

**THE EXISTENCE OF POWER RELATION AMONG CHARACTERS IN  
“HORRIBLE BOSSES” MOVIE BY SETH GORDON**

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**

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**STUDY PROGRAM OF ENGLISH  
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES  
FACULTY OF CULTURAL STUDIES  
UNIVERSITAS BRAWIJAYA  
2015**

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**Presented to  
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the degree of *Sarjana Sastra***

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSIP

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## ABSTRACT

Wardhana, Ardhiansyah Aga, 2015, **The Existence of Power Relation Among Characters in *Horrible Bosses* Movie by Seth Gordon**. Study Program of English, Department of Languages and Literature, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya. Supervisor: M. Andhy Nurmansyah.

Keywords: *Horrible Bosses* Movie, Movie Studies, Characterization, Power, Resistance.

One of the drama movies created by Seth Gordon is *Horrible Bosses*. *Horrible Bosses* movie tells about three ordinary guys are Nick, Kurt and Dale who has abusive bosses.

This research uses power relation theory according Michel Foucault and also movie studies concern on characterization to understand representation from characters on *Horrible Bosses* movie, especially power relation between boss and employee. This research analyzes in how power relation is represented by characters in the movie. The writer found that power relation comes in two sides, namely power and resistance. From power sides, power uses in the way; to coerce, to repress, to deceive and to lie that comes from the boss. That things are also greatly affects the lives of around, either from employee nor the nearest people. All of that to fulfill their main purposes are lust, assets, and position. From Resistance, it comes from the employees, are Nick, Kurt and Dale. They do it as the consequence from coercion and repression by their bosses. Resistance of them is shown as a step to getting appropriate treatment as an employee. The conclusion is the power relation has two sides as a driver; they are the power and resistance. And also supported by Discourse as an instrument of power relation. According to Faucoult that power relation also normless and valueless. It means that we can't conclude about good or bad from it. If there are repression and coercion, there also resistance and both of them are inseparable.

The researcher suggests the next researchers who want to conduct a study about power relation to use different objects. The next researchers are also expected to investigate the power relation phenomenon with different scope, like education or politics.

## INTISARI

Wardhana, Ardhiansyah Aga, 2015, **Adanya hubungan kekuasaan diantara pemeran dalam film *Horrible Bosses* oleh Seth Gordon**. Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Brawijaya. Pembimbing : M. Andhy Nurmansyah.

Kata Kunci: Film *Horrible Bosses*, studi film, karakterisasi, kekuatan, perlawanan.

Salah satu film drama yang dibuat oleh Seth Gordon adalah film *Horrible Bosses*. Film *Horrible Bosses*, film yang merefleksikan kehidupan nyata, bercerita tentang tiga lelaki biasa bernama Nick, Kurt dan Dale yang memiliki boss yang kasar.

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori hubungan kekuasaan menurut Michel Foucault, dan juga menggunakan studi film dalam hal karakterisasi untuk memahami penggambaran dari para pemeran dalam film *Horrible Bosses*, terutama tentang hubungan kekuasaan antara boss dan pegawai. Penelitian ini menganalisis tentang bagaimana hubungan kekuasaan digambarkan oleh para pemeran dalam film. Penulis menemukan bahwa hubungan kekuasaan terbagi dalam dua sisi, yaitu kekuatan dan perlawanan. Dari sisi kekuatan, di penelitian ini kekuatan digunakan dalam cara; untuk memaksa, untuk menindas, untuk menipu dan untuk berbohong yang datang dari para boss. Hal itu tentunya juga sangat mempengaruhi kehidupan sekitar, baik dari kehidupan pegawai ataupun orang-orang terdekatnya. Semua itu untuk memenuhi tujuan utama mereka, adalah nafsu, kekayaan, dan jabatan. Dari sisi perlawanan, datang dari para pegawai, adalah Nick, Kurt, and Dale. Mereka melakukan itu sebagai buntut dari penindasan dan pemaksaan oleh para boss. Perlawanan dari mereka ditampilkan sebagai langkah untuk mendapatkan perlakuan yang layak sebagai pegawai. Kesimpulannya adalah hubungan kekuasaan memiliki dua sisi sebagai penggerak, yaitu kekuatan dan perlawanan. Dan juga didukung oleh wacana sebagai instrumen hubungan kekuasaan. Menurut Foucault Hubungan kekuasaan juga tidak memiliki norma dan nilai. Itu berarti kita tidak bisa menyimpulkan tentang baik dan buruk dari hubungan kekuasaan. Jika ada penindasan atau pemaksaan, terdapat juga perlawanan dan keduanya tidak bisa dipisahkan.

Peneliti menyarankan kepada peneliti selanjutnya yang ingin melakukan studi tentang hubungan kekuatan untuk menggunakan objek yang berbeda. Peneliti berikutnya juga diharapkan untuk menyelidiki fenomena hubungan kekuatan dengan lingkup yang berbeda, seperti pendidikan atau politik.

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The Researcher



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer will present about the content of introduction. Those are background of the study, problem of the study and objective of the study. A brief explanation of the material object, *Horrible Bosses* by Seth Gordon, will also be explained in this chapter.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Movie is considered as a branch of literature. There is a reason why movie is called as a branch of literature. Movie is adapted from the tradition of live theatre which includes techniques of staging, lighting, movement and gestures. From the novel, movie is adapted from structure, characterization, theme and point of view. From poetry, it is adapted from an understanding of metaphor, symbolism and other literary tropes. Movie can extend into areas of the innermost privacy and consciousness just like poetry does.

Movie is a recording of moving images that tells a story and that people watch on a screen. For now, movie has become the popular thing of literary work in this era. Movie also plays one of the important roles in pop culture. Within the movie, it can be found the reflection of human's life through the depiction of relationship between man and man, man and nature and man and God. Those kinds of relationships makes filmmakers or artists interested in packaging in the form of work.

Relationship is something that cannot be separated from human life. Humans are connected with other through relationships. Their relationships are social and interpersonal relationships. There are several main types of relationships such as romantic relationships, friendships, work relationships and family relationships. Every relationship has different characteristics from each other. Romantic relationship characterized by commitment, honesty, trust, respect. Usually it happens between man and woman Friendship is a relationship where there are no formalities and no hesitation at all. Work relationship allows individuals working together in professional circles to achieve the goals and ambitions because they want to increase the chance of getting a promotion and accessing better career opportunities. The last is the family relationship where the members are connected by blood or marriage.

Within all the relationships described above, it is possible to see the manifestation of power relation within the process of communication among people. Power is certainly familiar for most of people. Definitely we usually hear it in the news, especially related to the issue of government and politics. However power is not always associated with government and politics because actually power can emerge from anywhere and operates everywhere. Foucault once said that power is not an entity but a relation, for example the relationship between teachers and students, bosses and employees, parents and children and even in other kinds of relationship such as friendship.

General definition of power is the ability or right to control people or things. Power is also used in many ways. Max Weber (1968, cited in Domhoff,

2005, para. 4) defines "power as the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others." This definition shows that power is very broad. Sometimes it creates an opportunity for an individual to achieve the goals but also creates resistance for other to blow it. According to Karl Marx in his book *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), the concept of power is only paying attention to the social classes and strata. Marx's statement is quite different from Foucault, Foucault states that "power is everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and regimes of truth" (1995, p. 88). Meanwhile, Truth is as stated by Rabinow in his book *The Foucault Reader*. He says that,

"Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (1984, p. 72-73).

Power for Foucault is not only in negative form like oppressive and repressive, but also productive and positive in society. Power produces reality in society and positive force such a resistance., Gaventa is one of experts who adopted Foucault's theory. He says In *Power after Lukes: a review of the literature*,

“Foucault is one of the few writers on power who recognize that power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force in society” (2003, p. 2).

In this thesis, the writer will use Foucault's theory related with power relations. Power can be found in the professional organization, society, family, profession, religion, sex and other aspects because basically it originates from everywhere. This thesis will explain how power arises in the work environment depicted in Seth Gordon's *Horrible Bosses*. So, that is why Foucault's theory about power closely matches with the theme of this thesis.

We know about the existence of power and we also know there is unequal power happen in society. Unequal power between boss and employee is one of example that becomes main issue in our society. The example is when boss holds most of the power than their employees since they have higher position, they can control their rights and they have absolute authority. Boss can decide their employee's 'future' and expect them to follow the path they want them to be. The power relation that happens in work field sometimes creates new behavior such as rebellion and resistance which is related with their rights.

Sometimes we can see the true individual's characters through power because power can build who he/she is. Besides creating coercion, repression and other negatives, it is also productive because power makes us think critically toward any situation, not simply accepts it. Furthermore, resistance does not happen in same scale and condition. Resistance and the target of resistance can be individual or collective, widespread or limited.



For this thesis, the writer takes *Horrible Bosses* as the material object. A movie made by Seth Gordon got a good response from the audience and has a tremendous enthusiasts. This movie tells about Nick, Dale and Kurt, three ordinary guys who work in different jobs and deal with abusive bosses. Nick works in a financial firm for Dave Harken, who after suggesting to Nick that he is in line for a major promotion, ends up awarding the position to himself (Dave Harken). He wants to quit, but he cannot. Dale is a dental assistant and is engaged, but his boss, Dr. Julia Harris, threatens to tell his fiance that they had sex unless he actually agrees to have sex with her. That is why he stuck in his job. Kurt enjoys his job, but after his boss, Jack Pellit, dies, his cocaine-addicted son, Bobby, takes over, and his poor work ethic threatens to bring down their company. In such rough economic times, quitting is not a viable solution, so the trio eventually decides they would be better off if their bosses were gone permanently. With the aid of a so-called "murder consultant", the trio devise a plan to kill their bosses in a way that they don't get caught. However, things didn't go according to plan, and the trio find themselves running from the law, and for their own lives.

The reason why *Horrible Bosses* is chosen to be the material object is because the story of this movie is satyr, easy packaging, has strong relation with everyday life and the construction of power relation within each of the action of the characters.

Moreover, the reason to choose power relation as the theory is because the relationship between boss and employee shown in the movie is assumed full of power relation formation. Power in this movie affects so many aspects of the characters' actions. Since power cannot be separated from society and since we live in a social environment, this study is crucial to be conducted to give lesson particularly about how to manage relationship among others.

## **1.2 Problem of the Study**

*Horrible Bosses* is a literary works that describes the life of three ordinary guys who work different jobs and deal with abusive bosses. Working in strict environment and under control by abusive bosses makes they decided to resist all of the bosses' wants. Based on the story of the movie, the problem of the study is concentrated on how power relation is represented by characters as seen in *Horrible Bosses* movie.

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Since the study concentrate on power in work environment and influence to the main character's life, especially in boss and employee relationship in which the bosses who influenced by job position try to coerce their will to their employees and how the employees make a resistance, so the objective of the study to show power relations through the characters as seen in the movie.

**CHAPTER II**

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**AND RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter provides theories and approaches that will be used to analyze Seth Gordon's *Horrible Bosses*. Definition of power relation from Foucault, discourse and movie studies will be explained in detail. Besides, this chapter also delivers information about previous studies and research method.

**2.1 Theoretical Framework**

As we know that human being surely needs each other in order to survive because actually he or she is social creature. Then communication becomes an important thing among human beings. Through communication can create interaction and share about many things that influence each other. When individuals tries to share about many things that influence each other, of course he or she needs power. Power itself works through various relationships and lies in every place including workplace. It is empowered from Faucoult's statement that power is not a thing but a relation.

In workplace power is created by the existence of relationship. It can be seen among the components in the workplace. Most of the power in the workplace is exercised by employer. However, it does not mean employees do not have any

opportunity to exercise power. Further, it is going to be discussed in detail about power,..... in order to know and understand better about Foucauldian power relation concept or theory.

### **2.1.1 Power**

Since human beings are social creatures, they cannot live without interaction with others. People creates relationship through interactions and they also creates the society more alive. Sometimes if it is looked deeper to some specific conditions, society is being dominated by some people who have more control over others. This condition actually is related with power that became an important part of society. There are also many experts used and adopted the definition developed by German sociologist Max Weber (1922, cited in Schaefer, 2012, p. 185), who says that “power is the ability to exercise one’s will over others.” It means that certain individual uses power to influence others to reach certain goals.

Unfortunately, people tend to misunderstand and misuse their power. People tend to use power to repress or coerce others in everyday life. Some of it include mocking, bullying, complaining, criticizing, and manipulating. Michael Foucault is the most influential figure in discussing about power. He said that “power is not a thing but a relation and power operates at the most micro levels of social relations. Power is omnipresent at every level of the social body” (2007, para. 95). It means that power cannot be touched physically but only be felt. Power is also works at all levels of social relationship and comes from everywhere. He also connected it with the idea

“power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere” (1978, p. 93). Moreover Foucault sees power as something which is dynamic, flexible, productive and not always negative or destructive as it is explained in quotation below.

“His [Foucault’s] work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them” (Gaventa, 2003, p. 1).

Thus, power is not about an institution, class or structure; neither is it a certain ability we are blessed with. It is embodied to anyone. There is also the others definition of power in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* which says,

“I am not referring to Power with a capital P, dominating and imposing its rationality upon the totality of the social body. In fact, there are power relations. They are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration” (1990, p. 38).

So, from this statement, it is really clear that power is a set of relations dissolved throughout social body and can be found in every relationship of human being.

Power according to Foucault’s theory is not only about negative forms like coercive or repressive but also as important things, productive and positive force in society. He states in his book titled *Discipline and Punish: the birth of a prison* that,

“We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (1995, p. 194).

The last thing about power is about resistance. According to Foucault, when power is exercised, power can create new behaviors arising through resistance. His famous quote from his book, *The History of Sexuality*, “where there is power there is resistance” (1978, p. 95) explains that power which is exercised by someone is not simply accepted by others. There is possibility when someone or group resists it. Power lies in every social body like Foucault’s statements. So, it works through various aspect of relationships such as economy, class, sex and many more to build strong power relation and has free access into people’s behaviors.

#### **2.1.1.1 Family**

The family is the first place for humans to learn. Family also is one of the important factors that can shape individual’s characters and thoughts. According to Burr et.al. there are five points to be understood considering about family. They are (1) family membership may be involuntary, and the connection may be more permanent; (2) actions of family members can be hidden and thus there is a safe environment provided for openness and honesty but also an environment for dark activities such as abuse, addictions, and neglect; (3) family members may be more intensely bonded through emotional ties; (4) there is often a shared family paradigm

or world view; and (5) there is frequently a biological connectedness that is not present in other social groups. Generally family consists of a mother, father, grandparents and children. Through the family, the member can learn about sense of belonging among its member and then becomes a place to transfer a culture or traditions between generations. In family, parents' roles are very crucial for children development, because they are model, strongest model and greatest influence. It is because they have the ability and more power to be exercised. They have many experiences as supporters, they're older and they will tell to children what is good and what is bad to do and they will teach which values are supposed to be followed and many more. Children will adopt values, norms and behaviors from their parents. It is natural because parents want their descendants to continue what the family believes.

#### **2.1.1.2 Education**

Education is more than reading, writing and doing academic and scientific tasks. It is one of important assets belongs to country because it can make future brighter and better. Education is critical to reduce poverty and inequality. Ralph Waldo Emerson stated about education in his book *Education an Essay and Other Selections* that,

“Education should be commensurate with the object of life. It should be a moral one; to teach self-trust; to inspire the youthful man with an interest in himself; with a curiosity touching his own nature; to acquaint him with the resources of his mind, and to teach him that there is all his strength, and to inflame him with a piety towards the Grand Mind in which he lives” (1909, p. 11).

Education is acquired through the formal institutions like school, colleges and universities then also can be acquired from various activities from real life. It is also one of the media in which power can emerge.

### **2.1.1.3 Media**

Nowadays media are the important things for human's life and play important for humans. There is definition about media from Merriam Webster, "a medium of cultivation, conveyance, or expression". Media also commonly refer to message-carriers because they can deliver message to users. Television, radio, the internet, music, the newspaper and cultural events are all media through which messages are carried to audiences. Media is also very closely related to power. For a certain individual, media is a proper medium to deploy something they want. Because most of people could not get away from the media, the power exercised by someone or a group of people will influence others massively. As a result gradually but surely people's mind and behavior can be directed to a certain goal unconsciously.

### **2.1.1.4 Government**

When we talk about power, we think directly about government. Government is very familiar with power. There is definition about government from Merriam Webster, "government is the group of people who control and make decisions for a country, state, etc." it means that they have power to control the society and the state and act as a decision-maker. People who work in government institution have special



access to use power for making policy, holding elections, declaring wars and many others on behalf of the nation. Government can influence how society works, and has the legal power over others. It is stated by Ayn Rand's (1964, cited in Binswanger, 1986, para. 7) that "the difference between political power and any other kind of social power, between a government and any private organization, is the fact that a government holds a legal monopoly on the use of physical force." So, government has absolute power, there is no one except government can use physical force legally.

### **2.1.2 Discourse**

One of the primary concerns of Michael Foucault besides power is discourse. Discourses becomes key concept in Foucault's theory. He sees how relationship operates within discourses. Discourse is the foundation for power relations. It embodied meaning and social relationships. In Foucault's book entitled *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he states that "discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak...Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention'" (1972, p. 49).

Another meaning of discourse according to Foucault is that,

"Discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark" (1972, p. 25).

Discourses expresses the historical specificity of what is said and what remains unsaid. It constructs knowledge and then governs, through the production of categories of knowledge and collects of texts, what it is possible to talk about and what is not. Then, it reproduces both power and knowledge simultaneously and it defines subjects framing and positioning who it is possible to be and what it is possible to do. Discourse also defines and produces the objects of our knowledge.

## **2.2 Movie Studies**

Nowadays, movie has become a part of society, because the story is shown in movie mostly reflected on the reality in society. Then movie has become the lesson in formal education which can be analyzed. Ed Sikov in his book *Film Studies: An Introduction* states that,

“Film studies deals with the problems of reality and representation by making an initial assumption and proceeding logically from it. This assumption is that all representations have meaning” (2009, p. 26).

Since this thesis is about movie which is closely related to representation and through the character, so movie studies will be applied. Therefore, the aim of studying movie is to get the detailed information about the film which is needed to answer the problem of the study.

To get the purpose of the movie, at first we must know about the way to analyze movie. In Boggs and Petrie's book entitled *The Art of Watching Films* (2008) it is mentioned that analyzing movie can be done by analyzing some elements of the movie such as characterization, dialogue, theme, costume and makeup design, sound effect, visual effect and others. However, here the writer will choose the element of character, characterization, dialogues to be the focuses of analysis to picture the manifestation of power relation among the characters.

To understand further about character and characterization, there will be some definitions about it given below. One general definition of character and characterization can be taken from Merriam Webster dictionary. In the dictionary character is ..... Meanwhile characterization is defined as, "the artistic representation (as in fiction or drama) of human character or motives". Therefore characterization is the way to look human's character or motives. To know deeper about certain characters' characterization, there are some ways analysts like to do, they are characterization through appearance, dialogue, internal and external action, reactions of other characters, contrast, caricature and leitmotif, and choice of name. To be specific, the writer only apply two ways, those are characterization through dialogue and external action. Therefore, beside character and characterization, dialogue becomes the important part of the movie which is analyzed.

### **2.2.1 Characterization through Dialogue**

Characterization through dialogue is one of methods to understand deeper about character in movie. In dialogue, we can see who characters truly are. Boggs and Petrie also states in their book *The Art of Watching Films* (2008) that, ‘characters in a fictional film naturally reveal a great deal about themselves by what they say. But a great deal is also revealed by how they say it. Their true thoughts, attitudes, and emotions can be revealed in subtle ways through word choice and through the stress, pitch, and pause patterns of their speech.’ (2009, p. 61) They mentioned not only with what they say we can see the character but also how they say it. How they say it that can be referred to educational background, social’s class and economic level. It is also explained in Boggs and Petrie’s book;

“Actors' use of grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and particular dialects (if any) reveals a great deal about their characters' social and economic level, educational background, and mental processes.” (2009, p. 61)

### **2.2.2 Characterization through External Action**

Action is also the most important thing to be understood. Through external action the characters want to show who they really are. How they try to possess or to influence over others character. Those are explained by Boggs and Petrie in their book *The Art of Watching Films* (2008) that, “the best reflections of character are a person's actions.”

If the reason for the character's action is clearly established, the character and the story become so woven together. They are impossible to separate, and every action that the person takes in some way reflects his or her personality.

### **2.3 Previous Studies**

In connection with the study conducted in this thesis, there are two previous studies need to be considered. The first previous study is done by Linda Pratiwi, an English Literature student from Brawijaya University entitled *Representation of Michel Foucault's Power Relation in Deception Point by Dan Brown* (2014). This study analyzed the power relation which is concentrated on political field of American government. Then the purpose of Pratiwi's study was to find out the circulation and the manifestation of Foucault's power relation in among some characters in the novel which can be separated roughly into two different poles; government and non-government pole. Pratiwi's study is very useful for the writer because it shows how power works in different level between civilian and government.

Next previous study is done by Dhian Zhafarina, also an English Literature student from Brawijaya University entitled *Power Relation Depicted in Jeanette Winterson's Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (2015) that analyze about power relations in mother and daughter relationship. The purpose of this study was how the mother who is influenced by religion institution and society's view try to impose her

view to her daughter. Dhian's study is also very useful for the writer on writing because her study shows how someone possessed his or her power to another.

Compare to two studies, this study will be different by means of analyzing Seth Gordon's movie *Horrible Bosses* that power is represented in this movie through some characters. From Pratiwi, the similarity this study is the theory from Foucault about power relation. The differences are that Pratiwi's study was more concentrated on political issue but this study is going to look at the manifestation of power relation within workfield. Then the material objects which are different. Pratiwi's work used novel as the material object of the study but this study takes movie as its object.

Next from Dhian, the similarity is the topic that related with how power reflects through some characters. The difference is the material object. Dhian Jeanette's Winterson novel *Oranges are not The Only Fruit* and this study uses Gordon's *Horrible Bosses* the movie.

## **2.4 Research method**

In this research, six steps will be taken. Those are deciding the object of the study, formulating the problem of the study, finding the theory related to the study, collecting the data, interpreting and analyzing the data and then drawing conclusion. The details are explained in the subheadings as follow:

### **2.4.1 Deciding the object of study**

A movie entitled *Horrible Bosses* which is created by Seth Gordon and published in 2011 is chosen to be material object of the study. The writer decided to choose this movie because the movie tells about how power lies in individuals can influence another individual's life and hold control over their life. The movie is chosen because power lies in society and happens in everyday live as much as this film brings. On the other hand, the selection of the object is also very different from previous studies. If the previous studies focused on the relationship of power that occurs in family relationships and governance, this research focused on work relationship.

### **2.4.2 Formulating the problem of the study**

After watching the movie in many times, the writer tries to formulate the problem of the study. It's important because the problem of the study could serve as guidelines, decisive direction and focus of a research. For the first this movie actually shows about the conflict between the boss and employee. The second is how power is excercised by the characters in the movie. So the writer pull the problem in this research is raising problem about; how power relation is represented by characters as seen in *Horrible Bosses* movie.

### **2.4.3 Finding the theory related to the study**

Since the movie is about relationship of power between boss and employee. Then the writer tries to find the theory that related with the study to solve the problem of the studies. Here the writer decides to use power relation theory from Foucault because the theory is really fit for this research, because there are also discourses that appears. The theory also can help the writer to reveal something about power.

### **2.4.4 Collecting the data**

After finding theory, the writer is going to collect the data. Since the object is movie, the data in the movie will be collected by marking the important scenes which is related with power relations. For the first the writer watching the movie and then the writer tries to sort and classify the data. The data is like important scenes within conversation. In addition, the writer uses cinematographic element to capture some picture and this study will use qualitative data in which it will be in form of description to uncover the answer of problem of study.

### **2.4.5 Interpreting and analyzing the data**

After collecting the data, the writer tries to interpret and analyze the data. This step is done in order to add a good understanding in interpreting the object. The data will be analyzed is the data that has been previously selected. The data is in the form of important scenes. The writer uses the theory of power relation as guidance to analyze and interpret data. Data will be analyzed by connecting the data with theory.



The movie shows how power that one or some people possesses can control individual's characters and life. To get the proper interpretation, movie studies will be used to analyze because the material object is movie and see the power is represented by characterization. The discussion in the research will be controlled by the use of theory about power by Michael Foucault.

#### **2.4.6 Drawing Conclusion**

After analyzing the data, the last steps will be taken is drawing conclusion. Based on the data that has been analyzed and the problem of the study that has been answered, so the writer can concluded that power relation in this research is clearly depicted, represented with various ways, and also exercised with various ways from the characters.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter will present about findings and discussion of the research. It provides the analysis about power relation represented in *Horrible Bosses* movie by Seth Gordon.

Movie is a work of art that can easily attract people's attention present days. The theme of the movie can be various. One of the themes that can be found in movie is related to real life particularly about relationships between man and man, man and God and man and nature or others. Sometimes what makes a relationship dynamic is power which is exercised among the characters within a certain movie. Foucault once said that, power is everywhere and it can be found in every relationship. People who holds a power that can influence others usually has a hidden purpose in which they are trying to realize. Power is also associated with the discourse and power and discourse cannot be separated. Representation of power in Gordon's *Horrible Bosses* comes from the bosses in their own ways.

In chapter 2, there are some notions about power and discourse. It lies inside the social body and they can be found in any relationships. This chapter will be more concentrated on the exploration of power relation in the workplace. The existence of power relation is represented by employee and boss characters. This movie has a tendency how power itself is used by the characters. The main characters, Nick, Dale and Kurt in *Horrible Bosses* movie is controlled over by their bosses. According to Foucault, where there is power, there is resistance.

Surely they will provide the 'resistance' in their ways. The writer found four findings about power relation. Three of them are the representation of power and one is for resistance.

### **3.1 Achieving Promotion**

Promotion is the goal of every employee. Through the promotion, employee could achieve a higher position. The picture is quite simple, the higher the position of a person in an institution or company, the greater income he or she would earn. Of course to achieve the promotion, it is not as easy as imagined. Each company has its own policy to do that, for example, the length of work, the contribution toward the development of the company, and others.

One character named Nick is an employee who is very active, and he belongs to those who are labeled as a hardworker. He wanted a promotion. He would do anything for it. Also there is Dave Harken. He is the boss of Nick. One of characters who could potentially in exercising his power to achieve his purpose. for the first time power relations happened in this case. Both powers will be exercised by the characters. There are also some discourse utilized by some of the characters and make power relations goes well. In the next subchapter will show how power relations happened, how the discourse is used to exercise the power over other individuals and who's the best in using power.

### 3.1.1 Extra Time for Work

Each employee will definitely feel the extra time, it can be called as overtime. It is felt by Nick. He also did it in order to get promotion. Surely it is expected by Nick and he would not miss that opportunity. The writer found that there is something different in this case. In general, employees only get extra time for overtime, for Nick it is very different. He is required to arrive earlier than other employees and also come home late.



**Figure 3.1 Nick tells about his office hours**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:00:36)

From characterization itself, it shows that Nick was the one being hard-working and obedient. Yet he knew that he was weighed down by the regulation of office hours are given solely to him. It is being used by Dave because he knew that Nick wanted to get a promotion. That's why Nick was willing to do what is ordered by his boss even though it is very exaggerated for him in terms of getting a promotion. He is willing to work before sunrise like in the scene and return after

sunset, which means that other employees are back home but he still struggling to work on his desk. In the scene it is also explained clearly what is seen on the atmosphere of the parking lot, where there is only his car Nick. Nick knows that it would have a good impact on his life in the future. He accept it to reach higher position that what he has now

Knowing Nick's ambition, Nick's boss also performs a discourse. Discourse is actually strongly related with the power relations in the social body expressed as it is not only through language but also practices. Foucault, in his book, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1, An Introduction* asserts that, "discourse transmits and produces power; it Reinforces it, but Also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it "(1990, p. 101). Nick's boss said that "*Life is a marathon, and you cannot win a marathon without putting a few Band-Aids on your nipples, right?*". It means that in order to achieve something to be desired, there must be sacrifices made. The sacrifices can be in any form, such time, energy, material possession and other.

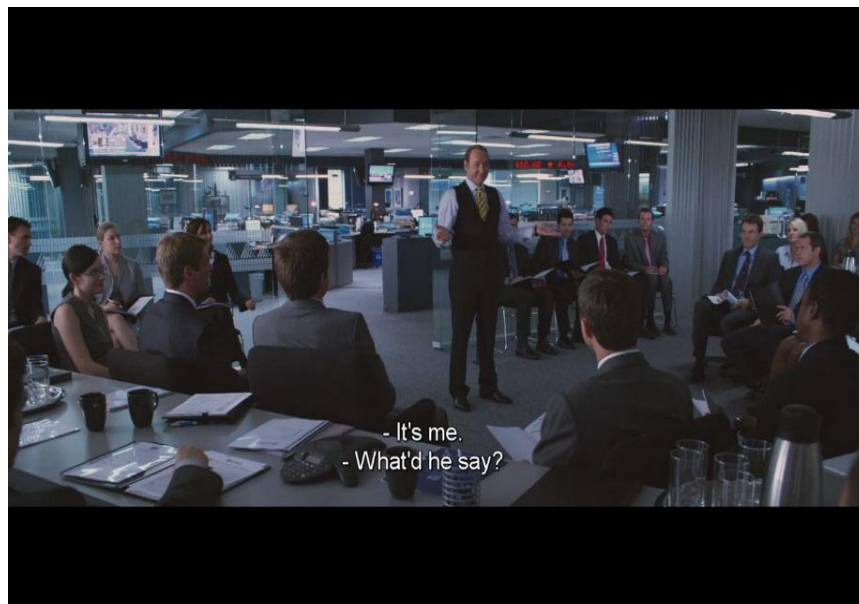
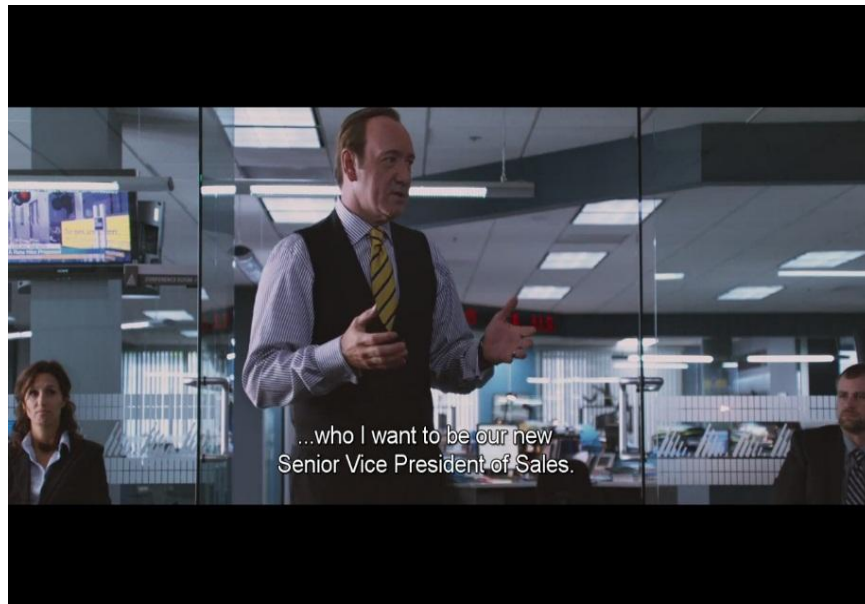
Power is always used to impose the will of others, to fulfill the will of the owner of power. Actually, it often occurs in people's lives. In this movie, coercion appears in different forms that are quite interesting. Power, authority and coercion are a continuous line. Authority arises because there is power in it and coercion made because the individual has the power and authority to do so. Also Weber states that "legitimacy distinguishes authority, from coercion, force, power, leadership, persuasion and influence. Superiors, he states, feel that they have a right to issue commands; subordinates perceive an obligation to obey." In the

movie, Nick and his boss are overwhelmed by a certain discourse which I may call as ‘promotion’ discourse. Within the discourse, the work of power are exercised by both sides. However, within the discourse, the power of the boss is exercised better than the power of Nick as the employee. Under the control of his ambition which is driven by a “tricky” power of the boss, saying that sacrifices are needed to get higher position, so Nick keeps working overtime and feels that it must be worth to be done.

### 3.1.2 Break the Promise

To begin this sub-sub chapter, the writer would like to show the scenes in three captions when Dave announces who is going to be the Senior Vice President of Sales.



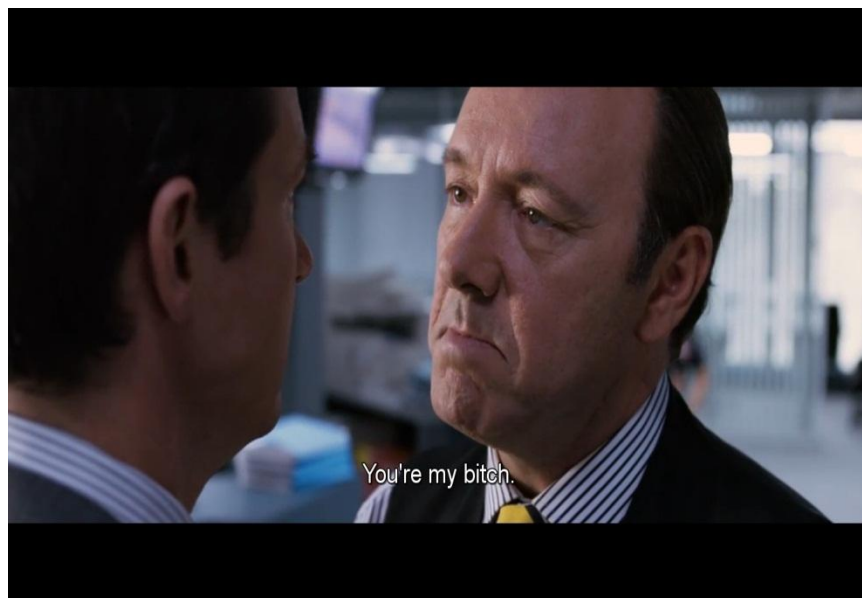


**Figure 3.2 - 3.4 Dave Harken states himself to hold the position  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:11:40, 00:11:44, 00:11:51)**

Here the writer wants to show through the aspect of characterization of Dave Harken character, the practice of power relation which is dominated by greed. He shows his dominance since he considers that only he who deserves the position. The writer also found that from the beginning Dave just plays his power

over his employee by giving them promise of promotion in which he never wants to keep it. He has no intention even to promote Nick. Because he knows that Nick is a competent, submissive and ambitious person, Dave plays his power over the condition. How Dave easily destroyed Nick's hopes even though Nick always obeyed all ordered by his boss. Dave gives hope and he also destroyed that hope. He uses a promotion for a higher position as a pretext. Previous captions are only the introduction to major problem discussed in the following paragraphs.

After the position is no longer possible to get, little resistance was given by Nick to get out of the company. German sociologist Max Weber (1922, cited in Schaefer, 2012, p. 185), who says that "power is the ability to exercise one's will over others." Dave uses his power in accordance with what he wants.



**Figure 3.5 Dave Harken tells about who Nick is**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:14:23)



From the figure above, it indicates that Dave Harken is an arrogant and tends to be rough. He is arrogant because of his position and power he holds in the company. He also tend to be rough because he called his servants as "bitch". Dave emphasizes that Nick is only his "servant". So, automatically Nick must "serve" orders from him as the boss while he is still working in the company.



**Figure 3.6 Dave Harken is willing to write about bad recommendation (Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:14:06)**

Dave is also a cunning and deceitful boss. It looks from how he tried to keep his best employees from out of the company.

Power relation is so interesting to analyze because there is discourse as an instrument builder. In this sub-chapter discourse is clearly seen. It occurs when the main characters, Nick dealing with his boss, Dave Harken, to get out from the company. In sum, Nick is powerless against Dave's power. However, the powerless Nick is not about subordinate position of Nick toward Dave. There is something complex that "binds" Nick to stay in the company and to become powerless in

front of his boss. It is all about recommendation. Nick is afraid of bad recommendation that can be spread by Dave to other companies if he decides to leave the company now. If Dave does so, Nick will find difficulty in getting a new job.

Dave stated that Nick is an insubordinate and dishonest drunk. Dave never hesitates to write something which is contrary to reality. This is bad for Nick's life. Nick lives with dilemma. He cannot get a better position in the company after serving in a long time, and he cannot also get out of the company due to bond of recommendation. In general, the owner of power has a tendency in the case of threatening others. However, the works of the power still depends on the discourse created among the parties which are involved in power relation. Finally, after successfully making Nick keep working all the time with 'promotion' as discourse, Dave also use a 'recommendation' as discourse. This time he uses it to make Nick stay in the company after the efforts of Nick to break out. As a result, Nick chooses to stick in the company.

### **3.2 Lust**

Lust is something that can not be separated from every human being and also owned by every human being in the world. There is definition about lust from Merriam Webster, "a strong feeling of sexual desire or a strong desire for something". strong desire, logically should require elements to achieve it. In this case, power is an important factor that can support someone to achieve his / her desire.

There are some scenes to prove that power is used to satisfy the lust of character in the movie. As stated by Foucault that power can happen anywhere, so that the incident involving the lust that appears in the movie can also occur wherever there is power as the origin of the foundation. The use of power to gain sexual desire happens in Dale, the next character whose actions and characterization the writer wants to discuss. Dale is someone who likes to work diligently and is compassionate. He loved his fiancée and will be married in the near future. However, there are some problems he would face. The problems come from DR. Julia who is a dentist and Dale's boss. DR. Julia is obsessed with sex. Due to this condition, Dale has to deal with power relation exercised by his boss.

### **3.2.1 Flirt With Assistant**

The following scene is an introduction to the main problem. The scene shows the conversation between Dale and DR. Julia that DR. Julia wants to have sex with Dale. DR. Julia knows that Dale will be married in the near future. There is assertion that Dale should do what is ordered by his boss. In figure 3.7 shows that DR. Julia is a person who tends to like coerce and little bit maniac. It can be seen from how she forced Dale to keep her crazy desire.



**Figure 3.7 Dr. Julia presses Dale**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:21:47)

The main problem arises in figure 3.8 when Dr. Julia forced Dale to have sex above the body of his fiancée. In a certain moment, Dr. Julia can not resist



**Figure 3.8 Dr. Julia wants to make love with Dale**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:28:55)

anymore her desire, to have sex. She uses her power and authority as good as possible although not in appropriate circumstances. When DR. Julia knows how to exercise her power within discourse, she will be more flexible in the suppression of Dale, and tend to be unstoppable. It can be seen also how easily she mastered the 'fiancée' as discourse. It is also described in the previous boss who is more dominant when he knows how to make his employee so powerless.



**Figure 3.9 Dr. Julia is binding Dale**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:29:14)

Requests that come out did not make sense and it has no effect because she has power and control over Dale, while in the office. Basically an event like this has often happened where the boss often exercises her power to fulfill the desire from herself. But what makes it interesting is how the movie-makers completely changes the perception about exercising power for lust which incidentally is often performed by different gender. From the figure above shows that Dr. Julia is also someone who is cunning, deceitful and a liar. That can be explained when Dr.

Julia tries to suppress Dale to obey with a reason she would tell to Dale's fiancée that Dale had slept with his boss, whereas the incident is far from the fact. Here, Dale also decided to quit because he felt uncomfortable with the treatment of Dr. Julia. In fact, he could not do it. That's because he was afraid, not Dr. Julia but rather to his fiancée. Because Dale loved his fiancée, he did not want to spoil relations with his fiancée. He also did not want the marriage canceled only because untrue news of Dr. Julia. Dr. Julia used Dale's fiancée as an instrument for her insane purpose, to strengthen her power, to thwart what Dale would do. It's been mentioned by Foucault in his book *The History of Sexuality* (p. 101) that, "Discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy." In this movie, Dale actually have enough power to resist the madness of his boss. When he is treated impolitely, Dale decided to get out. Unfortunately, the power of the boss more dominant and she also understands how to make Dale becomes powerless. DR. Julia use the ' fiancée ' as a discourse. As a result, Dale could not resist, remembering his fiancée so important for him. Dale was still working to prevent the rumor is not heard by his fiancée.

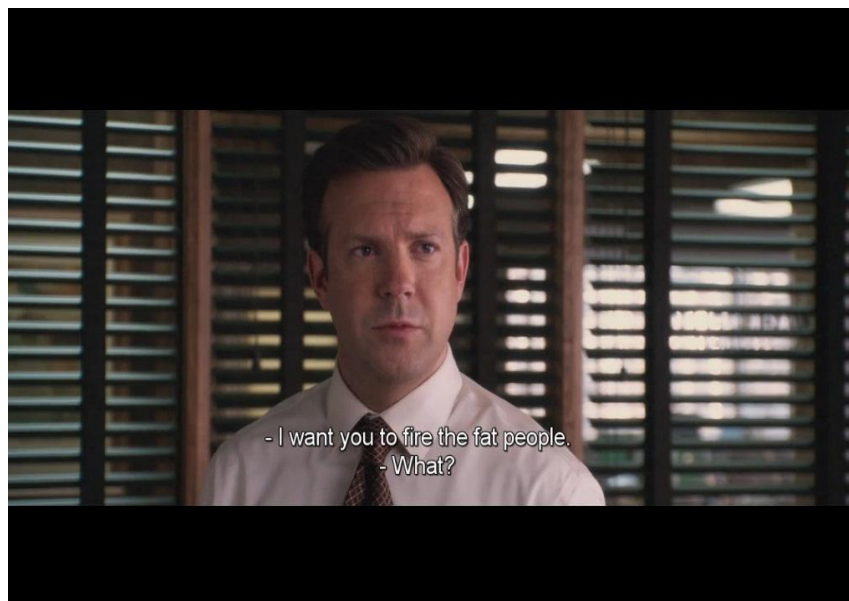
### **3.3 Assets**

After discussing the power associated with the position and lust in the previous sub-chapters. Now, the writer found an interesting finding, related to assets. It is very general if the use of power is usually connected with assets. Usually assets of person can be seen from who the person is. An influential figure usually has abundant assets.

The third case is experienced by Kurt, an employee who has a happy life before finally changes drastically after the coming of Bobby Pellitt, son of the owner of the company and also the next boss at the company. In contrast to the previous bosses, Mr. Pellitt has strange personality. His strange personality gets worse after he serves as a boss. Some problems arise when Mr. Pellitt declares some new rules which are in contrary to the rules of the previous boss. By looking at it, Kurt did not remain silent and give little resistance which thus it creates interesting power relation between them.

### 3.3.1 Dismissal of The Unlucky Employees

The problem arises when Bobby wanted to dismiss the fat and the cripple from his company. Actually, dismissal is a common thing to be done in the company with many, such as too many employees, company's financial instability, rejuvenation and others.



**Figure 3.10 Bobby Pellit is giving orders to dismiss the employee**

**(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:16:52)**

Bobby works on his plan because he feels there is no advantage to hold the fat people in his company. Fat employee is considered as a slow and less-action worker which could affect company's budget. All seem meaningless when individuals have more power over another individual to use his authority. Kurt give a little fight, he tells about the contribution they have given to the company has been quite satisfactory and there is no reduction in the budget that will affect the company.

On the other side, Bobby also want Kurt to dismiss employees who crippled. He also considered that the employee will only bother the company. It surprisingly comes to Kurt that he would be dismissed if he doesn't want to dismiss employees who are fat and crippled.





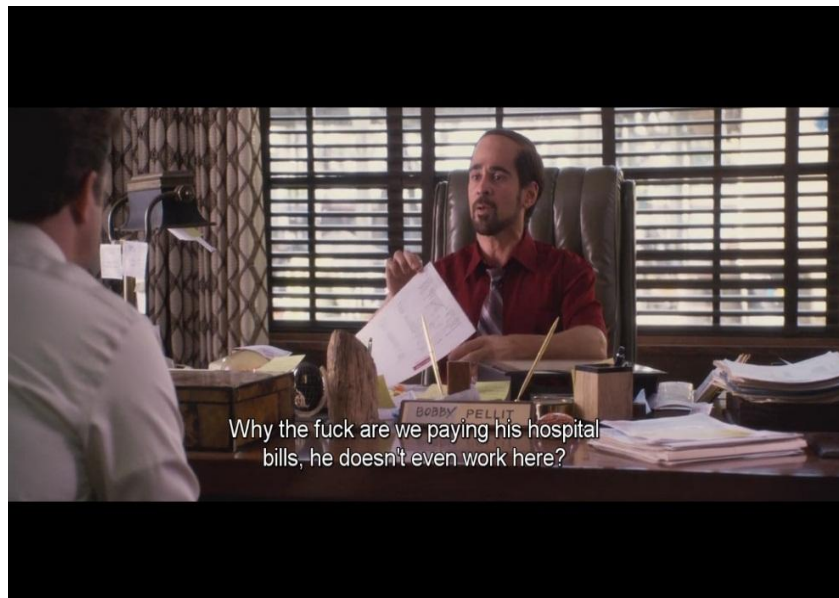
**Figure 3.11 Bobby Pellit is giving choices to Kurt**  
 (Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:17:45)

The same thing like the previous actors who intentionally placed in a situation which is likely to change their lives. They are forced to choose between the wishes of the boss or against their conscience. Surely the wishes of the boss is the top priority because they are the masters in their company and also the same as the previous boss who arbitrarily in using his authority. Discourse is also appear in this last sub-chapter and also different from the previous main characters. Here, the main character, Kurt, is also powerless with the power of his boss, Bobby. It is not because he is afraid of someone like Dale, or a recommendation like Nick, but he is afraid of losing his own position. In that situation, Bobby has put Kurt's 'position' as a discourse. If Kurt does not obey Bobby, Kurt would be fired. If Kurt obey, he will lose some his friends in the company. It is a very difficult choice. In sum, he followed what Bobby says. Kurt did not want to leave the company but he lost his best friend as employees and lose the confidence from all employees. It is is the impact caused by the power belongs to the boss.

### **3.3.2 Abolish the Allowance**

Allowance is the right of every employee and every employee definitely get it. Allowance can be diverse, such as health (occupational accidents and birth), retirees, and education. However not all companies provide the same kinds of allowances because each company might have different policy. This is the next trigger. Bobby shows his power in this scene as well. He wants to Abolish the

allowance. He wants to stop the hospital bills for employees who have an accident at work. He did not want to spend money only for people who do not work in his office at the time. He considers these measures are not beneficial for him or the company if it is passed. Automatically he will not be able to enjoy the wealth as he had planned. He does not care about the condition the employee later.



**Figure 3.12 Bobby Pellit decides to abolish the allowance**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:15:55)

From figure 3.12 also shows that Bobby is an indifferent and less concerned about the employees. He just focus on the wealth of the company. How assets do not experience a reduction. It is one of the plans he made. Although it looks simple but it will give a great impact for others. Basically people who have more power will be influential in the life around him. In this subchapter seen the power of the boss is exercised better than the power of Kurt. The boss knows that Kurt loves company so much because he was one of influential people in company's development. Of course, the boss using the 'company' as a discourse. When the

boss wants to abolish the allowance for employees in need, he could not refuse it. The boss always made it clear that this is for the good of the company. The boss did not want the company suffered losses. On the other hand, Kurt knew that it would be detrimental to the parties concerned.

### 3.3.3 Company is an ATM

Finally the main problem arises. It looks from the scene or dialogue which they do. Bobby mentions that the company is simply money machine for him. The machine to realize all his wishes, the machine to get pleasure. He also ignored, it can be seen from the nature of him who does not care about the company.



**Figure 3.13 Bobby Pellit finally shows his purpose**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:17:25)

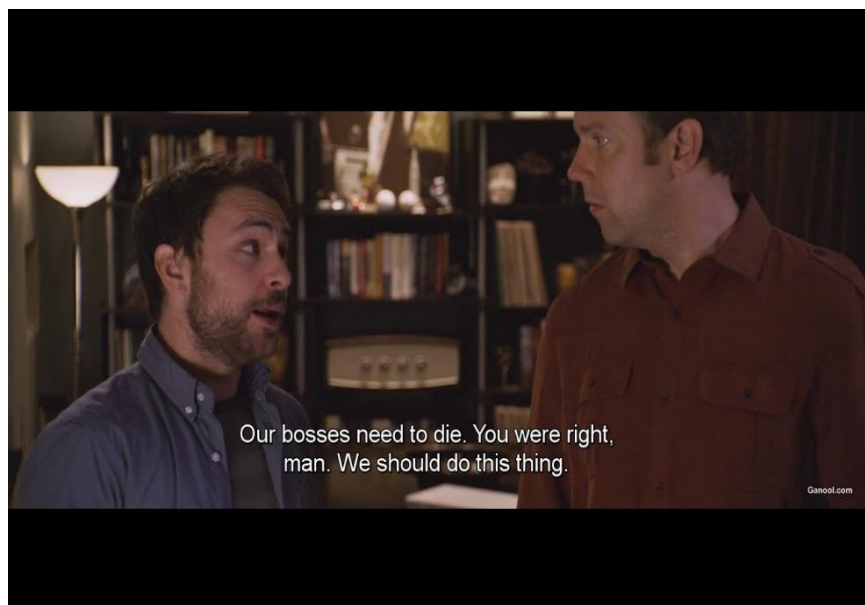
Through characterization, Bobby's character seems clear that he was a selfish and greedy. He was just thinking about how he got the wealth of the company, then what will he do with that wealth. All of his actions before is only a plan to carry

out the action real. It starts from to abolish allowance for employees who have an accident, to dismiss employees who are less looks good condition and to agree to cooperate with the company for the sake of more earnings. Everything is just for the satisfaction of himself alone. It is a common thing because he is ruling in his company. Freedom in the company only apply for him and not for employees. In this movie, Kurt is the most disadvantaged character. Unlike the previous main characters who can still exercise their power against their boss, Kurt did not. At the beginning he has been dominated by his new boss with 'position' as a discourse, to dismiss an employee as a first step controlling of the company. After that, the boss is using the weakness of Kurt, the company. The boss knows how to see Kurt's love to the company. Kurt is so powerless, because for every what is done by his boss on the basis for the company. Finally, when he knows the true purpose by the boss, he was silent. Do all his orders are the best, better than being fired and see the company he built with his colleagues fell into bankruptcy.

### **3.4 Resistance**

In this sub-chapter the writer would like to explain about the latest findings is the resistance that comes from the main characters. Previously the writer will explain in advance what is resistance and why resistance can arise in power relation. Resistance is a productive effect from power. Resistance is always about denying, challenging or undermining power (relations or claims by power). Indeed resistance can not be separated from power because that is a strong completeness. Foucault's famous quote from his book, *The History of Sexuality*, that says, "where there is power there is resistance" (1978, p. 95).

A relationship will work properly if there is reciprocity from each side. If there is coercion, there must be a rejection. If there is oppression there must be resistance. That happens in *Horrible Bosses* movie. In the movie, in addition to getting the imposition from the bosses, the main characters are also planned resistance to 'undermine' the power of the bosses. This makes power relation run perfectly. Resistance will vary according to who acts, where, with what means and organizational forms and against what. Regardless in what way a resistance that is done.



**Figure 3.15 Nick, Dale, and Kurt wants to kill their bosses**  
(Source: Gordon, 2011, *Horrible Bosses*, 00:30:45)

Based on the scene and dialogue that the main characters will do the resistance to stop the treatment from the boss. Their choice to avenge is to get rid the boss. There is also discourse in this sub-chapter and Foucault once said that discourse can be a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. They planned to resist because they are always treated less well, they are always depressed, they are always betrayed, they have always been marginalized, they are always faced with difficult choices, and they are always forced to obey all the crazy desire of their bosses. They want to end their role as toys from their bosses. They want to stop the game of their bosses.

Resistance is not necessarily directing people, telling them what to do but enable them to make their own choices. The story in this video ends with the main character's success in carrying out their resistance although it is so far from the original plan to kill them. In the movie, Kurt's boss is killed by Nick's boss because of misunderstanding. Then Nick's boss is arrested for planning to kill the main characters. Finally, Dale successfully beats his boss to trap her through the tape. If there were no possibility of resistance, there would be no power relations at all.

From all of the findings above are really clear that power is running in the various ways. In this movie, the power are used by bosses to do things, such as pressing, forcing, oppressing, harassing, and deceiving. Furthermore resistance comes from the main characters. They decided to kill the bosses. They feel they need to do to change their ways of life either directly or indirectly. Power relations according Foucault is normless and valueless. As a result we can not

mention whether the boss' actions are bad or good, and vice versa for the main characters. The writer also points out in several scenes related to the bad things those are mentioned before.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 Conclusion

Gordon's *Horrible Bosses* depicted the power relation inside work relationship. Dominated by powerful bosses, the main characters, Nick, Dale and Kurt, are suffocated by the crazy commands since the depiction of how power relation work in this movie is through three aspects. The first is position, the second is lust, and the last is assets. Power relation especially between boss and employee is clearly depicted and represented within discourse obviously. From position, the first boss uses his power to deceive his employee, his name is Nick, with the promotion as a pretext for a higher position. After the deception known by Nick, he uses his power with quite troublesome which give a bad recommendation about his track records so that no more companies or institutions that would accept him even though it is not true.

From Lust, the second boss tries to impose her desire to her employee, Dale. She is obsessed in order to have sex with Dale and even did not hesitate to do it in front of Dale's fiancée. She also tied Dale on the pretext that Dale had slept with her, and told Dale to fulfill her desire.

Lastly derived from assets, it means associated with wealth. The last boss uses his power to get and feel the wealth of the company. He also imposed his will to the main character, Kurt, to achieve his wish, ie; dismiss employees who



look fat and disability. That's because he feel that they have no effect on the company. Secondly, he stopped the budget for all employees who have an accident at work, because he thought it was just going to spend the wealth of the company. Finally, he decided to establish an agreement with company specialized in the field of waste because he tempted by profits. Kurt also feel aggrieved because he's hated by all employees on the order of dismissal for no reason to one of his friends.

The story in this movie ends with the success of the resistance made by the main characters even though it is not in accordance in which originally wanted to kill the boss. At least it would have a great impact on the lives of the protagonists later. Basically resistance can not be separated from power. If there is power, there is also resistance.

## **4.2 Suggestion**

This research is searching the representation of power relation that happened in *Horrible Bosses* movie by employing power relation theory. Based on descriptive analysis, it is found that power relation is done by the characters within discourse. Hence, the next researcher who is interested in analyzing literary works using power relation theory with different object is welcomed. The writer also giving suggests for the next researcher to analyze *Whiplash* movie and *V for Vendetta* movie by using same theory.

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# **APPENDIX**



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