



**Theodore Finch's Bipolar Disorder
in Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places***

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By:
Catlea Xmas Ratushima
Haryati Suiltiyorini

ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
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Advisor,


Haryati Sulistyorini SS, M.Hum.

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Catlea Xmas Ratushima, Haryati Suiltyorini
Universitas Dian Nuswantoro

ABSTRACT

The thesis entitled, "Theodore Finch's Bipolar Disorder in Jennifer Niven's All the Bright Places Novel" has an objective to analyze Finch's mental illness as specify bipolar disorder as the main character in the book. The method used in this thesis is descriptive qualitative method and library research method. The structural approach was used to analyze the general description of main character, conflicts, and setting. The psychological approach was used to analyze the bipolar disorder experienced by the main character in the novel. The result shows that Finch is described as depressed, suicidal, anxious, moody, caring, aggressive, smart, and considerate in the novel. Finch also experienced both internal and external conflicts against his father and Roamer. The setting in this novel is divided into setting of time and place. The setting of place on the novel is in America and the main setting is in the states Indiana. The main setting of time in the novel happened from January until mid-April. The bipolar disorder experienced by the main character is caused by his childhood abused by his temperamental father. This issue then leads him to his internal and external against his father and his school friends especially Roamer. Finch's bipolar disorder is never resolved, he never gets the treatment he needed and he ended up killing himself.

Keywords: Bipolar, Finch, Mental Illness, Niven's, Novel.

INTRODUCTION

According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) in www.nami.org, Bipolar disorder is a chronic mental illness that causes extreme shifts in a person's mood, energy and ability to think clearly. People with bipolar disorder have two moods commonly known as mania and depression moods, which is different from the typical ups and downs most people experience. A bipolar disorder is rarely seen in the society but the truth is there are a lot of people, mostly teenager suffered bipolar disorder and goes unnoticed. This is because society does not treat mental illness as an actual illness, even though the effect is the same as physical illness. If it goes untreated, the person who suffered often end up dies. In the book, Finch as a sufferer of bipolar disorder does not get the help he needed from the people around him; instead the people at his school bullied him and called him freak. This made him think that he is really a worthless freak and led him into taking his own life. Same case can be seen in one of Indonesian famous figures, she is an actress that suffered bipolar disorder. The fact that she's famous doesn't help her get the help she needed, instead there are more people to judge her. This creates a pressure on her and finally she breaks down by making a video that dissed everyone and posted it online. This is an act of crying for help still not

accepted by the society. Society sees this as an overreacting reaction. Fortunately, in the end she got the help she needed and she does not end up taking her own life like Finch.

All the Bright Places is a young adult fiction novel released in 2015 and written by Jennifer Niven. Even though, *All the Bright Places* is new, it has attracted many attentions in the worlds of critics and readers. It is because the unique way to deliver the story and the characters in the book is relatable to human life. The main theme of the book is mental illness and the characters in the book are struggling to deal with mental illness and a posttraumatic event. Because it is a new literary work, *All the Bright Places* have not won a lot of awards yet, but *All the Bright Places* has won some, which are Goodreads Choice Awards; Best Young Adult Fiction and New York Times Best Seller.

In Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places*, Finch is described as a boy that is fascinated by death, he planned his death every day and think, "is this a good day to die?" But every time he tried to take his own life, something stopped him, even how little this something is. He met with Violet, the girl who lost her sister in a car accident in a snowy night and she lost all her will to live. She refuses to drive or simply sit in a car and used to be a writer but she stops writing as if her words died with her sister. The story began when Finch and Violet meet on the ledge of the school bell tower, both are considering to jump, but never did. After that faithful meeting, Finch started to take interest in Violet. He wondered why a girl like Violet was on the ledge of the school bell tower and how did her even get up there. They became closer after Finch volunteered himself to be in the same as Violet in the geography project assignment which soon they called Wandering. Finch made it his life mission to encourage Violet to start living her life again, to start driving and writing again but as Violet's world grows, Finch's world began to shrink and finally he took his own life.

This thesis discusses those who is suffered Bipolar like the main character in the book. According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Bipolar disorder is not the same as the normal ups and downs every person goes through. Bipolar disorder symptoms are more powerful than that. The mood swings are more extreme and usually cause side effects such as by changes in sleep pattern, energy level, the ability to think clearly and emotion level. Bipolar disorder symptoms are so strong, it could make a child having difficulties to do well in school or get along with friends and family members. The illness not only has a strong impact, it can also be dangerous for the sufferer. Some young people with bipolar disorder often try to hurt themselves or attempt suicides, and many of them, even succeed to take their own life. People with bipolar disorder should get treatment as fast as possible. With help, they could the symptom so it does not advance any further and cause bigger problem.

The reason why the researcher chooses this story as an object in research literature is to help society understand more about bipolar disorder and other mental condition. As said earlier, mental illness is often untreated because society thinks it is not a real illness. It is real and it is as painful and dangerous as physical illness. The treatment is for the people around him/her to support his/her bipolar condition so the victim of bipolar disorder is not suffered. The researcher hopes by writing this research, it can help the society to understand more about mental illness and those who suffered. The researcher is also wanted to point out a neglect of a child, abusing a child and bullied other people can cause one person to develop a mental illness and might drive them into desperate action of cry for help. The other point never failed to see those around us; someone might need help but never said anything.

Based on explanation above, the researcher decided to discuss about bipolar disorder that is suffered by Theodore Finch. So, Theodore Finch's Bipolar in Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* is the topic of thesis.

RESEARCH METHOD

Data and Subject

The data of this study were *All the Bright Places* that is published in 2015 by Penguin Books that is written by Jennifer Niven as the main source.

Unit of Analysis

In this research, the researcher discussed about intrinsic elements from novel *All the Bright Places* through the events that happens in the story. Moreover, the researcher analyzed the data to find the bipolar disorder that is suffered by the main character.

Technique of Data Collection

1. General description: the researcher found the general description of Theodore Finch from narration and dialogue with other characters.
2. Conflict: the researcher found the internal and external conflict of Theodore Finch from narration and his thoughts in the story and the external conflict from narration and dialogue with other character.
3. Setting: the researcher found the setting of time and place from narration and dialogue with other characters.
4. Psychology approach: the researcher found the psychology struggles experiences by Theodore Finch from narration, his thoughts, and dialogue with other character.

Technique of Data Analysis

The researcher used the structural approach to analyze the general description of Theodore Finch as the main character of the story, internal and external conflicts experienced by Theodore Finch, and the setting of time and places that described by Theodore Finch. In this thesis the researcher also analyzed the novel using psychological approach to get the psychology condition supported by bipolar disorder of the main character. The researcher used the general description of the main character and also internal and external conflicts experienced by the main character to analyze the main character's mental state or the psychology of the character.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

General Description of Theodore Finch as the Main Character

Depressed

Theodore Finch suffered from depression, he is constantly thinking about death and how to kill himself. Many times he mentions that he feels dead and empty inside, like something is eating him up from the inside. Finch barely sleeps and eats. He also often shows signs of self-deprecation. Finch also mentions that he feels that he is sick, but not the kind of physical sick. It is his mind that is sick. He mentions that his mind went blank and shut down again. Finch's blankness can be related to depression, specifically bipolar symptoms.

Suicidal

In the book, Finch is fascinated by death, he constantly thinks about killing himself. Every day he would ask himself if that day is a good time to die. He is doing research on how to kill oneself. Then he considers all the possibilities, the method and the outcomes. When Finch first met Violet at the ledge of the school bell tower, he wonders how it would be if he just steps off from up there and ends everything in an instant. He wanted to end all the pain.

Moody

Finch's extreme mood changes can be seen in several occasions. He created alternated versions of himself. These personalities are created to match his many moods, and his actions are also changed according to which personality he uses that day. Finch often does something risky without thinking about the outcome. He is simultaneously hated and admired by people in their high school. He is very unpredictable and impulsive. Nobody knows who the real Theodore Finch is, because he is always changing, he comes and goes as he pleases. He does the things he wants to do. He gets in a lot of fights and often caused trouble.

Anxious

Finch is feeling anxious of how many days more he can stay awake. He is afraid to go back to sleep and not having control over his mind and his actions. Finch is afraid of the things he is capable of doing when he is "asleep", he could hurt the people he loved without thinking. Finch is most afraid of himself and the "asleep". Finch tried to outrun the bad labels he received from the people around him, so the words do not stick in his head and fill him up because if he let the words in, it will be his own destruction and he is afraid that he will be nothing more than the labels people put on him.

Caring

Finch cares deeply for Violet. He feels responsible for her because she is also depressed and suicidal after her sister died in a car accident. Finch wanted to help Violet to live her life again. He shows her the beauty in their hometown and he also pushed

her to drive and write again. Finch also care about his mother and his sisters, he quietly looking out for them as well as he could.

Aggressive

Finch mentions several times in the book that he sometimes cannot control himself. He is struggling to control his mind and his action. Even the story is started with Finch explaining that he is on probation that year because the year before, Finch suddenly threw a desk toward a chalkboard. He also got in a lot of fights, especially with Roamer and his group.

Smart

Finch is smart in his own way and he is quick witted. He also good at arranging words and always knows what to say. That is why Violet said that Finch should have been a writer. Finch also scored 2280 points on SAT test, which is considered high because the highest score in the old SAT test is 2400. Finch admitting he is always do well and get a good score on test, even though he is barely come to school and got in a lot of troubles.

Considerate

For years Finch is trying to keep himself small and not being a burden to anybody. He promise himself that he will be good and he will behave this time. Even in the bad days, when his emotion and moods are out of control or what he called "asleep" state, he still trying to go to school. Even though in those days, he often ends up causing trouble. In the quotation below Finch admit that he is trying to be pleasant and quiet, even if he is not always successful.

Conflicts Experienced by Noah Calhoun as the Main Character

Internal conflict

Theodore Finch is a mentally disturbed young man; he is depressed, suicidal, anxious, and suffering from bipolar. He struggles with himself every day and the terms he used to describe his "bad days" and "good days" is "asleep" for the bad and "awake" for good. Finch is still struggling to stay "awake". He wants to take control of his life and his actions. He does not want to go into "asleep" state, so he promise himself that he will behave this time, and he will be quiet, he will be normal so he does not become a burden for anyone else.

External conflict

Finch against his father

His father abuses Finch and his mother since he was a child. Before his father separated with his mother and still lived with them, if anything displeased his father, he will physically abused Finch's mother and Finch. Finch also mention to Violet that sometimes his father often get into one of his black moods. When this happens his father usually abuses Finch and Finch admitting he is a lot smaller than he is now and used to not know how to get out of the way, which makes

him the victims of his father's abuses. Finch's father is the main reasons why Finch developed mental illness.

Finch against Roamer

Gabe Romero or Roamer is the typical bully jock in Finch's school. He is always been a popular kid ever since middle school because he is seen normal by the society and Finch is the weird guy whose unpredictable, emotional and got in a lot of trouble. That is why Roamer bullies Finch, because Finch is weird and does not fit in the society standard.

Settings Described in *The Notebook* novel and film

Setting of time

January

The story began in January, when Finch met Violet for the first time on top of the school's bell tower. That is means the story began in the late winter, when the weather is still cold but not too much snowing.

Mid-April

When Violet found Finch in the Blue Holes Lake, it was mid-April, its means that Finch's story with Violet is only lasted for about four months before finally Finch drown himself.

Setting of place

The bell tower of Bartlett high school

This is the place where Finch and Violet meet for the first time, when both of them are attempting to jump from their school bell tower. This is the beginning of their short journey together before Finch killed himself due to the depression.

Mr. Embry's counseling office

Finch is on probation and supposed to meet with Mr. Embry, the counseling teacher in his school twice a week after his last year's incident, when Finch got in a lot of fights and doing a several property damages. He has to behave himself this year, and refrain from doing a property damage of any kind.

Mr. Black's class

Mr. Black is Finch and Violet's geography teacher. He gave an assignment which each student have make a group consist of two people and the student have to visit at least three places or/and landmark around Indiana states. The missions are to go there, take pictures, shoot video, learned the history or the origin, and write all of it in the report. Finch asked Violet to be in his group and they called the project "Wandering".

Finch's father house

Finch and his sister came to their father's house every Sunday for Weekly Obligatory Family Dinner after their parents' divorce and their father remarried.

Purina Tower

The Purina tower is also the turning point of Finch worsening condition. Finch and Violet accidentally fell asleep up there one day and Violet missed telling her parents about her whereabouts. Violet's parents are very protective of Violet after he sister's car accident. Because of that, Violet's parents did not believe him anymore, they think Finch is troubled and forbidding Violet to meet with Finch. Then it leads to the incident, where his father beating him up again.

Blue Hole Lake

Blue Hole Lake is the place that is located at Prairieton, it is a three-acre lake that sits on private property. This place is one of the places they visited for their own 'Wandering' and not for the project, and the place where Finch killed himself by swimming so deep until he can no longer breathe.

Setting of social

Middle class society

The setting social of the story is not detailed explain but Finch's mother job is a realtor, a person who sells houses to the client who wants to buy a house. So, it can be concluded that the social setting of the story is middle class household.

Discussion

In All the Bright Places novel, the process of Theodore Finch character towards Bipolar Disorder, is explained in the story through the general description of the main character also internal and external conflicts. Bipolar disorder have two states or can be called episode, but it is possible to have a mix of both episode. In the story Finch mostly experienced a mixed episodes. Finch's general descriptions are depressed, suicidal, moody, anxious, aggressive, smart, caring, and considerate. From these general descriptions, it can be conclude that Finch is suffering a mental illness especially bipolar disorder.

Finch's bipolar symptoms "manic episode"	Finch's bipolar symptoms "depressive episode"
Aggressive, which can be dangerous because he can't control his emotion	Aggressive which can be dangerous because he can't control his emotion
Impulsive, often do things without thinking	Moody; sometimes he goes into a black sinking mood and everything feels like spinning
Have trouble concentrating and feels like his mind going fast	Have trouble concentrating & recognizing his own face. Often losing track of time
Extreme	Self destructive
Does what he wants; come and go as he pleases	Anxious and feels empty

Productive; helping Violet to live and does their Geography project together	Depressed; feel very sad, down, empty, or hopeless
Do risky things: got in a lot of fights, got in a lot of trouble	Cannot control his emotion and actions
More active than usual: helping Violet.	Think about death everyday and attempted suicide

Finch's bipolar disorder is caused by traumatic and abusive past because of his father, and the bullies from Roamer and other students made it worse. Finch's bipolar disorder might also be genetic from his father, because in the book it was mentioned a several times about how his father also experienced an extreme mood swing.

Conclusion

All the Bright Places by Jennifer Niven is a young-adult novel that discusses about mental illness that is experience by a teenager. This book explicitly tells the readers about the mind of a person who suffered mental illness that actively attempted suicide. Finch as the main character who suffered a traumatic and abusive past from his father and is bullied because he is considered "freak". Those constant verbal and physical abuses made him developed mental illness, that is later reveal as bipolar disorder. Finch external conflict affected his mental state and then made him struggling internally.

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