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Abstract:

Bullying is an intentional behavior that causes discomfort or harm to a person. It is the most commonly experienced act in schools where the victims are exposed to verbal abuse and become a prey to physical assault and mental tantrums. This research paper focuses on bringing out the effects of bullying in schools with reference to the novel, *The Lollipop Shoes* written by Joanne Harris.

Joanne Harris is an English-French author who is best known for her novel *Chocolat* which was published in the year 1999 and was also adapted for the film titled the same in the following year. Later Harris penned three other sequels to her best-selling work *Chocolat*. The novel *The Lollipop Shoes* is one of the sequels of the *Chocolat* series.

The Lollipop Shoes was published in the year 2007. The story has been set between Halloween and Christmas. The plot revolves around Vianne, the protagonist and her two daughters, Anouk and Rossette whose lives are changed by the free-spirited and mysterious woman named Zoë de l'Alba. The novel focuses on various themes such as fear, magic, free-will and also other social issues like bullying.

The researcher intends to bring out the act of bullying in school also emphasizes on the consequences of it which results in affecting the characters both physically and mentally.

Key words: School bullying, Social Dominance Theory, consequence of bullying, bystanders

With ignorance comes fear- from fear comes bigotry. Education is the key to acceptance.
— Kathleen Patel

Literature is the reflection of society and writers tend to use their writings as a weapon to pen down the issues of the society that reflects the behavior of the individual. Writers of different period have written about numerous social issues like poverty, bullying, unemployment, migration, discrimination, racism, gender inequality and many other issues. Bullying is one of the major issues that affect people of all ages. It is one of the most dangerous act that ruins the entire life of the victim.

Bullying is an intentional behavior of an individual that causes discomfort or harm. It can also become more dreadful that it can even cost the life of the victim. Bullying includes not only physical aggression or name calling but also social bullying like purposeful exclusion from the group, gossips or rumours. While analyzing the act of bullying, the intention of the perpetrator is to gain power over the victim and the act would have to occur more than once. It also occurs when the bully or group bullies wants to preserve their status which means staying at the top of the social ladder in school or to gain and maintain a sense of power as well as control in their environment.

Joanne Harris, in *The Lollipop Shoes*, pictures the act of bullying and the effect of it in the life of her victims. Joanne M. Harris is an English-French author who was born on 3rd July 1964, in Barsley, Yorkshire to an English father and French mother. Harris was strongly influenced by Grimms' Fairy Tale, Charles Perrault's works, Norse Mythology and local folk lore. This strong influence of Harris has become the core content of many of her stories.

Her first novel *The Evil Seed* was published in 1989 which brought her limited success but her third novel which was a dark magical modern folk lore titled, *Chocolat* (1999) made her popular. Later

she published the sequels to *Chocolat*, entitled *The Lollipop Shoes* (2007), *Peaches for Monsieur le Cure* (2012) and *Strawberry Thief* (2019). She has become one of the four female members of the Millionaires Club in 2012. Harris has written 29 novels till date and also many short stories in different anthologies.

The novel *Lollipop Shoes* is the second novel from the *Chocolat* sequel. It discusses the life of Vianne Rocher and her two daughters Anouk and Rosette who lives at the cobbled streets of Montmartre, Paris. The novel is a follow up of the life events of the characters from the novel *Chocolat*. Harris in this novel particularly brings out the complicated relationship between a mother and her adolescent daughter and along with that the story showcases the issues of bullying, self identity, gender inequality and enmeshed relationship. Though the author discusses about various other social issues, the researcher intends to emphasize on the acts of bullying along with the purpose and the impact of it in the lives of the characters. Bullying, in one aspect, has become a source of dominance of the victimizer over the victimized. Social Dominance Theory elaborates on such actions of oppression.

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) focuses on the factors that contribute to the varied forms of group-based oppressions. The theory also indicates that students bully one another in their attempts to attain group and individual-level of social dominance, and thereby maintain their social status through ongoing bullying. In such manner, bullying is used as a means of establishing and maintaining dominance over the one who is victimized. The theory was put forth by two researchers, Jim Sidanius (1945) and Felicia Pratto (1961) in the year 1999.

Sidanius and Pratto attempts on explaining how and why the social structures seem to be supported by an unspoken hierarchy of groups based on the number of different traits. Such multiple hierarchies are based on gender, race, age, economic status, and other characteristics which are either naturally recurring or obtained. The desire for power and dominance is a prime motivating factor that encourages bullying behavior and bullies use threats and mortifications as a means of acquiring their power.

Besides, researchers Reijntjes et al., in their research based on school bullying suggests that “the students who are popular may bully others to maintain their power and status on the hierarchy and many have the goal to find their place in the social hierarchy and avoid being at the bottom” (Reijntjes et al.,2010). Hence maintaining power and dominance becomes one of the key factors for bullying.

Harris through the character Suzanne Prudhomme, a twelve year old girl, brings out the act of domination and bullying over her own peer group. She bullies her own classmate, Anouk, in order to maintain her power and status on the hierarchy so as to avoid being in the bottom. She insists her friends to follow her orders and conditions and when they fail on it, she befriends them and starts insulting by treating them differently. Anouk, who is the prime victim of Suzanne’s bullying says, “Today she wasn’t talking to me again. That’s because I wouldn’t come to the pictures last night. But the cinema’s expensive enough already, and then there’s popcorn and Coke to buy- and if I don’t buy any, Suzanne notices and makes jokes at school about my never having any money” (60).

At one point Anouk sees Suzanne and Chantal, one of the classmates of Anouk and one of the members of the bullying group, gives her a different look and pathetically says,

But then I see them with their heads together and I can tell from the way they’re not looking at me that they’re laughing at me again. Why? What is it about me? In the old days at least I knew what made me different. But now –

Is it my hair? Is it my clothes? Is it because we’ve never bought anything at the Galeries Lafayette? Is it because we never go skiing to Val d’Isère, or to Cannes for the summer? Is it some kind of label on me, like on a cheap pair of trainers, that warns them that I’m second rate? (61)

Anouk feels inferior and helpless around them because of their mocking talks and looks. She says, “But it’s hard when everyone else has friends. And it’s hard when people only ever really like you when you’re being someone else” (61). According to Wang, Iannotti and Nansel, “bullying victims are often unpopular, not well-liked, and have few friends” (Wang, et al., 2009). This was the case of Anouk too. Because of all the bullying and exclusion, she feels unliked and excluded from her peer group.

Additionally, Suzanne insults Anouk for her looks and often tells her that she, “looks weird” (109) and also comments on her hair saying that it is “like Afro hair”(109). Furthermore Anouk is an open diary to Suzanne which gives her the advantage of insulting her family as she knows every details of her family. Because of this, bullying does not stop within the school premises. She even takes her bullying group to Anouk’s Chocolataire to reveal about Anouk’s family condition and poverty.

Furthermore, she ends up to the extent of taunting Rosette, Anouk’s sister in order to indirectly insult Anouk. She rudely comments on her saying, “I mean, she’s like, what is she, four, or something, and she can’t even talk yet, or eat properly. My mum says she’s a mong. She looks like a mong, anyway... She’s an ugly retard, just like you” (299). Anouk becomes more and more helpless to handle her situation. Whereas Suzanne does all this to maintain her power and control over her peer group.

Suzanne’s target is not only Anouk but everyone who goes against her. That attitude of Suzanne has brought a control over every student in the school. It becomes evident when Anouk shares about her other classmates who were previously bullied by Suzanne and how in her absence they were enjoying their time in school happily with peace. She says, “You’d be amazed at the difference it makes to a class of thirty kids when the four nastiest people are away. But without Suzanne, Chantal, Sandrine and Danielle, it’s actually nice to be at school. No one’s laughs at Mathilde for being fat, and Claude actually answered a question in maths today without stuttering” (365).

Evidently, the aftermath of bullying can become more devastating. It can even destroy the life of the victim as well the person who does it. The consequence of bullying can be long-lasting and serious. The victims are at high risk of psychological and emotional impacts including anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, violent and criminal behavior and so on.

The victims might also experience physical symptoms like sleep disruptions, chronic pain and psychosomatic symptoms. Researchers even found out that the victims of bullying tend to produce higher levels of stress related hormone named Cortisol, which can interfere with normal brain function and as a result they tend to show aggression toward peers, siblings or parents. Hence it is necessary to take effective actions to control bullying.

School is a place where a child gets to know other children with different background and culture and through that they learn the virtue of acceptance i.e accepting different people from different community and different places all over. But unfortunately that place of acceptance and learning becomes the place of hatred because of bullying. Parents and teachers many a times ignore these kinds of behavior from students thinking that they will redress themselves as they grow up but unfortunately the seed of hatred grows big as a tree and spoils not only the victim but also the one who commits bullying. Hence it is also the responsibility of the bystanders to voice out against the bullying.

Alana James, a research scholar, in her research on school bullying mentions that, “many schools are focusing on the important role that bystanders can play in reducing bullying: telling someone, refusing to engage in the social group behavior, or helping the victim if it is safe enough to intervene” (James, 2010). And also if other students stop supporting the behavior of bullying, there are possibilities for the bully to become socially unrecognized.

Furthermore, on giving cognizance on the consequences of bullying through awareness programs and by encouraging students to read books on the consequences of it might as well reduce bullying in schools. Hence with the involvement and systematic approach of the whole school community which

includes, parents, teachers, administrators, supporting staff the rate of bullying can be decreased to a higher extent.

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