

**MEL HANNIGAN’S BIPOLAR I DISORDER IN ERIC LINDSTROM’S
*A TRAGIC KIND OF WONDERFUL***

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Abstract

The research focuses on Mel Hannigan’s bipolar I disorder in *A Tragic Kind of Wonderful* novel. The objectives of the study are to find out the symptoms of the portrayal of Mel’s bipolar I disorder, the causes of Mel’s bipolar I disorder, and the effect of Mel’s bipolar I disorder. ~~The theory used is~~ The study applies the theory of bipolar disorder stated by NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness). The research uses intrinsic and extrinsic approaches and conducts qualitative research to analyze the problems. The result of this study shows that Mel Hannigan’s bipolar I disorder is portrayed as mania and depression as primary episodes. Besides, the causes of Mel’s bipolar I disorder are genetics, stress, and brain abnormalities. Furthermore, the effect of bipolar I disorder is withdrawal makes her antisocial. She also feels that her life is hopeless and meaningless.

Keywords: *A Tragic Kind of Wonderful Bipolar Disorder, Bipolar I Disorder.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, mental disorder is still often ignored. Some people still believe that someone having a mental disorder is being possessed by an evil spirit due to being a sinner or lacking faith. If mental disorders are continued to be ignored, people will have a very dangerous impact on sufferers and others. Mental disorders consist of different category levels, from mild to severe mental disorders. Negligence of people with mental disorders can also lead to increasing levels of mental disorders, not only depression but also bipolar disorder. In this study bipolar disorder is as a psychological disorder that exists in real life and literary work.

Bipolar disorder or manic-depressive is a mental illness in which people experience extreme shifts in mood that can interfere with their lives. People with bipolar disorder may also have behavioral problems. Actually, they have relationship problems with other people. Even

based on the data from Boston Children's Hospital states that bipolar disorder usually appears between the ages of 15 to 30 years old.

Many people in Indonesia think that bipolar disorder is caused by black magic or even crazy. Family members who often do not know what to do are pressured to take the patient to be exorcised, which almost always results in disasters for all concerned. This is one of the consequences of mental illness stigma. One of the most popular public figures and influencers in Indonesia, Rachel Venya is also diagnosed with bipolar disorder. According to her YouTube channel, <https://youtu.be/VIncTIohraM>. In that video, she tells when she was 16 years old she attempted suicide twice, then her mother takes her to the mental hospital because she thought that Rachel was crazy, but her big family takes Rachel to be exorcised by using *rukiyah* from an a moslem teacher that must *adzan* right in her ear for five times a day. These methods only make Rachel more isolated and this means bipolar disorder needs more attention to handle.

The beginning of the manic-depressive term is around the nineteenth century. French psychiatrist Jean-Piere Fater (1794-1870) and Jules Gabriel Francois Baillarger (1809-1890) describe what they called *la Folie Circulaire* which translates to circular insanity or dual form insanity. This means that people were able to switch their moods through severe depression and manic excitement. Bipolar disorder is characterized by the episodic nature of these extreme moods. The first sign of bipolar disorder is almost always a manic episode of intense euphoria, excitement, and activity (Psychology Today, 1975:555).

Etymologically, bipolar consists of two words, bi and polar. Prefix "bi" means two and "polar" is poles. So bipolar means having two opposing poles. Bipolar disorder is caused by a complex interaction between biological and environmental factors. Thus, both nature and nurture are involved in the disorder. According to NAMI (2017:22) in the book entitled *NAMI Family and Friends*, the exact causes of bipolar disorder remains unknown. However, bipolar disorder is not caused by a single cause, but by various factors, such as the role of genetics, environment such as stress, and brain abnormalities.

There are several types of bipolar disorder, they are bipolar I disorder, bipolar II disorder, cyclothymia, and bipolar NOS (not otherwise specified). In this study, the researcher focuses on bipolar I disorder. According to the National Alliance of Mental Illness, bipolar I disorder is one

of the types of bipolar disorder, it is a condition in which the person may experience some episodes of mania, hypomania, or depression. In this type, the primary episode is a mania that is accompanied by abnormal behavior that disrupts daily. (NAMI, 2017: 22)

As bipolar disorder is one kind of human problem in the world. Bipolar disorder can be reflected in literary work. It can depict the picture of the world and human life, the characters that are on the literary works made by the author with life problems depicted in real life (Tyson, 1987). It can be obvious that the literary work is based on what happens in human life even though sometimes the author can add some imagination.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative research and descriptive analysis. It means that the research does not give priority to numbers and tables as stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1982). They said that qualitative research is research that describes phenomena in words instead of numbers or measures. It does not use statistics or replication as standards of proof. Therefore, it can be understood that this research only focuses on the phenomena of bipolar disorder and explains the symptoms, the causes, and the effects on humans descriptively.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the researchers answer and give the conclusion of the findings. The analysis only focuses on the reflection of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder, mainly some symptoms, causes, and effect of bipolar I disorder suffered by Mel Hannigan. The complete discussion can be seen below:

1. The Symptoms Portrayals of Mel Hannigan's Bipolar I Disorder

a. Mania

The portrayal of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder is shown by the mania that she suffers. It happens when Mel is in her bedroom alone and thinks about Zumi, she stayed up again that night. The next morning she has so much energy to walk to Zumi's house. It can be proven in the quotation below.

I stayed up again all that Friday night, approaching fifty hours awake, and snuck out of the house the next morning to walk to Zumi's. I'd spent that

entire second sleepless night plotting how we could stay friends and I had to get to her before Annie did. (Lindstrom, 2017:104)

This evidence shows that she suffers manic episodes interfere with Mel's energies. She does not sleep like other people. Fifty hours awake for her is like just five minutes. However, she still awakes for fifty hours that day, and the next morning she still has the energy to walk to Zumi's. So it is obvious that she gets mania symptoms.

b. Hypomania

The second symptom of Mel's bipolar I disorder is hypomania. Hypomania is the mood state with mild to severe symptoms of mania. Hypomania is a pleasant state of good humor or high productivity. Mel's hypomania occurs when Mel riding her bike to her old middle school, she has not stopped pedaling even at once, not for a red light, traffic, or anything, it is because her hypomania interferes with her productivity.

I'm exhausted yet still not tired. My muscles burn but don't weaken. I'm trembling though it's unclear how much is from exertion and how much is from the fact that I've been ice cold for hours. I thought I'd have to make bathroom stops by now but I haven't felt the need. I haven't stopped pedaling once, not for red lights, not for traffic, not for anything. I'm making a much better time than the map predicted. Maybe my real superpower is cycling. (Lindstrom, 2017:185)

The quotation above shows that Mel has high productivity in pedaling her bike. She has not felt exhausted yet, her muscles burn but it does not weaken anymore. She has ignored the fact that she has been ice cold for hours. She even does not stop making a bathroom stop. Moreover, she pedals her bike much better and speedier than the map prediction. Mel's high productivity on that night shows that she has experienced hypomania in her life.

c. Depression

The third symptom of Mel bipolar I disorder is categorized as depression. Depression is a feeling more than just a bad mood that might be experienced by most people daily. Depression is a combination of physical and emotional symptoms that makes it difficult to

function in life. Mel is crying for days, she feels that her life is useless, this world will run smoothly even without her. She is not needed by anyone. For Mel, nothing is real in this world. This life is only chemicals.

Damn it, These tears running down my nose, puddling on my pillow, with this feeling that the world outside is running smoothly without me, doesn't need me, doesn't want me, doesn't even know I'm here... none of that's real. It's just chemicals- (Lindstrom, 2017:101)

From the quotation above, it shows that Mel is blaming herself for everything that happens in her life. For her nothing in her life is real, all of the people are fake.

d. Dysphoric Mania

Next, she suffers from dysphoric mania. It is a rare symptom that can be experienced by bipolar disorder. Dysphoric mania is the feeling of being mixed. This might be the dangerous symptoms of bipolar disorder. People with this symptom can feel excited and miserable at the same time. Mel also experiences dysphoric mania with her bipolar I disorder same as her brother. She feels it exactly. She releases it when her psychiatrist asks about dysphoric mania to her. It is seen in the quotation below.

After a moment, he asks, "Do you know what dysphoric mania is?"
"Just what I feel like."
"how's it feel?"
"Like... being excited and miserable at the same time."
"yes, that's why your family admitted you, it's an extremely dangerous state of mind even if you say you don't want to hurt yourself. It's the same state your brother was in when—" I curl up tightly and wrap my arms around my head. (Lindstrom, 2017:170)

Mel knows the feeling of dysphoric mania for sure and can tell her psychiatrist how it feels because she experiences it. Unconsciously, it can be caused Mel to hurt herself even if she does not admit it. When he explained that it was in the same state that makes her brother die. She does not believe it and refuses it. Those are four symptoms suffered by Mel Hannigan. The next discussion is the Causes of Mel Hannigan's Bipolar I Disorder.

2. The Causes of Mel Hannigan's Bipolar I Disorder

a. Genetics

Genetics or biological factors play an important role in causing bipolar disorder. It also happens to Mel. One of Mel's bipolar disorders caused is by biological factors. It is seen when Mel is telling Dr. Oswald the first time, she meets Dr. Jordan and then is diagnosed with bipolar disorder same as her aunt and her brother. It can be seen in the quotation below.

“he told me. Well, he told Grandma Cece, then she told my mom. It's in the family—my aunt Joan and my brother—and he said it was a dead giveaway when I talked to him for twenty minutes in one long rambling sentence.” (Lindstrom, 2017:25)

This is proof that the main cause of Mel's bipolar disorder is a biological factor because Mel's aunt and brother are diagnosed with the same symptoms as Mel. However, her symptoms is a little bit different from her aunt.

b. Stress

Stressful surroundings also play a role in causing bipolar disorder, it also happens to Mel. Mel's bipolar disorder is also caused by stress. It is seen when Mel is explaining several tragic incidents in her family to Dr. Oswald, she seems like a big mountain sits on her chest. She takes a deep breath before pouring out all of her worries.

I take a deep breath. “when my parents divorced three years ago, six months after ... you know ... what happened with my brother ... I was pretty messed up. We moved here and then a year and a half later, I .. had my breakdown. Grandma Cece was friends with a psychiatrist living on the same floor of her retirement home, Dr. Jordan, and ... well, he won't talk about my meds—he's retired and won't be my real doctor—but he taught me things that pretty much saved me.” (Linstrom, 2017:23)

The quotation above explains several causes of her stress. She retells some incidents in her life to Dr. Jordan. The first is her parents divorced when she was thirteen, then six months after her brother died. Mel said that it was her hardest time to live her life. After moving on from her parent's house, she is diagnosed with bipolar I disorder by her grandmother's friend who is her roommate.

c. Brain Abnormalities

Bipolar disorder is also known as manic-depressive illness. It is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. It means that one of the causes of bipolar disorder is brain abnormalities that something is missing in the bipolar disorder patient. Brain abnormalities itself are still very complex to explain. There can be differences in the structure of people's brains with particular forms of bipolar disorder.

In this quotation, Mel explains that she is not sick. She knows that she has made her perform poorly in her friendship at school.

I wasn't sick, at least not in the way where you eventually get better or die. I just found out my brain was poorly designed. It won't kill me, but I can't get right again since I was never right in the first place. I was born with faulty parts. My brain just didn't turn them on till I became a teenager. (Lindstrom, 2017:72)

Mel feels that her brain is abnormal. Unfortunately, it can not kills her. Mel's knowing well that she was born with faulty parts. Her brain does not turn on until she became a teenager. She has abnormal behavior that in society's paradigm it was a fault. Her brain abnormalities not only make her struggle with her mood but also interfere with her life. Those third causes of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder that she suffers from her illness.

1. The Effects of Mel Hannigan's Bipolar I Disorder

The effect of Mel's bipolar I disorder is withdrawal. The antisocial behavior makes her withdraw from society. It happens when Mel comes to the vacant high school track then she remembers her two remaining friends. Both of them are nice, but Mel thinks that she needs a space to keep her secret. She does not let anyone know what has happened to her.

Holly and Declan were keeping me afloat, but they had other friends, and I needed to keep some distance from everyone to hide what was happening to me. I also needed lots of alone time. I spent lunches pacing the school grounds nibbling on an apple, the only food I could get myself to eat during the day through the barricade of medication side effects. (Lindstrom, 2017:33)

Holly and Declan are Mel's best friends after she lost all of her friends. Holly was the one who brings Mel assigned when she misses so much school. Then Holly becomes Mel's friend.

Even though Holly and Declan are Mel's best friends, she does not want to tell them too many things. Especially her illness. Mel also thinks that she needs a lot of time to make time with herself. She knows that she is pretty well ~~that~~ her mental disorder is not acceptable in society. However, Mell wants to tell Holly the truth even though Mel's grateful to have both her symptoms is a little bit different from her aunt.Holly and Declan. Eventually, this study only shows one effect of bipolar disorder that she suffers from her illness.

D.CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the symptom of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder is mania. It is seen when Mel is sometimes sleepless which interferes in her daily. The second portrayal of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder is hypomania. It is seen when s makes her antisocial. She also feels that her life is hopeless and meaningless.he gets high productivity. The third portrayal of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder is depression. It is seen when she randomly thinks that she is worthless in this world. The she suffers from her illness. The fourth portrayal of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder is dysphoric mania. It is seen when she experiences happiness and misery at the same time. The causes of Mel Hannigan's are genetics as seen when her symptoms is a little bit different from her aunt ; stress as seen when her parents divorced when she was thirteen, then six months after her brother died ; and brain abnormalities as seen when she suffers from her illness. The effect of Mel Hannigan's bipolar I disorder is withdrawal makes her antisocial. She also feels that her life is hopeless and meaningless.

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