

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the research

Each individual has unique characteristics which encompass his/her behaviors, emotions, personality, stress, motivation, and other aspects that build his/her psychological condition. One of the characteristics of humans that almost every one of them have is narcissism. However, narcissistic behavior can develop into a more dangerous stage which is called pathological narcissism. This form of narcissism underlies the emergence of pathological narcissism theory coined by Otto Kernberg in 1975. In his book entitled *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*, he stated that pathological narcissism means a destructive manifestation of narcissistic traits (Kernberg, 1985:283). It highlights the profound psychological implications of this condition on an individual's behavior and relationships.

Pathological narcissism is also represented in literary work. Literature is always considered a reflection of society, including its values, culture, and various other situations that occur in society. According to DeVoto, literature captures social experiences, reflects social myths, values, goals, and structures social beliefs and rules (In Albrecht, 1954:427). Therefore, the characters in the literature can also have the same mental condition as humans in real life.

One of the literary characters that shows the characteristics of pathological narcissistic behavior is Eli Cardale from the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab. The narrative revolves around the enmity between the protagonist, Victor Vale and the antagonist, Eli Cardale, who possess different moral values. Initially, when Eli and Victor were still at university, they worked together on experiments that granted humans extraordinary abilities. Eli succeeded and gained superhuman powers, but when Victor wanted to do the same, Eli refused due to safety concerns. Victor then turned to Eli's girlfriend, Angie, for help, which tragically ended with Angie's death. This convinced Eli that ExtraOrdinaries (EOs) were a mistake, and Victor was imprisoned for Angie's murder. Ten years later, after Victor broke out of prison with his friend Mitch, he discovered what Eli had been doing over the past decade. Victor then embarked on a mission to stop Eli from eliminating EOs. One night, they encountered a girl named Sydney who had been shot. Victor insisted on helping her and healed her wound, which was inflicted by her sister Serena's boyfriend, Eli. After that, the three of them worked together to stop Eli. Meanwhile, Eli's mission progressed smoothly, especially after meeting Serena, an EO with manipulation powers. Initially planning to kill her, Eli decided to keep her alive to aid his mission.

Eventually, Victor invited Eli to a direct confrontation. Eli came with Serena, intending to kill Victor, but Victor managed to kill Serena instead. In the ensuing battle between Eli and Victor, Eli delivered a fatal blow to Victor's chest just as the police arrived. Eli was confused about why they were no longer on his

side. He then realized Serena must have died since her hold on them was gone. Later that night, after digging up Victor's body, Sydney revived him.

The writer chooses this topic because Eli Cardale shows the symptoms of pathological narcissism. In detail, the writer intends to discuss an in-depth study of Eli's portrayal encompassing not only the symptoms but also the causes that trigger his pathological narcissist behavior. Moreover, the writer aims to clarify the complexities of pathological narcissism by analyzing Eli's nature and exposing how pathological narcissism affects himself.

1.2. Research Problems

- a. What are the symptoms of pathological narcissism demonstrated by Eli Cardale in the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab?
- b. What are the causes from Eli's early life experiences which shape his pathological narcissistic behaviors in the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab?
- c. What are the effects of pathological narcissism in Eli's life throughout the story of the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- a. To reveal the symptoms of pathological narcissism demonstrated by Eli Cardale in the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab.
- b. To reveal the causes from Eli Cardale's early life experiences which shape his pathological narcissistic behaviors in the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab.
- c. To reveal the effects of pathological narcissism in Eli Cardale's life throughout the story of the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab.

1.4. Previous Studies

The novel *Vicious* (2014) by V.E. Schwab currently has only a limited number of existing studies. Most of these studies focus on the exploration of the concepts of evil and morally ambiguous characters within the narrative. Despite the limited number of studies, they offer a detailed understanding of these themes, suggesting a need for further exploration of other aspects of the novel.

The first previous study is a research article entitled *Evil versus Evil: The Sense of No Good in Vicious by V.E Schwab* (2018) by Chitinous Maroua. The research focuses on exploring conflicting moralities and portraying characters as morally ambiguous or inherently evil in the novel, examining how these nuances of morality add depth to the characters and contribute to the overall narrative.

The second previous study is a research article entitled *Antagonist's Obsession to Revenge in V. E. Schwab's Novel Vicious* (2022) written by Cindy Karina Sunardi and Zulfan Sahri. The article delves into the antagonist's intense preoccupation with seeking revenge and analyzes how this obsession shapes the narrative.

The third previous study is a research article entitled *Transcending Genealogical Boundaries in Vicious: A Postcolonial Reading* (2022) by Ayesha Areej and Bushra Naz. The research aims to analyze how the characters in V.E. Schwab's *Vicious* symbolize different facets of the colonial world, exploring their aggressive interactions that propel the narrative toward decolonization. At the same

time, it challenges conventional perceptions of the colonizer's goodness, and the colonized enforced evil, ultimately portraying the characters as Fanonian ghosts.

The fourth previous study is a thesis entitled *What Makes a Hero? From Past Polarities to Contemporary Ambiguities* (2021) written by Mairuna Farhin. By analyzing morally ambiguous characters in literature, this thesis analyzes the concepts of good and evil related to heroes and villains. The author also mentioned *Vicious* as one of the novels that has morally gray characters who are also anti-hero and anti-villains.

In this research, the writer aims to analyze the symptoms, causes, and effects of pathological narcissism of Eli Cardale in the novel *Vicious* by V.E. Schwab. Differing from other previous studies, the writer of this research adopts the theory of pathological narcissism by Otto Kernberg. Furthermore, this research mainly focuses on analyzing Eli Cardale's character, which has not been discussed in the previous studies.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The focus of this research revolves around the analysis of Eli Cardale from the novel *Vicious* by examining both the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel. The intrinsic aspects' analysis of the novel *Vicious*, focusing on the character and characterization, conflict, and setting. Meanwhile, the extrinsic aspects discuss the way the character shows the manifestation of pathological narcissism symptoms, including the causes and effects of pathological narcissism. The research examines the symptoms, causes, and effects of pathological narcissism in

the character Eli Cardale. However, it also highlights the significant roles of other characters, namely Victor Vale and Serena Clarke, who are pivotal in influencing the development of Eli Cardale's pathological narcissism. Through the lens of Kernberg's theory, it reveals how Eli Cardale's pathological narcissism, driven by his abusive childhood, manifests through insatiable ambition, grandiosity, life dissatisfaction, and emotional deficit, ultimately demonstrating the destructive impact of his narcissistic tendencies on himself.

1.6. Organization of the Writing

This thesis contains four main chapters, namely introduction, theory and method, result and discussion, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The first chapter encompasses the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous studies, the scope of the study, and the organization of the writing.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND METHOD

The second chapter encompasses the theoretical framework and research method. The theoretical framework includes intrinsic elements theories of character and characterization, conflict, and setting. Meanwhile, the extrinsic elements theory is Otto Kernberg's pathological narcissism theory. The research method consists of a method of data collection and research approach used to analyze the novel.

CHAPTER 3: THE PORTRAYAL OF PATHOLOGICAL NARCISSISM IN

V.E. SCHWAB'S NOVEL *VICIOUS* (2014)

The third chapter includes the examination of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The first part of this chapter discusses the character and characterization of Eli Cardale and the conflict in the novel *Vicious* (2014). The second part of the chapter discuss the external element according to Otto Kernberg theory about pathological narcissism, including the characteristic of pathological narcissism, the causes of pathological narcissism, and also the effects of pathological narcissism demonstrated by Eli Cardale.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This last chapter presents the conclusions, which provide a concise summary of the research. It presents key ideas derived from the study's comprehensive analysis.