

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The dynamics of cross-cultural interaction have become more prevalent and complex in an increasingly interconnected world. According to Edward Tylor, Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Welsch & Vivanco, 2014). As globalization accelerates, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds cooperate, compete, and coexist in various spheres of life, whether in multinational corporations, educational institutions, or communities. For most people, including Americans, cross-cultural interactions often lack familiar reference points that guide behavior within their own cultural context. Simple tasks become complex and require intentional consideration or conscious choices. Uncertainty arises about when to engage in customary actions such as handshakes, nods, questioning, expressing opinions, or maintaining silence. Consequently, it may be necessary for individuals to reassess the effectiveness of their advice-giving methods and identify appropriate channels for effective communication (Stewart & Bennett, 1991:2-3). Therefore, any complex society is likely to have numerous subcultures composed of individuals who embody a multicultural identity because of their overlapping and diverse group affiliations.

According to Chaudhary and Yadav, the concept of “Cultural Conflict” refers to disparities in values and beliefs that give rise to disagreement between two parties. Within the realm of culture, conflict manifests as disharmony or

inconsistency in norms, values, priorities, and motivations (2018:80). These problems often lead to misunderstandings and ineffective face-to-face communication. In general, cross-cultural conflicts can be found in Western countries, such as the United States, where the country has the largest number of immigrants from different parts of the world (Davis, 2023).

This social phenomenon encourages several directors to elevate it into a work of art in the form of a movie. There are many contemporary movies that depict cross-cultural conflict as the main focus of the plot. One of them is the movie *The Big Sick* (2017). This movie is a romantic comedy movie directed by Michael Showalter. It depicts an affecting and humorous exploration of cross-cultural conflict in the context of contemporary American society. The movie *The Big Sick* (2017), written by co-writers Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon, is based on their own experiences. It explores the complex issues of cultural identity, family expectations, and romantic relationships in the context of cultural differences.

The movie centers around Kumail, a stand-up comedian and Uber driver from a traditional Pakistani family who relocated to the United States when he was fourteen years old. Despite living in the Western nation for several years, his family remains conservative and holds onto their traditional customs, attitudes, and values. In contrast, Kumail has been influenced by American culture, as reflected in his appearance and lifestyle. Kumail faces immense pressure from his conservative Pakistani Muslim parents to pursue a career in law and accept an arranged marriage. He refrains from introducing his American girlfriend, Emily Gardner, to his family, citing concern about potential familial rejection, similar to that experienced by his

cousin in a relationship with a Westerner. He acknowledges the disapproval of his family regarding relationships with Western women, regardless of circumstances.

This thesis analyzes the portrayal of cross-cultural conflict in the movie *The Big Sick* (2017). It examines how the characters negotiate cultural differences and strive for reconciliation and understanding. The study seeks to illuminate the complexities of identity formation and cultural negotiation in a multicultural society through a close analysis of key scenes, character interactions, and narrative themes.

1.2 Research Questions

The writer has formulated three research questions:

1. How are the intrinsic aspects depicted on the movie?
2. What are the cross-cultural conflicts experienced by Kumail Nanjiani as the main character in the movie?
3. How are the conflict resolution depicted in the movie?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the question above, objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic aspects of the movie.
2. To determine the cross-cultural conflicts experienced by the main character.
3. To analyze how are the conflict resolution depicted in the movie.

1.4 Scope of Study

The writer's exploration focuses on the cross-cultural conflicts experienced by Kumail Nanjiani. The text examines the intricate layers of identity, belonging, and societal expectations. The writer employs intrinsic analytical approaches by

Bordwell and Thompson (2013) to analyze this complex issue, closely examining the movie's characterization, plot, and setting to unravel the nuances of Nanjiani's cultural navigation

1.5 Previous Study

The writer undertakes a comprehensive review of relevant theses and scholarly journals in the field. While these previous studies address similar topics to the present study, they exhibit notable differences in their respective focus and theoretical foundations. Through a close analysis of these previous works, the study aims to contextualize its own research within the broader academic discourse and identify potential avenues for further study.

The first is a journal article published in 2019 by the English Department of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. The article, titled *The Contrast Portrayals of American and Pakistani Culture in The Big Sick Movie*, was written by Nidia Nikita, Ranti Andela, Ghina Zahra Fauziah, and Zhia Aulia. This study conducts an analysis of the cultural stereotype experienced by Pakistani in America. The writers show the differences between Pakistani and American culture through their belief, communication, and characteristics.

The second previous study is a thesis titled *Cultural Conflict in Intercultural Communication in "PK" Movie by Rajkumar Hirani* out in 2017 written by Nurhasanah from English and Literature Department of Adab and Humanities Faculty, UIN Alauddin Makassar University. This thesis seeks to examine the components of culture and cultural conflict in the PK movie. The intrinsic elements

relate to the narrative and cinematographic aspects, whereas the external element draws upon Kennedy and Manohar's theory about cultural conflict. The research demonstrated that there are three kinds of components of culture in the PK movie: language, religion/belief, and norms.

The third one is a journal titled *Cross-cultural Analysis of Cultural Conflicts in Film Gua Sha* in 2017 written by Lei Li from Foreign Department of Henan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, China. This study examines the legal disputes and family conflicts experienced by Xu Datong, a Chinese-American, following the departure of his father to the United States, who scratched his son in an attempt to treat his ailments. This analysis considers the cultural differences between Chinese and American societies and the underlying conflicts that are reflected in the narrative. Additionally, it proposes solutions to these cultural conflicts, examining the plot design of the movie in question.

The fourth journal used as previous study is titled *Dealing with Cross Cultural Conflict represented in French Migrant Cinema- a Film Study to Mauvaise Foi* out in 2020 written by Siti Khusnul Khotimah and Intan Dewi Savitri from Brawijaya University. This study examines the causes of cross-cultural conflict and strategies for resolution as depicted in the movie *Mauvaise Foi* by Maghreb filmmaker Roschidy Zem in 2006. The movie depicts the clash between the extended families of Clara and Ismael, a young couple from different cultural and religious backgrounds. This study utilizes a qualitative approach to identify the origins of cross-cultural conflict, focusing on ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and misinterpretation, as outlined by Pujiyanti and Zuliani. Furthermore, it analyzes the

application of four conflict resolution strategies—competition, accommodation, avoidance, and collaboration—based on Miall's framework.

The last journal that is used as previous study is a journal from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia out in 2023 titled *Analysis of Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges in the Movie 'Outsourced' (2006)* written by Afidatul Aqma Mohamad Sabre and Eliyas S. Mohandas. This study examines the cross-cultural communication difficulties experienced by the main characters from America and India, as well as the impact of these challenges on them. The writer utilized a qualitative research design and applied content analysis to identify the specific issues the characters faced.

In several theses and journals mentioned above, the majority of them employ different subjects of study compared to the one utilized in this research. In this study, the writer's subject of analysis is the movie *The Big Sick (2017)*, with a specific focus on Kumail Nanjiani as the main character. Additionally, in the thesis written by Nadia Nikita and other writers mentioned earlier, the same subject of analysis is utilized. This research focuses on the stereotypes assigned to Pakistani and American characters in the movie, without an in-depth examination of the underlying conflicts and resolutions. While acknowledging the presence of cultural stereotypes, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the broader narrative elements and character development, which are essential to understanding the complexities of Cross-cultural Conflict and Cross-cultural Conflict Resolution portrayed in *The Big Sick (2017)*.

1.6 Method of Study

1.6.1. Method of Research

The primary data for this research comprises the movie titled *The Big Sick*, which directed by Michael Showalter in 2017. This cinematic creation falls within the genre of romantic comedy. It is noteworthy that this movie was inspired by the true experiences of co-writers Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon. Furthermore, the writer has amassed secondary data from diverse sources, encompassing books, scholarly articles, and theses, all which pertain to *The Big Sick* and its cross-cultural conflict.

Based on this data, the writer employs a qualitative research methodology that enables the writer to investigate and gain a deeper understanding of the intricacy of a phenomenon (Williams, 2007:70). By using this method, the writer focuses primarily on library research. Library research is a systematic approach that entails a thorough investigation of existing literature, documents, and information sources to gather insight, facts, and data related to a specific subject (George, 2008:6). For this investigation, the writer chose the documentation method as the preferred means of data collection.

1.6.2. Method of Approach

In this study, the writer opts for the objective approach by M.H. Abrams (2009) to analyze the intrinsic aspect of the movie. In the objective approach, a literary work is regarded as an autonomous entity, distinct from the poet, audience, or surrounding world. The literary piece is regarded as a self-contained and autonomous entity, or as a complete world in itself, intended to be appreciated for

its intrinsic value. This approach emphasizes the analysis and evaluation of the work based on internal criteria, such as its complexity, coherence, balance, integrity, and the interrelationships among its elements (2009:63).

The writer employs the objective approach by M.H. Abrams, which traditionally focuses on the analysis of literary works. This approach is equally applicable to movies. Movies capture narratives and themes similar to literature but utilize visual and auditory elements to convey their stories (Ramrao, 2016:150). Unlike literature, which immerses readers in a solitary, text-based experience, movies engage viewers with a vibrant, multi-sensory journey. The dynamic visuals and immersive soundscapes of films create an immediate and collective experience that transcends the confines of written words (Ramrao, 2016:150). This contrast underscores the unique impact of movies, emphasizing their ability to foster a shared narrative that resonates deeply on sensory levels (Ramrao, 2016:150).

The writer also uses Cross-cultural Conflict theory by Edward and Bennet (1991) which focuses on the separation of cross-cultural conflict that occurs due to differences in perception. Also, Cross-cultural Conflict Resolution theory by Kevin Avruch (1998) which focused on negation and third-party processes such as mediation. Understanding the intricacies of cross-cultural communication is crucial for resolving conflicts in the most efficient and compassionate manner (Avruch & Mitchell, 2013:22).

In addition to these two analytical frameworks, the writer also utilizes cinematic elements as explained by Bordwell and Thompson (2013). This includes concepts such as *mise-en-scene*, camera shots, and sound design to enhance the

analysis of the movie. By incorporating these elements, the writer aims to analyze not only the narrative and thematic layers but also the atmospheric nuances and emotional intensities present in each scene. Together, these cinematic components create an analytical tool that allows the writer to explore the complexities of the movie's construction and its impact on the audience's perception (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013:2).

1.7 Writing Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter accommodates the background of the study, research problems, objective of the study, previous study, scope of the study, method of research, method of research, and writing organization.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes the theoretical framework used for this study. The theoretical framework is the explanation of the theory used for analyzing the research problems which is the prejudice stages.

CHAPTER 3: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of the result of the discussion and the answer from the research problem. The writer analyzed the cross-cultural conflict experienced by Kumail Nanjiani as a Pakistani living in America and the resolution of the conflict.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the conclusion of the analysis result based on the research.

REFERENCES