CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Salman Rushdie (1990:8), in his book, *Is Nothing Sacred* says, "literature is the one place in any society where, within the secrecy of our heads, people can hear voices talking about everything in every possible way". In literature and popular culture, we may find a message that the author or filmmaker wants to deliver to the readers, explicitly or implicitly. That message includes many aspects of life like social, political, spiritual, and many more. The Cambridge dictionary defines literature as written work. It connects with literary works of various types, such as poetry, novel, and short story.

On the other hand, popular culture dominates the entertainment field since the culture is transmitted verbally by tradition and practice. It is mass-marketed and enjoyed by many people. According to Delaney (2007), mass media influences popular culture in the modern era that then absorbs the everyday lives of societies. Film, short movies, drama, music, literature, categories as popular culture. Popular culture deliver a story and convey a message to educate, criticize, and entertain people. Thus, the researcher decided to analyze a film as a part of popular culture.

Not only used to entertain viewers by presenting moving images through computer-generated imagery (CGI), a film is a form of visualization of thoughts, ideas, creativities, criticisms, and a medium to deliver moral messages to audiences.

Viewers come to the cinema to watch a movie, like looking for an escape or an activity on a Saturday night. However, people think going to the cinema to watch a film is an escape and enjoyment, without being accompanied by the desire to believe and understand the story. They only come to enjoy the moving graphic pictures presented or are interested in the actors or actresses who play in the film. But for some viewers, the film carries the essence of more than just entertainment and escape. According to Dumazedier (1960), he stated that, first, the viewers want a beautiful film. It must contain a beautiful story, which is also well acted out. Second, viewers wish for a story that depicts real life. Viewers focus on reality, objectivity, real work such as documentaries, biographies, social and sports films, and travelogues. The last, what most viewers are interested in is the film genre such as comedy, action, adventure, romance, family, which presents a particular theme or subject matter.

However, the researcher feels an undeniable thing that many people expect stories about the idealization of a picture of life. If the film is realistic, it will hopefully not be a nightmare to describe; if the film is a true story, the moral message is expected to be conveyed well and have social and human significance. *Unbelievable* is a mini-series in that based on a true story. It presents the reality of the rape incidents and brings viewers to see from various points of view. The victims and their psychological conditions, especially post-incident, detectives with every effort and every decision-making process, people around the victims, to the bitter reality about the inconsistent justice system. *Unbelievable* contains a lot of

feminist elements which involve women in oppressed and cornered positions and strong female characters who succeed in solving the case.

Unbelievable was released on September 13th, 2019. Reported in 2015 by ProPublica and The Marshall Project, it collects two narratives into eight episodes. It successfully gets viewers' attention and positive reviews from film critics. They mention that this film is eye-opening and courageous to perform feminism, humanity, injustice, power, and rape, which are not many TV programs willing to show due to sensitive topics. Kelly Lawyer said, "The thing about *Unbelievable* is that you have to believe it. It's all true". (https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2019/09/13/unbelievable-review-netflix-series-harrowing-must-watch/2165471001/) Supported by Jen Chaney (2019), she said that *Unbelievable* concerns with the inconsistent criminal justice system and the different results are felt when the victim is heard and treated with compassion.

The mini-series is about a serial rape case in which two of the victims are Marie Adler, 18 years old young woman from Lynwood, Washington. Her case is not taken seriously by Detective Parker, a despair story and injustice that is continuously getting worse. The other victim is Amber Stevenson, 22 years old young woman who lives in Colorado and gets raped three years later with similar characteristics to the attacker, whose case is handled by Detective Duvall. The two detectives take different approaches and result in Duvall's success by treating the victim with compassion and attentively listening to the victim, dedicating her life, and using her extraordinary intelligence. It catches the researcher's attention to

analyze the story to get the meaning of the story. Therefore, this mini-series is going to be analyzed using reader-response criticism.

Around the world, as a result of being overburdened with work and their lack of power and influence, women face threats to their lives, health, and well-being (UNFPA, 2004). Patriarchal ideology brings limitations that women can and cannot do. It makes women consider weak and inferior. The depiction through films and mass media of police figures, for example, is always shown as men's job and rarely shown as women. It reflects how society still considers power to be positive for men and negative for women (Muhlhausen, 2019). According to Donner (2020) from a 2019 Gallup survey in the United States, the participants refer to an ideal home setting that men work full time and get paid while women take care of the house and children. In this way, women are limited only in the domestic sphere and should not get personal achievements outside the house because they are accountable and must focus on household chores. Empowering and giving autonomy to women is essential for achieving sustainable development (UNFPA, 2004).

Focusing on Duvall as the female main character, the researcher sees something special about this character. Working in law enforcement as a female detective, her attitudes, thoughts, efforts, personal life, and values make the researcher feel that Duvall is a reflection of an empowered woman. This film shows detail of aspects of women's power and gender equality in terms of work, economy, and freedom of life choices. With this film, women are expected to realize that they

can work without being seen as inferior beings, that they have the same potential, and can realize the dreams and lives they want.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

As written on the research background, concern problems that emerge related to the topic of discussion in this film, namely:

1. How does *Unbelievable* portray the differences between male and female detectives in solving a rape case?

2. What are the factors and motivation behind Detective Duvall, the female detective, in helping rape victims?

3. What is women empowerment reflected in *Unbelievable*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems, the researcher's objective of the study are:

1. To reveal how *Unbelievable* portrays the differences between female and male detective in solving rape case.

2. To find out the factors and motivation behind Detective Duvall, the female detective, in helping rape victims.

3. To find out women empowerment is reflected in *Unbelievable*.

1.4   Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is showing the empowerment of Duvall using Subjective Criticism theory by David Bleich. The researcher uses the researcher's response as a single response in finding the meaning of *Unbelievable*. The scope of research is how female and male detectives communicate with the victims, their attitude in the investigation, and their thoughts about the rape case. The motivation, factors, and empowerment of Duvall are observed from Duvall's actions and thoughts.

1.5   Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes this research will help the students, especially those who study in English Literature of the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies, in comprehending the reader-response approach. Furthermore, this thesis educates the researcher more about the theory of the reader-oriented approach, which is helpful to understand the conceptual meaning or perspective of oneself and others. Also, this thesis helps women to be aware of their potential and what actions that women can do to help others in the right way in society.

1.6   Approach to the Study

The approach of this thesis is the reader-oriented approach by using David Bleich's Reader-Response Approach: Subjective Criticism. Reader-response theory is one of the theories that focus on readers' responses to literary works based

on their interpretations and experiences in reading text. The reader's response is influenced by the feeling, experiences, and knowledge so that it contributes to the search for meaning.

Using qualitative methodology, the researcher conducts research steps; First, the researcher watches Unbelievable as the main source of data. Second, the researcher read the Unbelievable script to assist in gathering utterances of Detective Duvall and Detective Parker. Third, the researcher identifies the object observation from the actions and speeches of Detective Duvall. Fourth, the researcher identifies Duvall's factors, motivation, and empowerment. The last, the researcher concludes the findings to find out the meaning of this mini-series.

1.7   Organization of the Paper

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction that consists of the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, approach of the study, and organization of the paper. The second chapter consists of the synopsis of *Unbelievable* and the biography of Susannah Grant. The third chapter consists of the review of related literature that includes the previous studies, the definition of popular culture, film and its genre, the theory of Reader Response: Subjective Criticism by David Bleich and the important terminologies; women empowerment, empathy, and protestant work ethic. The fourth chapter consists of findings and discussion. Finally, the last chapter is the conclusion and suggestion.