

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

As human experiences, isolation and desperation are known as emotional states that can impact an individual's mental and emotional being. Isolation itself is the experience of being separated from others, stemming from physical separation, social rejection, or self-imposed withdrawal (Iovino *et al.*, 2023:4940). On the other hand, desperation is a state of despair typically resulting from situations perceived as hopeless or dangerous, characterized by a sense of urgency to take immediate action despite being potentially harmful or having an uncertain outcome (Hendin *et al.*, 2004:386–394). As humans adopt coping strategies to confront their negative experiences, some people turn to alcohol consumption as a means to overcome them. As a coping mechanism, alcoholism is often perceived as a temporary escape from the harsh realities of life. It provides a momentary relief from negative emotions by creating an illusion of solace in one's mind (Uniyal & Verma, 2020:30–45).

In countless literary works, isolation and desperation have become recurrent themes. These themes resonate deeply with the human psyche as they capture the essence of negative human experiences as perceived and interpreted by society. The allures of these themes lie in their universality and their ability to serve as mediums through which authors explore the depths of emotions. Oftentimes, individuals adopt coping mechanisms to either alleviate or suppress the negative emotions, among which is the consumption of alcohol (Le *et al.*, 2021:333–343).

Examples of isolation, desperation, and alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism as a singular theme can be found in two of Charles Bukowski's poems, *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody*.

Within the verses of *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody*, isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism can be acknowledged. *Bluebird* is a poem from Charles Bukowski, published in 1992, about a poignant exploration of vulnerability and the struggle for self-expression. The poem introduces a metaphorical bird representing the poet's suppressed self. *Bluebird* itself falls under nearly similar themes with *Alone with Everybody*, published in 1977, which delves into pervasive loneliness and the human condition, painting a bleak portrait of isolation amid societal connections. Within the two poems, the speakers' tendency to consume alcohol in specific situations is also mentioned.

In *Bluebird*, the poem portrays suppression of vulnerability in a society that craves for sincerity, while *Alone with Everybody* portrays a world filled with loneliness and existential angst. Existential angst itself is a pervasive sense of anxiety arising from the awareness of fundamental aspects of existence like death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness (van Deurzen, 2009:226–239). These themes reflect the pervasive feelings of loneliness and alienation in contemporary society, where individuals often struggle to connect authentically with others and confront their own vulnerabilities. The poems also depict alcohol as a coping mechanism for numbing pain and escaping harsh realities, yet the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism exacerbates feelings of isolation and desperation.

Charles Bukowski himself is a literary figure whose works are influenced by his life experiences, characterized by poverty, addiction, and tumultuous relationships. Bukowski's writing is marked by a raw and confessional style that explores themes of loneliness, human vulnerability, and the harsh realities of life, often reflecting the struggles of those living on the margins of society (Fox, 1969: 57–58).

The writer's decision to analyze *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody* stems from their infrequent examination in literary criticism despite the enduring relevance of their themes. This research fills this gap by discovering how isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism are reflected within both poems. This research elucidates human emotion and coping strategies in the face of societal pressures, shedding light on the negative experiences of isolation and desperation, as well as the adoption of alcoholism as a coping mechanism in the speakers' experiences. Lastly, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Bukowski's poetic narratives and their significance for understanding the human condition.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. How are isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism reflected in Charles Bukowski's "Bluebird"?
2. How are isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism reflected in Charles Bukowski's "Alone with Everybody"?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

This research thesis aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism within Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird*.
2. To analyze isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism within Charles Bukowski's *Alone with Everybody*.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The scope of this research includes the intrinsic elements of figurative language, such as metaphor and symbolism present in Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody*. As for the extrinsic elements, this research discusses isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism in Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody*.

#### **1.5 Previous Research**

The first previous research is an article entitled "The Act of Aggression in Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird*" written by Huda H. Jassim (2024:105–118). The article examines how the poem *Bluebird* by Charles Bukowski expresses Bukowski's frustration and anger toward the modern age, symbolizing how societal changes and lack of justice crush the bird's once delicate voice into lifelessness.

The second previous research is a website article entitled "*Alone with Everybody* by Charles Bukowski" written by Alissa Corfman (2016). The article analyzes the poem *Alone with Everybody* by Charles Bukowski, focusing on how it conveys the deep sense of loneliness often experienced by people. It emphasizes

Bukowski's ability to articulate feelings of meaninglessness and existential despair, resonating with readers who have struggled to express these emotions.

The third previous research is an essay entitled "Emotionalism in Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*" written by Prosper Ifeanyi (n.d:1–8). The essay examines how emotionalism is portrayed in the works of Bukowski and Kafka by analyzing their forms, structures, and language, highlighting how their respective genres shape the expression of emotion through a Romantic lens.

The fourth previous research is a dissertation entitled "The Poetry of Charles Bukowski: Narrative, Subjectivity and the Everyday" written by Christine Brandl (2018:1–66). The dissertation concludes that Bukowski's poetry captivates readers through its accessible humor and gritty portrayal of everyday working-class life. His candid and often crude language serves as a critique of societal norms and the American dream, while his independent writing style emphasizes the importance of personal experience.

The fifth previous research is a journal article entitled "Effects of Alcohol; Cognitive Disturbances, Pessimism, Depressive Symptoms and Psychological Maladjustment among Alcoholics" from a journal entitled *The Professional Medical Journal*, conducted by Hira Aziz & Fauzia Naz (2016:680–686). The journal article reveals that alcoholics experience more cognitive failures, suffer more depressive symptoms, adopt a more pessimistic view in their lives, and have more psychological maladjustment than those who are not alcoholics.

The sixth previous research is a journal article entitled “Loneliness and Time Alone in Everyday Life: A Descriptive-Exploratory Study of Subjective and Objective Social Isolation” from a journal entitled *Journal of Research in Personality*, conducted by Alexander F. Danvers et al. (2023:104426). The result of this journal article highlights the importance of considering both subjective and objective measures when examining social isolation, as they may provide complementary insights into individuals' experiences.

The seventh previous research is a journal article entitled “Despair and Hopelessness” from a journal entitled *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, conducted by Jack M. C. Kwong (2023:1–18). The journal article offers insights into the details of despair and hopelessness, particularly in the absence or loss of hope, shedding light on the behavioral and phenomenological differences between these negative attitudes.

This research is very different from the previous studies. Firstly, regarding data collection, this research employs a primary data in the form of poems *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody* by Charles Bukowski. Thus, the research gains depth and authenticity as it is referencing the poems.

Secondly, unlike previous studies that employ a variety of analysis from sociological and literary perspectives, this research employs a psychological approach by focusing specifically on the combined exploration of psychological dimensions of isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism within Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird and Alone with Everybody*.

Thirdly, this research incorporates the theories of isolation by Irvin D. Yalom, desperation by Evan Hannan & Jana Hackathorn, and alcoholism by E. M. Jellinek to examine isolation, desperation, and alcoholism as a coping mechanism in Charles Bukowski's *Bluebird* and *Alone with Everybody*. Unlike the previous studies that address these concepts separately, this thesis combines these theories to form a unified analytical approach, enhancing the understanding of the psychological and emotional aspects within the literature.

## **1.6 Writing Organization**

This research is organized into the following chapters:

### **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains six sub-chapters: the background of the research, research questions, purpose of the research, scope of the research, previous research, writing organization.

### **CHAPTER II THEORY AND METHOD**

This chapter includes relevant literature and theoretical frameworks to understand the poem's themes and content, as well as the research methods used to analyze and interpret the data.

### **CHAPTER III DISCUSSION**

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the poems and presents the findings. The analysis will be founded by the theories introduced in the previous chapter.

## **CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION**

This chapter summarizes the entire research.