

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Morality in global society is based on its function as a basic standard of behavior that influences social norms, laws, and individual choices. Morality influences every part of life, from personal decisions to social institutions by impacting how individuals interact with one another, resolve conflicts, and uphold the rule of law. Morality is a system of obligatory concerns that guides judgments about right and wrong, shaping how individuals treat others with regard to their welfare, rights, fairness, and justice (Dahl, 2023:35). Morality includes judgments, reasoning processes, emotions, and actions that stem from these obligatory concerns about ethical behavior. It involves evaluating actions not only from a personal (first-person) perspective, but also from the viewpoints of others (second-person) and from a broader societal or objective standpoint (third-person).

Moral development is the process by which individuals progress through cognitive and moral stages that shape their identity and ethical reasoning across different life eras—early childhood, adolescence, and late adulthood (Kohlberg, 1981:xvii). This development occurs during transitional periods when individuals express their philosophical perspectives most clearly. Moral development involves the growth and refinement of an individual's moral values, ethical reasoning, and

sense of responsibility toward others and society as a whole. Moral development typically evolves over the course of a person

's life and is influenced by various factors, including cultural, social, familial, and individual experiences. It is categorized into stages or levels, each is characterized by distinct moral reasoning and perspectives.

Moral development phenomena are also revealed in literary works. One of the literary works that reflects moral development is *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* written by Jeff Kinney. *Big Shot* is one of the titles from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series by Jeff Kinney. Based on his own childhood, the series follows a teenage boy named Greg Heffley, as he interacts with family, friends, and surviving middle school. With 19 books in 86 editions and 70 languages, the series has been adapted into live action movies, animated films, and a musical (Wimpy Kid, n.d).

The novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*, centers around the struggles of Greg Heffley, who joins a basketball team due to his mother's encouragement despite his lack of enthusiasm or talent. Throughout the season, Greg faces various challenges, including strict Coach Patel, a team full of misfits, and his own lack of enthusiasm. Greg Heffley's experiences in the novel are a reflection of what many adolescents actually go through on a daily basis as they deal with peer pressure, friendship dynamics, relationship with parents, and moral dilemmas. By analysing the moral development of the main character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*, readers can discover more about how young people develop their morality.

This research thesis is significant in several ways. It advances knowledge of how literature, especially young adult fiction, may be an effective media and case studies

for addressing moral growth. This interdisciplinary approach enriches both literary and psychological studies by proving how fiction can be used as a means of moral education. Educators and parents can also learn about the moral issues that adolescents face by examining the challenges that are faced by the character in the novel. Understanding how young readers engage with these issues through literature can help adults guide them in developing critical thinking and moral reasoning skills in real life. Additionally, this research thesis clarifies the larger effects of moral development in the setting of adolescence.

This research thesis will examine the moral development of Greg Heffley in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* and study how the main character's choices and experiences mirror the struggles of adolescence and offers insightful information about moral growth in young people. Related to this research thesis writing, the writer will analyse the portrayal, the stages, the motivations, and the role-taking opportunities of moral development of the main character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What is the portrayal of Greg Heffley's morality throughout Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*?
2. What are the stages of moral development Greg Heffley exhibit throughout Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*?
3. What are the motivations which drive the progression of Greg Heffley's moral development throughout Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*?

1. What are the role-taking opportunities that influence Greg Heffley's moral development throughout Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research thesis are as follows:

1. To analyse the portrayal of morality by Greg Heffley in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*
2. To analyse the stage of moral development exhibited by Greg Heffley, in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*
3. To analyse the motivations which drive the progression of Greg Heffley's moral development in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*
4. To analyse the role-taking opportunities that influence Greg Heffley's moral development in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*

1.4. Scope of the Study

The novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* by Jeff Kinney is the subject of this research thesis. The main focus is on Greg Heffley, the main character of the story. The intrinsic elements discussion of this research thesis explores characters and characterization and conflict. The discussion of extrinsic elements will cover the portrayal, the stages, the motivations, and the role-taking opportunities of moral development of the main character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* by utilizing the theory and concept of moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg.

1.5. Previous Studies

Previous academic research related to the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* is not found. However, there are several book reviews related to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*.

The first previous study is a book review in the Kirkus Reviews website with the title “BIG SHOT From the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series, Vol. 16.” The reviewer praises *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* for maintaining the humor and energy of the series. The review notes that fans of the series will find the familiar blend of wry humor, moody tweens, and signature single-panel comics. It also acknowledges that while the series could have grown stale by now, Jeff Kinney’s continued affection for his characters keeps the story fresh and engaging. The review concludes that *Big Shot* stands out as one of the stronger entries in the series (Kirkus Reviews, 2021).

The second previous study is a book review by Nithin (2024) entitled “Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot” on the Johnson County Library website. The reviewer praises *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot* for offering a fresh take on Greg Heffley by exploring the world of school sports. The reviewer commends Jeff Kinney for capturing the awkwardness and anxiety many children experience when participating in activities they are not good at, therefore making Greg relatable and humorous. The reviewer appreciates how the book addresses Greg’s insecurities and frustrations. The reviewer rates the book 4 out of 5 and calls it a strong addition to the series that appeals to both returning readers and newcomers.

The third previous study is a book review by Cooper (n.d) with the title “Book Review: Big Shot (Diary of a Wimpy Kid)” on the Pikes Peak Library District website. The reviewer expresses a neutral opinion of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot*. The reviewer describes it as an average entry in the series. The reviewer found the plot predictable and less impressive compared to other books they had read that year. They still recommended the book to fans of the series or those who enjoy humorous sports stories.

This research thesis has several differences from any other previous studies by doing academic research, discussing Greg Heffley’s moral development, and applying Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development.

1.6. Writing Organization

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes Background of the Study, Research Questions, Objectives of the Study, Scope of the Study, Previous Study, and Writing Organization.

CHAPTER II THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter includes the theories of Characters & Characterization, Conflict, Theory of Moral Development as a framework in analyzing the research.

CHAPTER III DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the analysis of the main character using the previous theories. The discussion involves the Intrinsic Elements and Extrinsic Elements of

the novel. The Intrinsic Elements consists of Characters & Characterization and Conflict, which divides into Internal and External Conflict. Furthermore, the Extrinsic Elements of the novel uses theory of moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg. There are Portrayal of Morality, Stages of Moral Development, Motivations behind Moral Development, and the Influence of Role-Taking.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

This chapter is the summary of the research thesis as its entirety.