CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter talked about the introduction of the research including Background of the Research, Research Question, Objective of the Research and Significance of the study.

1. 1 Background of the Research

Film functions as a social mirror, reflecting and interrogating societal issues such as discrimination, stigmatization, and identity crises. As a relatively modern literary work, films have various genres and contain stories with some elements such as characters, settings, plots including conflict (Ummah, 2019a). In addition, it is a collaborative medium which consists of various technologies and artistic components such as visual arts, theater, literature, architecture and music which combine and become one of the modern visual works (Pokhrel, 2024). As a modern visual media, film has become a relevant entertainment medium for conveying messages containing moral, social and cultural values to its viewers. This is in line with (Juanda et al., 2021) that film is a new form of visual art that was deliberately created as a means of entertainment and has been around for the last three centuries.

In this globalization era, films also contribute to shaping socio-cultural identities, and influence public perceptions. The superhero movies, in particular, have a strong impact on fostering empathy and prosocial tendencies in society. (Zornado & Reilly, 2021) argues that superhero films are social practices inviting audiences to identify with fantasy while confronting stigma. Experimental studies show that superhero films do not only influence the state-empathy and prosocial behavior, but are also able to justify violence. (Silva Santos, I.L., & Pimentel, C.E, 2025). In addition, the content analysis of 21st-century superhero films confirms that cinema is not just entertainment but also a medium for shaping social values. (Ramos, A. J. and Brown, G., 2021)

The superhero movie "*Spider-Man: No Way Home"* by Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers (2021) is one of the movies that contains some issues about identity, especially the personality identity of the main character, Peter Parker as Spider-Man. Parker experiences an identity crisis after being slandered as the killer of Mysterio. His identity is exposed, and even he faces the social stigma that threatens both himself and his loved ones. A study from (Madundang, 2023) highlights that this film portrays the identity crisis of teenagers under social pressure and labeling.

Social labeling is the process of assigning social labels that shape a person's identity. Negative labels such as "troublemaker" or "criminal" might influence behavior and self-esteem. (Davies, 2025). In addition, from Becker's theory of labeling, deviance is not only the act itself but also society's reaction to it. (Nickerson, 2025). It is crucial to understand how slander and social labeling are able to damage an individual identity, especially for public figures or role models such as heroes.

Recent studies show that the impact of labeling because of slander might trigger identity crises, alienation, and even deviant behavior. From the interviews with the Cambridge students, the results reveal that labeling and stigma play a major role in shaping the non-normative identities. (Sandler, 2025). Without research, society may ignore the destructive impact of labeling, which can lead to mass identity crises, discrimination, and marginalization of certain groups. Even worse, it may also reinforce a culture of slander in public spaces and social media. By analyzing film as the object, we might see how the popular media shapes public perceptions of stigma and identity.

Based on these points of view, the researcher conducts a research entitled "The Impact of Slander on The Superhero's Identity Based on Social Labeling in The Movie "Spider-Man: No Way Home" by Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers. This research is aimed at exploring how slander brings impact toward the main character's psychology as the superhero based on Becker's elements of social labeling. A previous study has been conducted in the same movie by (Madundang, 2023), however, his focus is on observing the personality characteristics

possessed by Peter Parker because of the identity crisis he experiences by using Freud's psychoanalysis elements.

1. 2 Research Question

The problem of this research is "How does the impact of slander on the superhero's self-identity based on social labelling in Spider-Man: No Way Home?"

1. 3 Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to find out how slander brings the impact on the superhero's self-identity based on social labelling in Spider-Man: No Way Home.

1. 4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions related to the study of language, identity, and social construction in film.

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of sociological literary criticism, particularly in understanding how Labeling Theory can be applied in film analysis. By focusing on slander as a form of social labeling, this research expands the discussion of how false accusations and public reactions construct meaning and identity within popular culture.

It also reinforces Howard S. Becker's concept that deviance is not an inherent quality of an action but the result of social reaction and labeling. Through this analysis, the research provides an example of how labeling processes in film narratives can reflect real-world social mechanisms such as defamation, stigma, and identity transformation.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

1) For Academics and Film Researchers

This study can serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to explore the relationship between language, media, and social identity using sociological theories such as Labeling Theory or Stigma Theory. It may also help

students understand how theoretical frameworks can be applied to analyze characters and moral perception in film.

2) For Literature and Film Studies

The findings encourage a deeper understanding of how slander and media representation shape moral and social perception. It highlights the role of mass media as a “moral entrepreneur” in constructing deviance, as theorized by Becker.

3) For Society and Media Practitioners

This research raises awareness about the destructive power of slander and false labeling. It emphasizes the importance of critical media literacy, encouraging audiences and journalists to reflect on how public opinion can be shaped by misinformation and social labeling.