

AMY'S PERSONALITY DISORDER IN FLYNN'S *GONE GIRL*: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

By: Gilang Wening Pertiwi
State University of Yogyakarta
gwpertiwi@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to identify the characteristics of antisocial personality disorder found in Amy's actions and behaviors, and to reveal the cause of her personality disorder. The types of the data are words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs taken from the novel which are related to the topic of the novel. The main instrument of this research was the researcher and was supported by the table list that contains the data of the research as the secondary instrument. The source of the data is the novel. There are two results for this research. The first one is that Amy shows six out of seven characteristics of antisocial personality disorder. They are failure to conform social norms, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability and aggressiveness, reckless disregard for safety of self and others, and lack of remorse. The second one is that Amy's personality disorder is caused by her peers, who are her parents and husband.

Keywords: *personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, psychological approach.*

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, humans use many kinds of term to describe how a person behaves. Someone can be referred as kind, easy-going, naughty, diligent, or many more. Those terms are what people called as personality. According to Kasschau (1980: 433), personality is the dynamic organization within an individual of those systems that determine his or her characteristic behavior and thought.

Even though humans have certain personality, they are not born with it. Humans have to develop personality since they interact with other people for the first time. In the process of developing personality, it is possible that there are many conditions that affect the development. The condition when individual's personality deviates from culture's expectations is called personality disorder. American Psychiatric Association (2000: 630) defines

personality disorder as a condition when personality traits are inflexible and maladaptive and cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress. There are five factors which can cause personality disorder. They are genetics, childhood trauma, verbal abuse, high reactivity, and also peers. The personality disorder itself can be classified to eleven types: paranoid personality disorder, schizoid personality disorder, schizotypal personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder, dependent personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, and personality disorder not otherwise specified (American Psychiatric Association, 2000: 629). Each of personality disorders has its own characteristics. Someone should show at least three or more of the characteristics to be diagnosed as having personality disorder.

Amy Dunne, the main character of Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* is suspected to suffer antisocial personality disorder. The characteristics of antisocial personality disorder are failure to conform social norms, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability and aggressiveness, reckless disregard for safety of self and others, consistent irresponsibility, and lack of remorse.

This research has two objectives: (1) to identify the characteristics of antisocial personality disorder found in Amy's actions and behaviors, and (2) to reveal the cause of her personality disorder. This research can give some information and contribution to the literature, specifically those that are related to personality disorders. It can also be used as a reference to study of personality disorder in literary works.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative approach to analyze Amy's personality disorder in Flynn's *Gone Girl*. This type of research will result narrative or textual description of the research

(VanderStoep and Johnston, 2009: 7). The researcher was the main instrument in this research.

The data of this research are words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs related to the topic of the research in *Gone Girl* novel. The source of the data is the novel.

The data collection technique are divided in several steps: the researcher (1) read the novel several times to get deep understanding about the plot story of the novel, (2) interpreted and collected the words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs in the novel which are related to the topic of the research, (3) re-check the data in order to avoid mistakes and to remove datum that is unrelated to the topic of the research, (4) took a note and categorized the data according to the characteristics of antisocial personality disorder, (5) classified the data based on the cause of personality disorder.

In order to analyze the data, the researcher identified the data and arranged them based on two major topics of the researcher. Then the data

are categorized in the table lists and analyzed to check if the data are matched to the theory. Lastly, the researcher concluded the findings of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the analysis, it can be found that there are six out of seven characteristics of antisocial personality disorder which can be found on Amy's actions and behaviors. Those six characteristics are (1) failure to conform social norms, (2) deceitfulness, (3) impulsivity, (4) irritability and aggressiveness, (5) reckless disregard for safety of self or others, and (6) lack of remorse.

The explanations of the characteristics of antisocial personality disorder shown by Amy can be seen below.

I have \$10,200 in cash. If I'd cleared out \$10,200 in a month, that would have been noticed. But I collected cash forwards from credit cards I took out in Nick's name – the cards that would make him like a greedy little cheat – and I siphoned off another \$4,400 from our bank accounts over the months: withdrawals of \$200 or \$300, nothing to attract attention. I stole from Nick,

from his pockets, a \$20 here, a \$10 there, a slow deliberate stockpile – it's like that budgeting plan where you put the money you'd spend on your morning Starbucks into a jar, and at the end of the year you have \$1,500. And I'd always steal from the tip jar when I went to The Bar.

(Flynn, 2012: 276)

In the quotation above, it can be seen that Amy does not mind to steal money from Nick and the tip jar in The Bar so she can save up cash money which can be used during her run. It is obvious that the act of stealing is inappropriate according to the law or social norms. Therefore, it is sure that Amy fails to conform social norms which is the first characteristic of antisocial personality disorder. People with antisocial personality disorder tend to break the law and do not really care about social norms. That is the reason why people with antisocial personality disorder usually have criminal records.

People with antisocial personality disorder also tend to deceive other people around them. They do not mind to deceive,

manipulate, or use alias as long as they can get benefit from it. It is sure that Amy is being deceitful on the quotation below.

I wrote her very carefully, Diary Amy. She is designed to appeal to the cops, to appeal to the public should portions be released. They have to read this diary like it's some sort of Gothic tragedy. A wonderful, good-hearted woman – *whole life ahead of her, everything going for her*, whatever else they say about women who die – chooses the wrong mate and *pays the ultimate price*. They have to like me. Her.

(Flynn, 2012: 267)

It can be clearly seen that Amy tries to deceive the cops and the public by writing fake diary entries. She wants the cops to see the diary as an evidence so they will arrest her husband. This kind of deceitfulness shows that Amy has the characteristic of people with antisocial personality disorder.

Besides failure to conform social norm, Amy also shows the tendency of being impulsive. Impulsivity is one of characteristics of antisocial personality disorder. People

with antisocial personality disorder usually do not think further before acting. They just do what they want without thinking the consequences that follow their actions. Amy shows impulsivity since she is young. An opinion comes from Hillary Handy. She tells Nick that Amy throws herself down a flight of stairs in order to frame Hillary when they are in high school. It can be clearly seen below.

'Friends see most of each other's flaws. Spouses see every awful last bit. If she punished a friend of a few months by throwing herself down a flight of stairs, what would she do to a man who was dumb enough to marry her?'

(Flynn, 2012:327)

In the quotation above, Hillary Handy tells Nick that Amy dares to throw herself down the flight of stairs in order to punish her. In Amy's thought, punishing is not just simply being angry to her. She has to frame Hillary so she will get ousted from the school. Amy does it perfectly by throwing herself down the flight of

stairs and tells everyone that Hillary pushes her down. It is obviously an act of impulsivity since it can harm herself if thing goes bad. She does not really think further as long as her plan works.

Irritability and aggressiveness is another characteristic of antisocial personality disorder. People who suffer antisocial personality disorder are easily irritated and aggressive. They can get angry because of simple reasons. When they are angry, they are aggressive in showing their angry. Amy's irritability and aggressiveness is shown when she and her husband, Nick, drives to Massachusetts (Flynn, 2012: 285). While driving, Amy's car is flipped by a trucker. It is not harmful but Amy is so angry and calls the company of the trucker to get the driver fired. Even in two months after the incident, Amy still tries to call the company. She even makes up the story of the incident. It is a vivid proof how Amy is easily irritated because of small cause.

Amy is also reckless disregard for safety of herself or others, which is one of characteristics of antisocial

personality disorder. People with antisocial personality disorder tend to be reckless in everything they did. They do not care if their actions will cause harm to their selves or other people. Amy is obviously reckless disregard for her own safety. It can be seen in the quotation below.

Item 22: Cut myself has been on the list a long time. Now it's real and my arm hurts. A lot. It takes a very special discipline to slice oneself past the paper-cut layer, down to the muscle. You want a lot of blood, but not so much that you pass out, get discovered hours later in a kiddie pool of red with a lot of explaining to do. I held a box cutter to my wrist first, but looking at the crisscross of veins, I felt like a bomb technician in an action movie. Snip the wrong line and you die. I ended up cutting into the inside of my upper arm, gnawing on a rag so I wouldn't scream. I sat cross-legged on my kitchen floor for ten minutes, letting the blood drizzle steadily until I'd made a nice thick puddle.

(Flynn, 2012: 248)

The quotation above is Amy's narration when she explains her actions. Amy wants to frame her husband. In order to make it successful, Amy tries to make a puddle

of her blood. She cuts herself so the police would get blood stain of her own blood. This action shows that she is reckless disregard for her own safety. Cutting herself can lead to dangerous incident. She might run out of blood or cut the wrong pulse. Even though she knows it already, she still does it because she wants to make her plan works.

Last, people with antisocial personality disorder lack of remorse. They do not regret their mistakes. Instead, they feel proud or happy of what they have done. Amy does not really think that she does something wrong by framing Nick. It can be seen clearly below.

I've always thought I could commit the perfect murder. People who get caught get caught because they don't have any patience; they refuse to plan. I smile again as I shift my crappy getaway car into fifth gear (Carthage is now seventy-eight miles in the dust) and brace myself for a speeding truck – the car seems ready to take flight every time a semi passes.

(Flynn, 2012: 264)

The line 'I smile again as I shift my crappy getaway car into fifth gear...' shows that Amy does not feel guilty or having remorse in what she did. Smiling is an act that humans will do when they are happy. Amy's situation is not supposed to allow her to smile. Girls in run are usually scared or nervous. However, Amy does not seem to feel that kind of emotion. Instead, she smiles while thinking about the plan she prepared for Nick framing. At this point, it can be clearly seen that Amy has no remorse at all.

It is impossible if there is no cause to everything. Personality disorder can be caused by at least five factors, which are genetics, childhood trauma, verbal abuse, high reactivity, and peers. In Amy's case, her personality disorder is caused by her peers, who are her parents and husband. Her parents write a book and name the main character as Amy. Whenever the real Amy screws everything in real life, the Amy in the book will do her best. It can be seen below.

My parents have always worried that I'd take *Amy* too personally – they always tell me not to read too much into her. And yet I can't fail to notice that whenever I screw something up, Amy does it right: When I finally quit violin at age twelve, Amy was revealed as a prodigy in the next book. ('Sheesh, violin can be hard work, but hard work is the only way to get better!') When I blew off the junior tennis championship at age sixteen to do a beach weekend with friends, Amy recommitted to the game. ('Sheesh, I know it's fun to spend time with friends, but I'd be letting myself and everyone else down if I didn't show up for the tournament.')

(Flynn, 2012: 30)

Because of the comparison, Amy strives for perfection. She wants to show people that she is as perfect as Amy in the book. Therefore, she does anything so she can appear perfect in front of other people.

Besides her parents, Amy's husband also takes part in making Amy's personality disorder gotten worse. Amy shows her real personality to Nick but it seems like Nick cannot accept her. Instead of accepting her, Nick cheats on her. It makes her mad

and do all of the framing. It can be clearly seen below.

I got there just in time to see him leaving with her. I was in the goddamn parking lot, twenty feet behind him, and he didn't even register me, I was a ghost. He didn't have his hands on her, not yet, but I knew. I could tell because he was so *aware* of her. I followed them, and suddenly, I pressed her up against a tree – *in the middle of town* – and kissed her. *Nick is cheating.*

(Flynn, 2012: 262)

Besides parents and husband, her high school boyfriend also makes her personality disorder stronger. It happens because he shows rejection when Amy shows her true personality. It can be seen on the quotation below.

'So, I start making excuses not to hang out so much. I don't call it off, because I'm an idiot, and she's gorgeous. I'm hoping it might turn around. But you know, I'm making excuses fairly regularly: I'm stuck at work, I'm on deadline, I have a friend in town, my monkey is sick, whatever. And I started seeing this other girl, kinda sorta seeing her, very casual, no big deal. Or so I *think*. But Amy finds out – how, I still don't know, for all I know, she was staking out my apartment. But ...*shit* ...'

(Flynn, 2012: 311)

Amy's friend also contributes in causing Amy's personality disorder. Hillary Handy, Amy's friend in high school, gets punished because she becomes more popular than her while she knows that Amy is actually not that perfect. Amy worries about it so she tries to get rid of her. It can be seen on the quotation below.

'I feel like Amy wanted people to believe she really was perfect. And as we got to be friends, I got to know her. And she wasn't perfect. You know? She was brilliant and charming and all that, but she was also controlling and OCD and a drama queen and a bit of a liar. Which was fine by me. It just wasn't fine by her. She got rid of me because I knew she wasn't perfect. It made me wonder about you.'

(Flynn, 2012: 326)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the cause of Amy's personality disorder is her peers, who are her parents and husband.

CONCLUSIONS

There are six out of seven characteristics of antisocial personality disorder which are shown by Amy. They are failure to conform social norms, deceitfulness, impulsivity,

irritability and aggressiveness, reckless disregard for safety of self or others, and lack of remorse.

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the cause of Amy's antisocial personality disorder is her peers, who are parents, husband, boyfriend, and friend. Raised by parents who compare her with a character of storybook makes Amy strives for perfection. In order to appear perfect in front of other people, she dares to do anything without thinking about the consequences. Besides, her husband and boyfriend makes it worse by cheating on her and showing rejection to Amy's real personality. Amy's friend is also another cause to her personality disorder because she knows that Amy is not that perfect. Her parents, husband, boyfriend, and friend cause her personality to deviate from culture's expectation. Therefore, she suffers personality disorder.

SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested to the students of English Language and Literature to understand more about personality

disorder in the characters of literary works. Therefore, they can raise awareness of this problem.

The researcher also suggests the next researchers who want to do research about personality disorder to be careful in choosing the character they want to analyze.

REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. 2000. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (4th Ed.). Washington D. C.: American Psychiatric Association.
- Flynn, Gillian. 2012. *Gone Girl*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.
- Kasschau, Richard. A. 1980. *Psychology: Exploring Behavior*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Vanderstoep Scott W., and Johnston, Deidre D. 2009. *Research Methods for Everyday Life*. London: Jossey Bass Wiley.