

CHILD EMPOWERMENT IN J. K. ROWLING'S *HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE*

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Abstract

This research aimed to (1) identify the problems faced by Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, Hermione Granger and Neville Longbottom in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, (2) reveal the process of child empowerment experienced by those characters in the novel, and (3) reveal the influences of child empowerment on those characters in the novel. The researcher used qualitative descriptive content analysis. The data of the research were significant expressions related to child empowerment taken from the novel. The result of this research showed: *first*, there were two kinds of problems: problems from external sources (people's negative judgment, suppressions and mistreatment) and internal problems (children's inferior feeling and negative thinking); *second*, there were five ways to empower children: giving them chance, making them complex characters, giving them important position, making them capable and giving them trust; and *third*, there were four influences of child empowerment namely becoming knowledgeable, aware, sociable and proactive.

Keywords: J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, children's literature, problems faced by children, child empowerment

INTRODUCTION

A problem can happen to children in their early life consciously and unconsciously. These problems can be various: easy or difficult to solve, simple or complicated, and internal or external. One of the causes for those problems is that children's power or their ability to control others and to do something in their own way is limited. Therefore, this limited power can cause problems for children as they own limited access to exercise it. There are two examples which can be found in the reality: first, parents try to neglect what their children want and implement their consideration and second, parents give their children limitation where they can play and explore. These problems bring at least two

impacts: first, children are not well-motivated and well supported, and second, they are not trusted by adults.

These children's problems occur not only in reality but also in literature especially in children's literature. Children's literature contains children's problems caused by adults and environment where children grow. It occurs consciously because writers or adults try to shape children as what they want through children's literature. There are two examples of children's literature with children's problems. The first example is Rapunzel in *Tangled* (2011) who is overpowered by Mother Gothel. The second example is Cinderella who represents children's

vulnerability and passivity by accepting her stepmother and stepsisters' unfair treatment.

The adults' treatment and environment existing in both examples cause several impacts. According to Purbani (2009: 49-55), those aspects result in some of powerlessness in children: it generates 'otherness' and inferiority in children's character, children are invented to be what adults want them to be as the result of the distorted understanding in children's concept; children almost become the object, whereas adults become the subject or the center; and it indicates how children are expected to perceive the world through adults' gaze as they should agree with adults' decision and understand adults' reason for their betterment.

However, some others may limit those problems which refer to the wrong representation of children by developing strong, independent and round characters for children as what has been existed in *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Oliver twist*. As Rappaport (1987: 121) says, the aim of empowerment is to improve the opportunities for people to handle their own life. It means that empowerment can be one of the best solutions in giving chance and trust to change the children to be more powerful and better. According to Lord and Hutchinson (1993: 10), there are four factors initiating the empowerment. These factors are such as giving opportunities to child characters to be involved in a crisis or "life transition", representing children in acting on anger or frustration, giving children new information about their situation, and building children on

inherent strengths and capabilities. According to Parsons (in Sadan, 2004: 76), empowerment can result in external and internal changes. These changes are formulated into four kinds of personal growth proposed by Saxby (1991: 8-9) namely cognitive, ethical, social and spiritual aspects. Thus, child empowerment in children's literature is important.

However, in Indonesia, the existence of children's literature is acknowledged as 'the child of literature' (Indriyana, 2006). In fact, according to Saxby (1991: 5-9), children's literature may offer exploration and discovery, provide a range of experience and education, develop the personal growth and give children the journey to joy. Thus, children's literature is very essential to children. Therefore, children's literature is not inferior literature.

As children's literature is intended and designed for children, it should be created and written to fulfill children's need and understanding. Lukens (1999: 9) believes that children differ from adults only based on their experience and knowledge since adults live longer than children. The researcher maintains that this difference of experience and knowledge level creates children's literature to suit with children's ability. Therefore, she agrees with Nodelman (2008: 142) who says that children's literature is not very distinct but only simpler than adults' literature. Lukens (1999: 3-9) states that children's literature is a kind of literature for children providing some children's needs such as pleasure, understanding, experience, social

institution, etc. Indeed, this literature contains important values for children as what adults' literature does for adults. Therefore, children's literature may provide the same enjoyment for children similar to what adults' literature do for adults.

The most distinct aspect of children's literature is the prominent children characters or animals with human or children quality as the main focus of the story (Purbani, 2009: 22). According to Purbani's statement, children's literature needs to contain children or animal with children quality as the prominent character and the main focus of the story. The character development ought to exist in children's literature. According to Lukens (1999: 80), "character development means showing the character—whether a person or animal or object—with the complexity of a human being" in children's literature. Thus, child characters or animals or objects with children quality may not be perfect humans but they can be the three-dimensional ones. Therefore, children may own both bad and good characters.

In addition, Jacqueline Rose (in Nodelman, 1992: 29) says that "children's literature is a form of 'colonization'". It means that children's literature may "colonize" children through the way the writers (adults) describe the children and childhood wrongly. Those problems reveal the way adults practice the colonization for the children. They control and seemingly educate children by using literature and their ideology which are inherent in the text. Therefore, children

may be put in lower position. The researcher disagrees if children are placed in the lower position because children's literature is intended for children and places them as the central of the story. Thus, children's literature should put children in higher position.

According to Lukens (1999: 13), "like adults' literature, children's literature offers variety". This statement shows that children's literature is available in variety. Thus, children's literature is not uniform. Lukens (1999: 14) mentions some genres of children's literature such as realism, fantasy, traditional tales, rhyme to poetry, nonfiction, etc. From those genres, fantasy is chosen because it is the most interesting one. Grenby (2008: 160) believes that the fantasy writing can be "the antithesis of the didactic tradition in children's literature". It shows the way those who are subordinate in their home worlds become those who bear the fate of the world resting in their shoulders once they enter the fantasy worlds.

Therefore, the researcher tries to explore further regarding to the topics of children's problems and empowerment in children's literature. Thus, the researcher is interested in analyzing one of J. K. Rowling's works, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. This novel is chosen based on several reasons. First, it contains children's problems faced by Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Ronald Weasley and Neville Longbottom. Second, the implementation of child empowerment is the solution for the children's problems. Third, it shows that the empowerment

applied to the children influences their character. Fourth, it provides the explanation of various factors in implementing the child empowerment. From above explanation, it is necessary for the researcher to conduct the study in finding and analyzing the child empowerment in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

This research has three aims namely (1) to identify the problems faced by Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, Hermione Granger and Neville Longbottom in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, (2) to reveal the process of child empowerment experienced by those four child characters in the novel and (3) to reveal the influences of child empowerment on those child characters in the novel.

This research is significant to give the insight and knowledge in English literature especially in children's literature, children's position, problems faced by children and child empowerment and to give benefit for these following groups of people such as students, lecturers and future researchers in getting knowledge, providing examples and guiding for further analysis in the relevant topics.

THE RESEARCH METHOD

As Cheek (2008: 761) said, a research design "combines three broadly connected and interdependent components: the theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations relevant to the specific project". Thus, the research design provides a framework for the data collection and analysis, guides the

implementation of research method and helps prioritize the decisions made during the research process. Thus, the research design is crucial because it guides the researcher with ways to achieve the answers for those objectives.

There are two common types of research namely quantitative and qualitative. According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7), "quantitative research specifies numerical assignment to the phenomena under study, whereas qualitative research produces narrative or textual description of the phenomena under study". They stated that the research can be classified either quantitative or qualitative depending on its finding. By considering the above objectives, this research needs to produce and find narrative description as the finding in order to explain and analyze the phenomena. In addition, the phenomena are not numerical. In conclusion, the qualitative research is the most appropriate one to this research. In a more specific way, this research is a descriptive qualitative research.

Data are crucial things in this research. According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7), the type of data in the qualitative research refers to the phenomena which are explained in a narrative way. Thus, the data used in the qualitative research are taken from the narrative expressions in the novel.

The data source refers to one of J. K. Rowling's novels entitled *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* which provides the researcher with the significant expressions in the form of

sentences, paragraphs and discourses related to (1) the problems faced by children, (2) the process of child empowerment and (3) the influences of child empowerment. This first novel of Harry Potter series was published by Scholastic, New York in October 1998. It consisted of 309 pages with 17 chapters.

The primary instrument of this research is the researcher herself. As what Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 211) said, “the researcher’s interpretation is, therefore, only one of many possible valid interpretations of a given text”. Thus, she acted as the interpreter of those data related to the purposes of this research from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. The second instrument used in this research is the data table. There are three data tables which help the researcher in working and interpreting the data.

There were two steps done as parts of the technique of data collection: the first step referred to the close reading and re-reading activities and the second step was done by categorizing the raw data.

The triangulation is essential in establishing the trustworthiness which is crucial in ensuring the quality of the research findings. Julien (2008: 120) suggests that triangulation is intended to confirm the data in determining whether or not the researcher’s interpretation is reliable and valid. In this research, the first and second supervisors who helped the researcher in checking the data. In addition, there are two friends under the same study program who also helped the researcher in checking the data. These

friends were chosen because they were in the same concentration and used the same topic, children’s literature, in their thesis.

To analyze the data, content analysis is used. According to Julien (2008: 120), content analysis can be defined as some activities in processing the data which start from categorizing into logical categories, looking for the relation and discovering the idea. There were some phases of data analysis done by the researcher. Those phases are listed in the following: (1) obtaining the raw data from the novel by close reading, re-reading and taking notes; (2) classifying and sorting those raw data into the four tables based on their categories; (3) identifying those data in each category into more specific sub-categories which were existed in the three tables; (4) re-examining the data in those tables by checking, combining and comparing them by drawing the relation among them; (5) interpreting those data and acquiring the new idea or information from them, and (6) reporting the data analysis by describing the findings into a narrative form which could be shared and read by other people.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher finds that J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* contains problems faced by children, the process of empowerment and the influences of child empowerment by providing various data. These data are divided into three tables which are explained further in the following.

Kinds of Problems Faced by Children

These problems faced by children are divided into two categories: the source of problems as the main category and the kind of problems as the sub category. The problems from external sources are divided into three categories and the ones from internal sources are divided into two categories.

These problems from external sources are classified into three categories namely people's negative judgment, suppression and mistreatment. First, people's negative judgment can be various. In this novel, people's negative judgment refers to the way people distrust and disbelieve children. This situation is reflected in this quotation below.

But Uncle Vernon **didn't believe him. No one ever did.** (Rowling, 1998:24)

This quotation shows that there is no one who trusts the children. When children say the truth, they are not believed by adults. It can be concluded that these children have no one on their side.

Second, people's suppression refers to the way adults use their power to limit children's access and prohibit them to do anything that they should not do. This suppression can be in the form of limitation and prohibition. This situation is reflected in this following quotation.

But he wished he hadn't said anything. **If there was one thing the Dursleys hated even more than his asking questions,** it was his talking about anything acting in a way it shouldn't, no matter if it was in a dream or even a cartoon — they seemed to think he might get dangerous ideas. (Rowling, 1998: 22)

The datum above shows that Dursleys neither want to get any questions nor hear any strange and imaginative things come out from Harry's mouth. The Dursleys prohibit Harry to ask them questions and say all sorts of things. In this case, children have to remain silent, accept everything adults decide and do everything adults ask.

Third, people's mistreatment which refers to the way people deals with children is not in line with children's needs. The mistreatment can be various such as people's attitude, action and behavior.

Hermione and Neville were suffering, too. **They didn't have as bad a time as Harry, because they weren't as well-known, but nobody would speak to them, either.** Hermione had stopped drawing attention to herself in class, keeping her head down and working in silence. (Rowling, 1998: 245)

Both Hermione and Neville suffer the bad treatment from other students after the incident. They are being isolated by them. Moreover, an active child such as Hermione Granger has to draw herself from people's attention as the result of people's mistreatment. Therefore, people's mistreatment can limit children's freedom and exploration in their life.

Meanwhile, internal problems are classified into two categories namely children's inferior feeling and negative thinking. First, children's inferior feeling refers to the way they underestimate their own selves. This inferior feeling can be in the form of worry and nervousness which make them easy to get afraid.

“Go to Professor McGonagall!” Hermione urged Neville. “Report him!” Neville shook his head. **“I don’t want more trouble,” he mumbled.** (Rowling, 1998: 218)

This datum shows that Neville is someone who wants to stay out from more trouble ahead. He can be classified as a coward. He does not want to end his vulnerability by reporting the one who always bully him. Moreover, he does not do anything to fight back against the doer. Thus, the doer is safe and Neville still gets bullying from that person.

Second, children’s negative thinking refers to the way children perceive themselves in a false way and the way children disbelieve themselves. This condition is reflected in this following quotation.

He was going to be expelled, he just knew it. He wanted to say something to defend himself, but there seemed to be something wrong with his voice. Professor McGonagall was sweeping along without even looking at him; he had to jog to keep up. Now he’d done it. He hadn’t even lasted two weeks. He’d be packing his bags in ten minutes. What would the Dursleys say when he turned up on the doorstep? (Rowling, 1998: 150)

The datum explains the way Harry keeps thinking a horrible negative thought that his existence in the Hogwarts is a mistake and he is being expelled from the school. He thinks negatively because he does not feel confident and do not know how to defend himself in facing Professor McGonagall. Therefore, negative thinking appears in his mind.

The Process of Child Empowerment

The researcher found five kinds of the process of child empowerment experienced by those four child characters in the novel namely giving them chance, making them complex characters, giving children important positions, making children capable and giving children trust.

First, giving children chance can be done by allowing them to enter the great place to learn and explore. The chance can be in the form of providing them a great place to learn things, giving a “tool” for developing their capability and giving them approval and acknowledgement for their decision and opinion. This situation is reflected in the datum below.

Suddenly, Harry felt wide-awake. **The whole of Hogwarts was open to him in this cloak.** Excitement flooded through him as he stood there in the dark and silence. **He could go anywhere in this, anywhere, and Filch would never know.** (Rowling, 1998: 205)

The quotation illustrates that Harry gets an Invisibility Cloak that allows him to do what he wants to do in order to explore the school, Hogwarts without being seen by others. Harry has freedom without getting punishment when he is wandering around the school at night. By having this freedom and chance, Harry finds many things which are useful to solve problems like discovering the Mirror of Erised and finding the Sorcerer’s Stone.

Second, making them complex characters is another process of child empowerment.

Children are presented with the combination of bad and good personalities. In other words, they are neither white nor black characters. They are rebellious, tough, brave, courageous, lying, determined, perceptive, curious and revengeful. One of the quotations which represent children with complex characters can be seen below.

Where's my letter?" said Harry, the moment Uncle Vernon had squeezed through the door. "Who's writing to me?"

"No one. It was addressed to you by mistake," said Uncle Vernon shortly. "I have burned it."

"It was not a mistake," said Harry angrily, "it had my cupboard on it." (Rowling, 1998: 36-37)

Harry can actively rebel instead of becoming a compliant child especially when he gets unfair treatment. He knows that the letter is meant to him which has been stated clearly in the address on the envelope. That is why he tries to rebel against his uncle who tries to manipulate the fact about it and does a wrong thing over his belonging. Moreover, children can own power to defend their belongings and needs.

Third, giving children important positions means that are represented with important positions which make them neither inferior nor vulnerable. They are young people but can do many things in their life. They have capability which makes them important and place them in a higher level compared to adults or other children.

"You-Know-Who killed 'em. An' then — an' this is the real myst'ry of the thing — he tried to kill you, too. Wanted ter make a clean job of it, I suppose, or maybe he just liked killin' by then. **But he couldn't do it. Never wondered how you got that mark on yer forehead? That was no**

ordinary cut. That's what yeh get when a powerful, evil curse touches yeh — took care of yer mum an' dad an' yer house, even — but it didn't work on you, an' that's why yer famous, Harry. No one ever lived after he decided ter kill 'em, no one except you, an' he'd killed some o' the best witches an' wizards of the age — the McKinnons, the Bones, the Prewetts — an' you was only a baby, an' you lived." (Rowling, 1998: 55-56)

Other people cannot escape from death when they face Voldemort. Yet, Harry is safe and alive after facing Voldemort. Thus, he can defeat him when other adults cannot do that.

Fourth, making children capable is another process of children empowerment. Children are presented to be able to take control over adults. In other words, they are capable to defeat adults by their inherent capability and will.

He saw his reflection, pale and scared-looking at first. But a moment later, the reflection smiled at him. It put its hand into its pocket and pulled out a blood-red stone. It winked and put the Stone back in its pocket — and as it did so, **Harry felt something heavy drop into his real pocket. Somehow — incredibly — he'd gotten the Stone.** (Rowling, 1998: 292)

Harry is able to get the stone faster compared to Quirrel. Harry knows what to do in order to defeat an adult. He has an amazing brain too. Thus, he can manage to use what he learns to help him get the stone. Therefore, children can use their power to achieve their goals.

Fifth, giving children trust refers to the way adults believe and acknowledge children's capability in solving problems without giving much interference.

“Well, I got back all right,” said Hermione. “I brought Ron round — that took a while — and we were dashing up to the owlery to contact Dumbledore when we met him in the entrance hall — he already knew — he just said, ‘Harry’s gone after him, hasn’t he?’ and hurtled off to the third floor.”

“D’you think he meant you to do it?” said Ron. “Sending you your father’s cloak and everything?” (Rowling. 1998: 302)

This datum shows that an adult trusts a child. In the novel, Dumbledore believes that Harry can stop Voldemort to own the Sorcerer’s Stone successfully by providing him chances and tools. Dumbledore does not give Harry instruction to go after Voldemort in getting the stone. He only gives Harry a chance to go with Hagrid in taking the Sorcerer’s Stone, the invisibility cloak which belongs to Harry’s father, advice which enlighten Harry’s mind in understanding the Mirror of Erised and freedom in exploring the castle. Harry is able to know the existence of the stone and find out someone try to steal it from Hogwarts. In addition, Harry accompanied by his friends, Ron and Hermione tries to stop Voldemort. A child with other’s trust can do better beyond people’s expectation.

The Influences of Child Empowerment

These influences or changes are classified into four categories namely becoming knowledgeable, aware, sociable and proactive. First, becoming knowledgeable refers to the improvement of their hard and soft knowledge. Thus, children becoming knowledgeable mean that they turn to be broad-minded in facing problems.

Harry had almost forgotten that the exam results were still to come, but come they did. To their great surprise, both he and Ron passed with good marks; Hermione, of course, had the best grades of the first years. Even Neville scraped through, his good Herbology mark making up for his abysmal Potions one. They had hoped that Goyle, who was almost as stupid as he was mean, might be thrown out, but he had passed, too. It was a shame, but as Ron said, you couldn’t have everything. (Rowling, 1998: 307)

The result shows that they are capable to pass the exam. In the beginning of the story, Harry has thought that he will be the worst in the class but he turns to be better and more knowledgeable day by day since he enters Hogwarts. Ron who has underestimated his capability is able to pass the exam with good marks. Hermione who comes from an ordinary family which is named as “Muggle” (Rowling, 1998: 53) becomes the best among the students. Moreover, Neville has a great mark in Herbology. They turn to be knowledgeable because they can study, learn and practice many things in the school. Thus, they have capability using their knowledge to achieve their goal for passing the exam.

Second, becoming aware means that children are able to understand that the world is consisted of neither totally good nor totally bad people. They are aware that there are good people with bad sides and vice versa.

This was so unfair that Harry opened his mouth to argue, but Ron kicked him behind their cauldron. **“Don’t push it,” he muttered, “I’ve heard Snape can turn very nasty.”** (Rowing, 1998: 139)

The datum illustrates that children can consider that arguing can worsen the situation in such

particular moment. Arguing a person, who is close-minded, bad tempered and unpleasant, cannot be the best solution to solve the problem. Ron understands it and advises Harry to let it go. It can be a strategic to deal with a temperamental and horrible person.

Third, becoming sociable means that children are ready to live among the society and they can get along well with the members of the society. Moreover, society can see that children are able to communicate with them in an appropriate way.

Harry didn't think there was anything wrong with not being able to afford an owl.

After all, he'd never had any money in his life until a month ago, and he told Ron so, all about having to wear Dudley's old clothes and never getting proper birthday presents. This seemed to cheer Ron up. (Rowling, 1998: 100)

Ron feels unhappy with his current condition because he gets his brothers' hand-me-downs. Harry tries to comfort him by telling his own miserable life. By knowing that he is not alone, Harry's story cheers Ron up.

Fourth, becoming proactive means that children with empowerment initiate an action because they feel unsatisfied with their condition and situation. They aware that they need to change the problematic condition instead of being passive and accepting it. Children try to participate by giving an idea, action and effort to make the problematic condition can be solved.

Harry walked round and round his new room. Someone knew he had moved out of his cupboard and they seemed to know he hadn't received his first letter. **Surely that meant**

they'd try again? And this time he'd make sure they didn't fail. He had a plan. (Rowling, 1998: 39)

Harry has made a plan as the result of the unfair condition done by his uncle, Vernon Dursley. The unfair condition refers to the way Uncle Vernon has taken and burned Harry's mail without his permission. Meanwhile, the sender has sent another mail as she or he knows that Harry has not received his mail. By having this limitation and suppression, Harry is initiated to design a plan that can help him to get the mail before his uncle. This condition shows that a child is able to think by their own and make an action if needed.

CONCLUSION

The researcher finds that J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* contains child empowerment. The child empowerment is broken down into three classifications in line with the research objectives: the problems faced by children, the process of child empowerment and the influences of child empowerment on the four child characters named Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Ronald Weasley and Neville Longbottom.

The first is that these four child characters face many problems in the novel which are classified into two big categories: external and internal depending on the source of problems. The problems from external sources which commonly occur because of adults are people's negative judgment, people's suppression and people's mistreatment. Meanwhile, the problems from internal sources are children's inferior

feeling and negative thinking. These problems originate from children's inner selves. Thus, this kind of children's literature represents children with various problems.

The second one is that these four characters are empowered in five ways. These ways found in the novel refer to the process of empowerment namely giving children chance, making them complex characters, giving them important positions, making them capable and giving them trust. These ways are crucial to provide children with opportunity to do exploration, support them to be influential, acknowledge them to be who they are and believe that they are able to solve problems.

The third one refers to the influences of child empowerment on these four child characters. The researcher finds four kinds of changes experienced by these children. These four changes are namely becoming knowledgeable, aware, sociable and proactive in solving their problems.

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