JISH: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora
Vol. 1, No. 1, Maret 2025
Available Online at https://journal.umgo.ac.id/index.php/jish
E-ISSN:
DOI:

THE IMPACT OF BULLYING ON THE ATTITUDE TRANSFORMATION OF SHOYA ISHIDA IN "A SILENT VOICE" BY NAOKO YAMADA

Taufik Kamal Imran[1*], Happy Anastasia Usman[2] , Dahlia Husain[3] , Moon Hidayati Otoluwa[4]

[1,2] Sastra Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, Indonesia

Corresponding Author taufikkimrn@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Submited :
Revised :
Published :

Kata Kunci :
Bullying, transformasi sikap, tokoh utama, film animasi

Keywords:
Bullying, attitude transformaton, main character, animated film

This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.
Copyright ©2025 by Author. Published by Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the impact of bullying on the attitude transformation of Shoya Ishida, the main character and former bully in Naoko Yamada's animated film *A Silent Voice*. The research aims to identify the types of bullying committed by the main character and examine how these actions influence his personal transformation throughout the story. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using Miles and Huberman's approach to analyze film dialogues and scenes involving the character. The findings reveal nine instances of bullying committed by Shoya, consisting of verbal mockery, insults, and physical aggression. Meanwhile, thirty-seven data points indicate significant attitude transformation, including confession of guilt, efforts to improve relationships, and increased empathy toward others. These results show that Shoya's transformation outweighs his harmful actions, suggesting a substantial shift in self-awareness and emotional maturity. The study concludes that bullying leaves long-term effects not only on victims but also on perpetrators, who may experience guilt and eventually change. This research highlights how fictional narratives can reflect real-life issues and provide messages about empathy, accountability, and the possibility of personal growth.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis dampak perundungan terhadap transformasi sikap Shoya Ishida, tokoh utama sekaligus mantan pelaku perundungan dalam film animasi *A Silent Voice* karya Naoko Yamada. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk perundungan yang dilakukan tokoh utama serta menjelaskan bagaimana tindakan tersebut berpengaruh terhadap proses perubahan sikapnya. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan analisis Miles dan Huberman terhadap dialog serta adegan dalam film. Hasil penelitian menemukan sembilan data perundungan yang meliputi ejekan, hinaan, dan kekerasan fisik. Selain itu, terdapat tiga puluh tujuh data yang menunjukkan adanya transformasi sikap melalui pengakuan kesalahan, upaya memperbaiki hubungan, serta meningkatnya kepedulian terhadap orang lain. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perubahan sikap Shoya jauh lebih dominan dibandingkan perilaku buruknya, menandakan adanya perkembangan kesadaran diri dan

empati. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa perundungan memberikan dampak jangka panjang bukan hanya kepada korban, tetapi juga pelaku yang dapat mengalami penyesalan dan berpotensi berubah menjadi lebih baik. Kajian ini menegaskan bahwa karya fiksi dapat merepresentasikan persoalan nyata sekaligus menyampaikan pesan tentang empati, tanggung jawab, dan peluang untuk berubah.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the most prevalent social problems within educational environments and significantly impacts both victims and perpetrators. It is characterized by an imbalance of power, repetitive harmful actions, and an intention to cause distress, which often leads to trauma, anxiety, and social isolation for victims. However, perpetrators may also experience psychological consequences such as guilt and regret, influencing their behavioral and emotional development. Representations of bullying are widely depicted not only in real life but also in fictional works, including the animated film *A Silent Voice* directed by Naoko Yamada. The film portrays Shoya Ishida, a young boy who torments Shoko Nishimiya, his classmate with a hearing impairment. His bullying behaviors include teasing, mocking, and physical aggression, which later backfire when his peers turn against him. This turning point triggers deep remorse and becomes the foundation of his journey toward self-redemption. Examining Shoya's transformation is relevant because it demonstrates that perpetrators can also undergo positive behavioral changes through self-reflection, empathy, and meaningful social interaction. Based on this phenomenon, this study seeks to answer two research questions: 1) What forms of bullying are committed by Shoya Ishida in *A Silent Voice*? and 2) How does his attitude transform after becoming aware of the consequences of his actions?

In addition to the growing concerns surrounding bullying in real-life educational settings, fictional narratives such as *A Silent Voice* have become crucial cultural texts for examining the emotional, moral, and social consequences of bullying. The film provides an intimate portrayal of how harmful behavior in childhood can leave long-lasting effects not only on the victim but also on the perpetrator, who may struggle with guilt, shame, and social rejection. According to Abrams (2005), fictional characters often serve as mirrors of human behavior, allowing audiences to understand complex psychological processes through narrative structure. In this context, Shoya Ishida represents a compelling example of how adolescents navigate identity formation, moral conflict, and emotional recovery.

Moreover, examining bullying through the lens of film opens discussions about disability, empathy, and inclusion. Shoko Nishimiya's hearing impairment introduces an additional layer of vulnerability, illustrating how individuals with disabilities are disproportionately targeted in school environments. This perspective aligns with Lucy & Bamman's (2019) argument that characters with disabilities in fiction often reveal societal attitudes toward difference. Shoya's behavioral shift from aggression to empathy becomes central in understanding how emotional and moral development can occur when individuals confront their past behavior and seek reconciliation.

Given these complexities, analyzing *A Silent Voice* provides valuable insights into the psychological foundations of bullying behavior and the possibilities for moral transformation. Therefore, this study explores the forms of bullying demonstrated by

Shoya Ishida and examines the stages and mechanisms through which his attitude transforms throughout the narrative.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the influence of bullying on the attitude transformation of the main character in *A Silent Voice*. The primary data source is the film released in 2016, while supporting data are taken from books, journal articles, and relevant academic sources. Data were collected through documentation and dialogue analysis from film transcripts. The data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by identifying dialogues and scenes that represent bullying actions or attitude transformation. Data were then presented descriptively based on categories of bullying and indicators of behavioral change. The final stage involved drawing conclusions to determine the relationship between bullying actions and the character's transformation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

1. Bullying Types

The findings reveal that Shoya Ishida engages in multiple forms of bullying toward Shoko Nishimiya and his classmates. These forms consist of verbal, physical, and social bullying. Verbal bullying is the most frequently occurring type and includes mocking Shoko's disability, imitating her voice, making insulting remarks, and shouting at her during class interactions. This aligns with Seslar's (2021) definition of verbal bullying as harmful speech intended to humiliate and attack the victim's self-worth. Similarly, Barus (2017) notes that verbal bullying commonly emerges through ridicule and derogatory labeling—a pattern clearly demonstrated in Shoya's behavior. Physical bullying appears when Shoya repeatedly pulls out Shoko's hearing aids, throws objects at her, and pushes his classmates. Olweus (1993) argues that physical aggression reflects intentional harm reinforced by power imbalance, which fits Shoya's role as the dominant student influencing his peers. Social bullying is shown through Shoya's attempts to isolate Shoko by encouraging classmates to avoid interacting with her and normalizing group hostility toward her. This category matches Ilham's (2022) view of social bullying as exclusionary behavior that aims to strip the victim of belongingness and social support.

Across the nine bullying incidents identified in the film, Shoya demonstrates a consistent pattern of dominance, insensitivity, and a lack of emotional awareness. These behaviors reinforce Abrams and Harpham's (2009) argument that characters in narratives often reflect real human tendencies, especially in adolescence where identity and group belonging strongly influence actions.

2. Attitude Transformation of Shoya Ishida

The results also identify thirty-seven data entries reflecting Shoya's attitude transformation. This transformation can be divided into three main dimensions: confessing guilt, improving relationships, and showing care toward others.

a. Confessing Guilt

Shoya's first major transformation is his acknowledgment of guilt. He apologizes to Shoko, recognizes the emotional harm he caused, and struggles with self-loathing. Zogli (2023) explains that confessing guilt derives from deep awareness of one's wrongdoing and the desire to repair moral imbalance. O'Connor (2011) similarly states that guilt confession arises when individuals confront the consequences of their harmful actions. Shoya's apology scenes, flashbacks, and increasing sensitivity toward the past illustrate Jiang's (2019) concept of attitude transformation, wherein emotional recognition becomes the basis for behavioral change. Laurie (2011) also emphasizes that sincere guilt often emerges after the perpetrator experiences social consequences—a phenomenon reflected in Shoya's isolation by classmates.

b. Improving Relationships

Shoya attempts to rebuild damaged relationships by learning sign language, reconnecting with former friends, and seeking harmony in his social environment. Poitevien & Ramburger (2017) highlight that improving relationships occurs when individuals initiate efforts to restore trust and demonstrate consistent positive interaction. Truffo (2022) notes that relationship repair requires empathy, accountability, and willingness to change behaviors—traits Shoya gradually develops. Bodge (2017) also argues that relational recovery begins when the perpetrator shows emotional openness and effort to understand the victim's experience. These theories align with Shoya's actions, such as his persistent efforts to communicate respectfully with Shoko.

c. Caring for Others

The final stage of Shoya's transformation is his increasing concern for others. According to Vocabulary (2011), caring reflects one's willingness to respond to another person's needs with sincerity and compassion. Flores (2023) adds that caring behavior grows when individuals internalize empathy and moral responsibility. Shoya demonstrates this by protecting Shoko, preventing her from self-harm, supporting Yuzuru, and forming new friendships. His caring actions reflect an emotional maturity described by Nurgiyantoro (2010), who argues that character development in narratives often manifests when internal conflict evolves into moral action.

Beyond the identification of the bullying types and the general overview of Shoya's behavioral transformation, a deeper examination of the film reveals more nuanced emotional, psychological, and relational processes that shape the character's development. These additional layers provide a more comprehensive understanding of how bullying impacts not only the victim but also the perpetrator. The film presents Shoya's transformation not as a sudden moral shift, but as a gradual and emotionally complex journey influenced by guilt, isolation, self-reflection, and renewed social connections.

One significant dimension of the results is the internal conflict that Shoya experiences after becoming socially isolated by his peers. This turning point is crucial, as Abrams (2005) states that character development is often shown through internal tension that forces the character to confront their behavior. Shoya's isolation mirrors the emotional suffering he once imposed on Shoko. This reversal of roles serves as a narrative mechanism described by Nurgiyantoro (2010), who argues that authors often use mirrored experiences to highlight a character's moral evolution. In Shoya's case, the loneliness he experiences after being blamed for Shoko's suffering becomes an emotional catalyst that triggers self-awareness and moral awakening.

Another important result involves the symbolic elements used throughout the film that reflect Shoya's internal struggle. For instance, the recurring "X marks" over people's faces visually illustrate Shoya's social anxiety and inability to connect with others. This symbol aligns with Jiang's (2019) theory that attitude transformation is influenced not only by external interactions but also by internal cognitive processes. Shoya's inability to look at others' faces reveals how guilt reshapes his perception of the social world. Only when he begins forming meaningful connections—especially with Shoko—do the X marks begin to fall away, symbolizing his gradual reintegration into society.

In addition, the results reveal that remorse alone does not immediately lead to moral transformation. Shoya's attempt to apologize to Shoko for the first time is awkward and incomplete, reflecting O'Connor's (2011) claim that guilt confession often begins with hesitation and emotional discomfort. Genuine apology requires emotional readiness, and Shoya's early efforts show that transformation is nonlinear. This aligns with Zogli's (2023) argument that confession emerges gradually as individuals become more emotionally aware of the consequences of their actions.

The data also show a notable shift in Shoya's communication patterns. During his childhood, his communication is dominated by insults and aggressive remarks, reflecting the verbal bullying category defined by Seslar (2021). However, as he matures, Shoya begins adopting softer vocal tones, listens more attentively, and expresses emotions more openly. Flores (2023) argues that caring behavior is often reflected through attentive listening and emotional expression—behaviors seen increasingly in Shoya's interactions. This transformation reflects Lucy & Bamman's (2019) claim that a character's linguistic behavior often mirrors their psychological development.

Shoya's efforts to improve relationships also reveal nuanced emotional layers beyond surface-level reconciliation. For example, his attempt to reconnect with his former best friend, Nagatsuka, results in an emotionally significant friendship that becomes central to his healing process. According to Poitevien & Ramburger (2017), improving relationships requires not only apology but also consistent actions that rebuild trust. Shoya's repeated attempts to support Nagatsuka even when others mock him illustrate that transformation is validated through actions, not just words.

Furthermore, Shoya's caring behavior toward Shoko extends beyond isolated moments of concern. He becomes increasingly protective of her emotional wellbeing, particularly during Shoko's internal struggle with guilt and self-blame. His protective actions reflect Vocabulary's (2011) definition of caring as emotional responsibility for another person's wellbeing. This emotional responsibility marks the final stage of Shoya's transformation, in which empathy replaces aggression, and understanding replaces dominance.

Finally, the results show that Shoya's transformation is reinforced by the new social environment he builds for himself. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), individuals learn behavior through observing and interacting with positive role models. In the film, characters such as Tomohiro, Miki, and Yuzuru become new influences who shape Shoya's understanding of friendship, loyalty, and empathy. These relationships help Shoya reshape his identity, demonstrating that transformation is not an isolated internal process, but a socially constructed phenomenon supported by meaningful connections.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Shoya's bullying behaviors align strongly with several established bullying theories. Seslar (2021) and Barus (2017) emphasize that verbal bullying is marked by ridicule and name-calling—both present in Shoya's early interactions with Shoko. Olweus' (1993) classic bullying framework explaining power imbalance and repeated aggression is illustrated through Shoya's repeated removal of Shoko's hearing aids. Ilham's (2022) theory on social exclusion also appears when Shoya influences classmates to ostracize Shoko. Thus, the results confirm that *A Silent Voice* depicts bullying realistically and in accordance with theoretical frameworks.

Regarding Shoya's transformation, the findings align with Jiang's (2019) theory of attitude change, which suggests that emotional awareness drives moral reorientation. Shoya's guilt aligns with O'Connor (2011) and Zogli (2023), both of whom argue that confessing guilt emerges from internal conflict and emotional awakening. His relationship-building efforts reflect Truffo's (2022) and Poitevien & Ramburger's (2017) concepts of reconciliation. His caring behaviors correspond with Flores (2023), who states that caring is the highest form of moral development because it involves empathy-driven action.

These findings are also consistent with previous research. Astuti (2019) found that character transformation in Japanese animated films often emerges through guilt, emotional struggle, and social rejection—patterns present in Shoya's arc. Rani (2021) highlighted that animated films frequently use internal conflict to illustrate moral change, which is reflected in Shoya's emotional turmoil. Dewi (2020) also demonstrated that bullying perpetrators can change when they experience negative social consequences, supporting the idea that Shoya's isolation is a turning point for his transformation.

In broader implications, this study demonstrates that fictional narratives like *A Silent Voice* can represent real adolescent psychological struggles and provide moral lessons on empathy, accountability, and personal growth. The story not only illustrates the damaging effects of bullying on victims but also reveals the emotional burden carried by perpetrators, emphasizing that change is possible through self-awareness and social support. This highlights the value of animated films as educational tools for promoting emotional intelligence in youth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that:

1. Shoya Ishida engages in various forms of bullying, including verbal and physical aggression toward Shoko Nishimiya and other classmates. These actions reflect an imbalance of power and intentional harm.

2. Shoya undergoes significant attitude transformation after recognizing the negative consequences of his actions, as demonstrated through confession, relationship repair, and enhanced empathy for others. This transformation shows that perpetrators are also able to develop positive behavioral changes when they reflect upon their wrongdoing and strive for self-improvement.

The study highlights that bullying has long-term effects on both victims and perpetrators, and fictional narratives such as *A Silent Voice* can serve as meaningful tools for promoting empathy, responsibility, and the possibility of change.

REFERENCE

Aini, N. (2021). Representation of bullying in the film *Ralph Breaks the Internet* by Phil Johnston. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya*, 9(2), 115–126.

Aisyah, N. (2020). The impact of bullying on adolescent character development. *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan*, 12(1), 33–45.

Astuti, P. (2019). Character transformation analysis in Japanese animated films. *Jurnal Kaji Budaya*, 5(3), 201–210.

Dewi, R. S. (2020). Bullying and its impact on students' mental health. *Jurnal Konseling Indonesia*, 8(1), 55–66.

Fajri, F. (2021). Representation of empathy in Japanese animated films. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 14(2), 122–134.

Fitria, M. (2020). Psychological analysis of the main character in Japanese youth films. *Jurnal Sastra dan Budaya*, 18(1), 89–101.

Hernawati, S. (2021). Verbal bullying and its impact on adolescent self-acceptance. *Jurnal Psikologi Sosial*, 6(2), 88–99.

Ismail, K. (2018). Social interaction and behavioral changes among adolescents. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, 3(2), 115–129.

Lestari, A. (2022). Identification of bullying forms in secondary schools. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 10(1), 45–57.

Mulyani, S. (2019). The influence of guilt on behavioral changes in bullying perpetrators. *Jurnal Psikologi Klinis*, 4(1), 12–23.

Nugroho, R. (2020). Film analysis as a medium for representing social issues. *Jurnal Komunikasi Visual*, 8(3), 147–160.

Putri, V. (2019). Self-acceptance and character change in animated films. *Jurnal Kajian Media*, 7(2), 201–214.

Rahmawati, S. (2021). Factors influencing aggressive behavior among adolescents. *Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 11(1), 55–70.

Ramadhan, M. (2020). Portrayal of bullying behavior in Japanese youth films. *Jurnal Seni dan Film*, 5(1), 66–77.

Rani, D. (2021). Characterization of protagonists in animated films and their moral messages. *Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora*, 16(2), 134–142.

Salsabilla, A. (2022). The impact of social interaction on adolescent character formation. *Jurnal Psikologi Remaja*, 9(1), 45–57.

Sari, D. (2021). Empathy development in adolescents following traumatic experiences. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 19(1), 77–88.
Susanto, L. (2019). Structural analysis of characters in animated films as moral education media. *Jurnal Edukasi Seni*, 4(3), 221–233.
Wahyuni, T. (2020). Representation of disability issues in Japanese animated films. *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya*, 13(1), 119–131.
Yolanda, M. (2022). Descriptive study of character transformation in youth films. *Jurnal Sastra Modern*, 11(2), 145–158.