# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the Problem

On the 15th century, Johannes Gutenberg may have created one of the most life changing machine in history that changes the way people communicate to this day. It is not sure on when exactly Gutenberg invented the printing machine that allows the invention of newspaper and the printing of thousands of copies of books and other visual media at a low price point, making it accessible to lower class people (Wood, 2017). But Gutenberg's invention changed human life, it ascended human literacy like never before in human history.

Gutenberg's invention ascended human literacy in a way that it creates the concept of mass media which allows things that were never thought of possible before. The creation of newspaper and mass printed books allow the same content to be consumed by a large number of people which resulted in homogenization of thoughts (West & Turner, 2014). This also helps in the "homogenization of fluid regional tongue into a fixed national language was followed closely by the rise of nationalism" (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2015, p. 321). As time passes by, there have been many types of mass media that exist and McQuail (2007) was able to identify several functions of mass media, some of them are to educate and to entertain.

Some of the form of mass media is film or TV series, film or TV series is a great tool for education and entertainment because its ability to create an experience

for the audience by evoking their imagination to participate what they hear, see and feel, but it can also be considered a productive time where they gathered and interpret new information (Cloete, 2017). As a result, it is not uncommon to see the combination of serious life problems and entertainment as a feature of a film.

One of the serious life problems that has been featured in a film or TV series is the existence of sexual harassment or sexual assault. Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted sexual behaviour ranging from physical contact to verbal and can be repeated or happened once, if harassment becomes physical, forceful, or develops into threats it can be classed as sexual violence or sexual abuse or sexual assault (Brook, 2020). While all sexual violence/abuse/assault is a form of sexual harassment, not all sexual harassment can be considered an abuse/assault/violence.

Though many people know what sexual harassment is, they might not have the accurate picture of it, according to Cuklanz (2000), news or mass media often display or report cases that are newsworthy and has the potential of being sensationalized hence, rape caused by stranger is very prominent on mass media due to its representation of 'true' violence, when there are other forms of sexual harassment happening on everyday lives that does not get reported such as flashing/indecent exposure, stalking, groping and others. If people keep on watching sensationalized news, they might not know about other forms of sexual harassment that may frequently happened in real life but goes unreported.

In reality, instead of rape, catcalling is the most common form of sexual harassment reported by young woman or girls in the UK (Women and Equalities Committee, 2018). According to the Office for National Statistics (2018), among

adults age 16-59 years old indecent exposure or unwanted sexual touching was more common than rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) by 3.8 million to 1.1 million victims. In another study among 1024 girls aged 14-21, more than a third of girls have been "groped, stared at, catcalled and wolf-whistled while wearing their school uniform in public" (Plan International UK, 2018). These are one of the many common forms of sexual harassment experienced by people on everyday lives.

Therefore, many campaigns regarding the danger of sexual harassment and organizations are made to educate the public such as RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) in the United States, Brook, Plan International UK as well as Women and Equalities Committee from the parliament in the U.K. Besides that, film or TV series industries which is also a great tool to educate the public are participating in raising the awareness of sexual harassment and one of them is the Netflix Originals 'Sex Education season 2'.

## 1.2. Identification of the Problem

With the rising issues of sexual harassment, around 3.4 millions of female sexual harassment victims compare to 631,000 male sexual harassment victims that have experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16 (Office for National Statistics, 2018) in the United Kingdom, government as well as organization have been trying to raise awareness and educate the society on this issue. They use various forms of platform directed towards the mass such as social media, public speeches or interviews, books, and websites to communicate their

goal. Another forms of media that communicates to the mass is film even though it can be more costly than the previous. According to McQuail (2005), film is one of the various forms of mass media that can entertain and educate the public. It is one of the many platforms that is affordable and decent to enjoy your free time. Hence, it's a more fun way to learn new things.

Film is a suitable platform to spread awareness about sexual harassment because sexual harassment is a daily problem that are faced by many people of all age and gender and therefore people may find it easier to relate and understand. Another reason is also because film is "instantly a true mass medium in the sense that it quite completely reached a very large proportion of populations, even in rural areas" (McQuail, 2005, p. 32).

The movie industry take this chance to release several films and series promoting the awareness of sexual harassment in different circumstances such as movies like *Bombshell* and *The Assistant* are American dramas that revolve around sexual harassment on the workplace and series like *I May Destroy You* is a British comedy-drama that tells a story of a rape survivor, who seeks to rebuild her life after the incident. *The invisible war* is a documentary about sexual harassment and assault that has been going on for years within the military.

Another recent series that brings up sexual harassment is the series created by Netflix called 'Sex Education'. Written by an English screenwriter Laurie Nunn, the series is known for its open and honest discussion about sex. It is currently in production for the third season and the series is centred on the main character Otis who is an awkward 16 years old boy living with a single mom who happens to be

a sex therapist, Otis then secretly has been giving sex advice to the students in his school when he has zero experience on the field.

In the second season of the series, sexual harassment was brough up to light when it was incorporated as one of the major storyline which happened to one of the main characters called Aimee when she was on her way to school and what intrigue the researcher was their ability to depict the reality of sexual harassment in everyday lives and how it can still deeply affect the victim. People have been saying that the scene was "too relatable" (Freedman, 2020) or it is "so universal that it hurts" (Carlin, 2020). Though, it mainly focuses Aimee, other forms of sexual harassment was portrayed throughout the series with other characters.

With this background, this thesis will be discussing about how the series 'Sex Education season 2' delivers the message about sexual harassment throughout the film using Sara Mills critical discourse analysis as the theory and research method and because this series is based in the UK, the data mentioned throughout this research will also be based on UK's statistics. It is also important to acknowledge how consistent the series 'Sex Education' has been trying to promote sexual harassment awareness even outside the series.

## 1.3. Statement of the Problem

Based on the background and the identification of the problem explained above, the researcher came up with the research question:

How is the discourse of sexual harassment being portrayed in the series 'Sex Education season 2'?

**1.4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyse the communication process of the series 'Sex Education season 2' on raising the awareness of sexual harassment.

**1.5. Significance of the Study**

**1.5.1. Academic Purpose**

For the academic purpose, this study is useful for development of communication research regarding sexual harassment communication. This research is going to discuss about the power of mass media in a form series as a platform to create social awareness which can be used as a reference for further study in similar topics.

**1.5.2. Practical Purpose**

For its practical purpose, researcher hopes that this research can give new information and shed light onto the current situation on sexual harassment. This research can be a source of information for movie producers that may want to create a movie or series that revolves around sexual harassment.

**1.5.3. Social Purpose**

In terms of the social purpose of this study, this study can give information and guidelines to organizations as well as other social institution regarding sexual harassment if they ever want to create a film, series or any motion picture about it.

## 1.6. Organization of the Study

This study constitutes of six different chapters which is further elaborated below:

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

Chapter one which is the introduction consists of background of the study, identification of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study as well as organization of the study.

CHAPTER II : RESEARCH OBJECT

Chapter two will discuss further on the subject of research which is the series 'Sex Education season 2'. In this chapter, details on the key characters as well as synopsis of the series will be further elaborated.

CHAPTER III : LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter three will be directed for the explanation of theories and concepts use throughout the research.

CHAPTER IV : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter four will be describing the method use for this research. This research is using a qualitative approach with Sara Mills critical discourse analysis as the method.

CHAPTER V : RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter five will be the findings and result of the analysis based on the data collected during the data collecting process.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Chapter six is going to be the last chapter which will conclude the whole research as well as to mention some suggestions that can be done for further research in this topic.