativity, relationships with other people, intellectual intelligence. This pursuit of happiness from Yoon Jae mentioned in the sentences in part 3; "If Gon tried to teach me pain, guilt, and agony, Dora taught me flowers and scents, breezes and dreams" (Chapter 49). Even though Yoon Jae has the disease that enables him to feel the emotion including happiness, there is a moment in the story that refers to his happiness. It occurs when he meets his friend named Dora, he starts to feel happiness especially the feeling of falling in love and relationships with other people as reflected; "Your heart's excited because I'm close to you, so it's clapping." (Chapter 59). This means that Yoon Jae begins to have a humanism classification, namely the pursuit of happiness through the people around him, especially Yoon Jae's friends. Yoon Jae's humanism begins to develop and is used more by relating to the people around him. Thus, Yoon Jae is able to pursue his form of happiness.

In addition to pursuing happiness, humans need personal development. It can take form in some efforts to become rich, diverse, creative, and adventurous, and to compete with other humans in this universe. Yoon Jae's personal development is reflected in these utterances "I was able to open the bookstore only after school, and naturally, sales were slow. I remembered Granny used to say, "If business isn't good, just shut it down" (Chapter 43). Yoon Jae's personal development occurs when he decides to close his bookstore to earn money with a different way. He starts having friend named Gon and Dora even though he has no friends at all before; "On hot summer nights, so humid that my skin got sticky, Gon would lie on a bench in front of the bookstore and tell me stories about himself" (Chapter 47). The fact that Yoon Jae is creative to look for other income represents his personal development. When Yoon Jae has started to develop his personal, he also started to develop his humanism even more. Humanism is used to relate to other people, just like Yoon Jae who started to build a relationship with Gon and Dora.

One of the ways to improve someone's personal development is through making connections. It refers to building a relationship with other humans and also with other natural worlds such as plants, animals, mountains, rivers, and other natural objects. For making connections, Yoon Jae starts it when he tells and asks about his feeling to Dr. Shim; "Do you think I have a crush on her?" I regretted asking him the question as soon as I asked" (Chapter 56). It is also reflected when he starts to build a friendship with Gon and Dora; "If Gon tried to teach me pain, guilt, and agony, Dora taught me flowers and scents, breezes and dreams" (Chapter 49).

In part three, Yoon Jae is successful to make connections with other humans. They are Gon, Dora and Dr. Shim. He starts to fall in love and share their life story with other humans. Thus, the next humanism classification, namely making connections is also experienced by Yoon Jae. Previously, he could not make friends, even becoming a victim of bullying at his previous school, but Yoon Jae has grown by starting to make connections with other humans and using his humanism to make connections. The next humanism classification is the good life and the whole person, the good life and

the whole person is very important in humanism because this classification is used to relate to other people as well as the function of humanism. Yoon Jae experienced tragedy, pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connections which Yoon Jae used to connect with other people, especially with his friends, so Yoon Jae was able to start learning to understand other people and act according to people in general even though he could not feel the emotions of another human. The fourth humanism classification is morality. There are two classifications, namely the origins of morality and the aim of morality. The forms of humanism classifications which are reflected in the main character named Yoon Jae of Sohn Won Pyung's *Almond* novel in part one, two and three are the origins of morality and the aim of morality.

Morality can be seen long ago and has been owned by human ancestors and passed down from generation to generation until now. The morality has been taught to Joon Jae by his mother, even though Yoon Jae cannot feel emotions from himself and others because of his disease. The origins of morality that was taught by his mother can be seen from the following sentences: “When someone said positive things like I was handsome or I did a good job (of course, I had to memorize separately what “positive” statements were) , I should respond as follows: “Thank you”, or “It's nothing” (Chapter 8).

This sentence shows that morality has been taught by Yoon Jae's mother since Yoon Jae was a child; “Thanks to Mom's persistent efforts and my mandatory daily training, I slowly learned to get along at school without too much trouble” (Chapter 10). Saying 'thank you' or 'it's nothing' represents moral lesson to be kind to others. Yoon Jae is also able to mingle with other friends at school and get along due to the learning process of morality. They show that there are origins of morality as reflected in Yoon Jae as main character in *Almond* novel.

Morality aims to measure the extent to which humans take actions and use those actions to live with another human. What Yoon Jae does as the main character in part one cannot be measured whether Yoon Jae has certain moral values that can be used to live with other people, because Yoon Jae only acts according to what his mother ordered and explained. He does not act according to his own will. However, Yoon Jae begins to show when he lives alone, he also begins to talk with Dr. Shim and have friends named Gon and Dora. Yoon Jae has started listening to other people's stories as reflected in; “On hot summer nights, so humid that my skin got sticky, Gon would lie on a bench in front of the bookstore and tell me stories about himself.” (Chapter 47).

This action can be used to live with other people, because humans does not live in this world alone. Humans also need to listen to the others' opinions so that they are not selfish. Yoon Jae has also started to allow other people to connect and meet him, “Dora started coming by the bookstore often.” (Chapter 57). Yoon Jae starts to connect himself with other people which is a good action to start living side by side with other people.

The last humanism classification is morality. Humans can be judged as a humanist when their lives are useful for others through morality. Yoon Jae's morality, which was taught by his mother, is to always be kind to others. It is the most basic humanism and is always used in human life. Then, the kindness that Yoon Jae does when he starts living alone proves that Yoon Jae already has the final humanism classification.

CONCLUSION

There are many humanism classifications experienced by Yoon Jae as the main character of *Almond* Novel. Those humanism classifications include starting with human being, valuing truth, death, tragedy, the pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connections, the origins of morality, and the aim of morality. All of those humanism classifications are used for human to apply the humanism in the real life. Valuing truth, death, tragedy are sad humanism classifications, while the pursuit of happiness, personal development, making connections are happy humanism classifications and the beginning of Yoon Jae's awakening from the sadness he experienced. The origins of morality

and the aim of morality are the moral values that can be taken from Yoon Jae's life. Sadness, happiness, and values always occur in every human life.

Some of the humanism classifications as reflected in Yoon Jae, he experienced bullying when he made some classifications, namely valuing truth, personal development, and making connections. He managed to get through bullying when he started to feel the pursuit of happiness and achieved the aim of morality. Yoon Jae's actions, which were classified into the humanism, managed to make Yoon Jae survive from bullying and continue his life like an ordinary person. Those humanism classifications can be applied in human life and have a positive impact so that humans live side by side well.

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