CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter contains two parts which are conclusion and recommendation. The conclusion part is to conclude the discussion about the factors that lead Vanessa to become a child grooming victim, and Strane's acts of child grooming in *My Dark Vanessa* (2020). Meanwhile, the recommendation part provides some recommendations for further research.

5.1 Conclusion

The object of this research is a novel entitled *My Dark Vanessa* by Kate Elizabeth Russell which was published in 2020. The novel tells a story about a 15-year-old student named Vanessa Wye and her 42-year-old teacher named Jacob Strane who have a special relationship more than a regular teacher and student. Throughout the story, Strane managed to befriend then manipulate Vanessa's mind to think that the relationship and sexual intercourse which happened between them is a normal thing. However, given the condition that Vanessa is still counted as a child and Strane is a full-grown adult, the approaches that Strane did toward Vanessa in order to build a special relationship can be categorized as grooming. Due to this issue, this research analyzes child grooming in *My Dark Vanessa* (2020), focused on the factors that lead Vanessa to become a child grooming victim, and how Strane applies the acts of child grooming to Vanessa in this novel.

To answer the first research question, which is what are the factors that lead Vanessa to become a child grooming victim, Elliot et al.'s theory of child sexual

abusers' grooming strategy is used. Based on their theory, the offenders are mainly targeting their victims based on four factors. The four factors are the child's psychological vulnerabilities, less parental oversight, being socially isolated, and being emotionally needy. However, only three out of four factors are used in this research. Those are Vanessa's psychological vulnerabilities, Vanessa's less parental oversight, and Vanessa's being socially isolated.

The first factor is Vanessa's psychological vulnerabilities which appeared in a form of low self-esteem. She is described as a child who has low self-esteem regarding her academic abilities and her physical appearance. Despite the fact that she got a scholarship, and no one ever mocked her appearance, Vanessa always thought that she is stupid and not good-looking. This made Vanessa easier to accept any appreciation from people, including strangers, as she needs a confidence boost for her low self-esteem. Thus, a child sexual offender would most likely choose her as a victim, for it is easier to befriend Vanessa rather than other children who did not have any psychological vulnerabilities.

The second factor is Vanessa's less parental oversight which happened because Vanessa did not live with her parents. She lived in a dormitory, which made her parents unable to supervise Vanessa by themselves. This made Strane, as a teacher who meets Vanessa daily, have the confidence to victimize Vanessa. For he knew that Vanessa is still naïve and the parents could not realize it if he oversteps the line as a teacher.

The last factor is Vanessa's being socially isolated. Vanessa is described as a girl who did not have any friends and was always alone. Therefore, this is seen as

an appeal for a child sexual offender, for the risk of them getting caught by Vanessa's friends is very low to none. However, Vanessa also actually did not like being a loner and desired company. Because of this factor, when Mr. Strane as the offender made a move on Vanessa, she will open up to the offender quicker and easier compared to her peers that are not socially isolated.

Moreover, to answer the second research question, which is how Strane applies the acts of child grooming in *My Dark Vanessa* (2020), the researcher used Winters and Jeglic's theory of stages of grooming. Those stages consist of four stages, which are the selection of the victim, gaining access, trust development, and desensitizing the child to touch.

In the first stage, Strane decided to choose Vanessa as a potential victim by finding out whether she is a loner or not, and also by observing her physical appearance. A child sexual offender tends to be interested in a loner who did not have any social support because they are easier to get closer to. Thus, it is important for Strane to make sure that Vanessa fits the criteria of a loner before proceeding to the next stage. Furthermore, the child's physical appearance should also match the offender's liking. Hence, Strane chose to observe Vanessa's appearance first in this first stage.

In the second stage, Strane's act of child grooming is portrayed through how he made sure that Vanessa joined the creative writing club which he supervised. This counted as Strane's attempt to obtain access to be closer to Vanessa, which later will result in Vanessa's isolation from the others. The situation then makes the grooming process and assault will be more easily enacted.

In the third stage, Strane developed trust between himself and Vanessa by siding on Vanessa's side when the others are not, making her feel special and different from Strane's other students, and manipulating Vanessa's mind to think that the relationship between them is not wrong

In the final stage, Strane's acts of child grooming appeared in a form of desensitizing Vanessa to touch physically by initiating seemingly innocent touches like touching her knee, until escalated to more intimate touches like sexual intercourse. Meanwhile, he also desensitizes Vanessa to touch psychologically by giving her several sexual-themed books.

In conclusion, Vanessa's characteristics as a loner who has low self-esteem that also did not have direct supervision from her parents play a big part that led her to become a child grooming victim. Moreover, even though the definition of grooming is still insufficient and it is hard to identify whether a behavior could be categorized as grooming or not, Strane's acts toward Vanessa are proven as grooming behavior because it fit the current child grooming theory which stated that the grooming offender often uses the four stages of grooming, which are the selection of the victim, gaining access, trust development, and desensitizing the child to touch (Winters and Jeglic, 2017). The findings also show that Strane did all the grooming stages in order to make Vanessa not realize that he assaulted her, which resulted in Strane getting away from his supposed deserving punishment. Hence, it can be concluded that these findings also support the current child grooming theories which argue that the main goal of child grooming is to make sure that the victim will keep the secrecy of the assault that happened to them (McAlinden, 2006; Knoll, 2010; Winters and Jeglic, 2017).

Lastly, given that the cases of child grooming are continuing to rise in Indonesia nowadays, it is critical to be able to recognize the acts of child grooming. However, the public in Indonesia still does not have a sufficient understanding of the term child grooming. Therefore, it is essential to increase public knowledge about this issue to stop more sexual abuse from happening.

5.2 Recommendation

There are two recommendations that emerged while conducting this research which may be made for further research. The first is the use of pedophilia theory to examine the same object of this current research, *My Dark Vanessa* (2020). The second is the use of the self-defense mechanism theory to examine *My Dark Vanessa* (2020). These recommendations may be helpful for those who are interested in conducting research related to literary works.

There are still plenty of aspects from the novel *My Dark Vanessa* (2020) that have not been examined yet. For example, future researchers could examine Strane's behavior with the use of pedophilia theory. Future researchers then could find out whether Strane's behavior could be linked with pedophilia as a mental illness or not. This research could be beneficial to widen the scope of the research from the novel *My Dark Vanessa* (2020), especially within the psychology in literature branch.

Moreover, future researchers could also make new research from the novel *My Dark Vanessa* (2020) by using the self-defense mechanism theory. This theory can be used to analyze how Vanessa copes with past assaults by using a self-defense

mechanism as her shield. Finally, this new research might broaden the analysis of this novel, specifically the analysis from Vanessa's perspective.