

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is an artistic representation of human ideas with aesthetic value that is developed by the author's thoughts, experiences, and feelings. In other words, literature reflects what happens in life. Like Jay Asher, an American author and novelist born on September 30, 1975, in Arcadia, California who gained inspiration from several true stories he had heard and personal experiences in writing his works, such as the novels *Thirteen Reasons Why*, *The Future Of Us* and *What Light* (Afangka & Purwarno, 2021). Asher has also written a number of picture books and middle school humor novels. *Thirteen Reasons Why* received a number of honors including five stars from Teen Book Review, the best books by Association of Booksellers for Children, best books for young adults by American Library Association, top 10 best for teens by Barnes & Noble, best of the best books by Chicago Public Library and more. In the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*, the author describes the protagonist's depression after experiencing a number of events that weigh on her emotions.

According to Fakhirah (2021), depression is an emotional condition characterized by feelings of guilt and meaninglessness, extreme sadness, self-isolation, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, and loss of interest and pleasure in carrying out activities that are often done. Therefore, depression is common in every human being, from teenagers to adults and elders. However, Wenzel (2017) states

that depression is a common but serious illness. It can be concluded that depression can not be considered a normal thing without prevention or efforts to overcome it.

Depression in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* is experienced by the character Hannah Baker, the protagonist who is describe from the beginning of the story as a young woman who committed suicide after experiencing a number of events that hurt her emotionally. The author describes Hannah's experiences and how interactions with the people around her in an interesting and unique way. The story begins with Clay Jensen receiving an anonymous package containing seven cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker. Clay knew this after hearing the first cassette. He was sure that the voice he heard on the tape was the voice of Hannah, his friend who committed suicide.

Each cassette there are two different stories except in the last cassette which only contains one story so there are thirteen stories which are the reasons Hannah committed suicide. Each story there is one person who is considered responsible for their actions which hurt Hannah to the point of making her depressed and decided to kill herself. Clay, who felt responsible after receiving the cassette began tracing Hannah's voice recordings until Hannah's motives for committing suicide were revealed one by one.

Based on the description above, it was concluded that Hannah experienced depression after experiencing various stressful life events which were also the reason she chose to commit suicide. Even though the novel is a fictional story, there is no justification for suicide. Moreover, Hannah is a teenager, as we know that depression in teenagers is more common. This was proven in a large-scale cross-sectional epidemiological study which showed that there was a 43.7% prevalence of

depressive symptoms in middle and high school students aged 12-18 years in China in March 2020 (Hidayat et al., 2022). Beirão et al. (2020) also stated that depression is a common mental health disorder, especially in mid to late adolescence.

Therefore, there is interest in analyzing Hannah's psychological condition, what type of depression she experiences, and the impact of her depression. The reason depression is chosen in this study is because the impact of depression resulted in many changes in Hannah's life. In this case, it makes sense that the impact of depression is the focus of this research. Despite the novel's essence, depression is a common emotional condition nowadays, especially for teenagers who often experience depression. So, it is hoped that this research can open the minds of someone suffering from depression to think before acting to hurt themselves and for someone who is not suffering from depression to prevent things that can cause depression and think about the impact of depression before hurting other people's feelings, emotions and mental health.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background above, there are two problems that will be explored in this study. They are as follows:

1. What type of depression does the protagonist suffer from in the novel?
2. What are the impacts of the protagonist's depression portrayed in the novel?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the problem above, there are two objectives to achieve in this study.

They are as follows:

1. To find out the type of protagonist's depression in the novel.
2. To reveal the impacts of the protagonist's depression in the novel.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study focuses on the types and the impact of depression experienced by the protagonist in the context of the novel. This research includes analysis of Hannah's words, actions and thoughts to find out more about the impact of the protagonist's depression depicted in the narrative. It can provide insight into the impact of depression, the impact of our behaviors on others, the value of social support, and the importance of discussing mental health difficulties.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Theoretically, readers are informed about the impact of depression faced by protagonists in literary works and served as a resource for other students when writing similar issues in their thesis or dealing with depression. Practically, it is hoped that this study can provide direct benefits in the context of education and mental health, as well as to contribute to the development of literary science, particularly for those interested in literary studies through the result of this study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Protagonist**

The protagonist is the first and most important character in a literary work, whether it be a novel, short story, poetry, or drama, and the journey or conflict of this character is often the focus of the story. According to Baldick (2001), the protagonist is the main character in a narrative, play, or story who is the focus of the audience and readers' attention. Furthermore, Ananda (2023) argues that the protagonist is the main hero who is the center of attention of a literary work. Moreover, Wulan (2023) defines the protagonist as a character in a story, novel, play or other literary work who provides empathy for the reader or audience. As a result, the protagonist is the character who leads the story.

#### **2.2 Psychology of Literature**

Psychology of literature is the study that analyzes a literary work based on human beings and its reactions, misery, fear, desire, world perception, conflict, reconciliation and individual or social concerns, through various concepts, methods and approaches. Concisely, psychology is a scientific study that explores and attempts to explain a person's behavior, including observable external acts and internal thoughts. Literature, on the other hand, also discusses humans and their behavior. Therefore, psychology and literature have a strong and deep correlation with human life.

According to Meiliana (2020), psychology of literature is defined as a scientific study that regards literary works as containing several events in human life carried out by imaginary or even factual characters. Another viewpoint holds that psychology of literature is a science that explores and studies mental processes and human behavior, with a focus on ordinary elements in a literary work that are used to describe the psychology of the author, characters and readers (Sulistiyana & Widiarti, 2019). In other words, psychology of literature is a science that evaluates human behavior utilizing psychological considerations and related issues.

Moreover, psychology can be used to reveal the basis of behavior, the reasons why characters behave and character motivations as well as understand more deeply the message, characterization and other elements in the novel (Meiliana, 2020). In *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren (1970) propose that the psychology of literature has four meanings: the first is the science that studies the author's psychology as an individual; the second is the science that studies the creative process; the third is the science that studies psychology applied in literary works; and the fourth is the science that studies the reader's psychology. The third meaning of psychology of literature is applied in this research, where the research addresses the behavior of characters in a literary work. This behavior can vary depending on our point of view; such as, depression experienced by a character has a big influence on the character because it is directly related to the character's emotional condition and behavior.

### **2.3 Depression**

Depression is a mood disorder that is common in society, where the sufferer feels restless, anxious and has difficulty carrying out normal activities due to certain reasons. According to Xiang (2022), depression is a type of mood disorder with symptoms of bad mood and feeling tired of the world. Depression is also defined as a condition of emotional instability due to mental stress that occurs in life (Fakhirah, 2021).

As we know, depression is a common emotional condition experienced by anyone, especially teenagers. The inability to deal with depression can have an impact on the sufferer's life. This idea is reinforced by Hidayat et al. (2022), who suggests that depression is a serious emotional condition that has an impact on a person's feelings, thoughts and actions. People suffering from a depressive disorder may have decreased interest and pleasure in daily activities, insomnia or excessive sleeping, a lack of energy and concentration, significant weight loss or gain, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurring thoughts about death or suicide. In addition, Remes et al. (2021) emphasizes that depression is one of the leading causes of disability, and if untreated, it might raise the risk of suicide. Moreover, Hariani & Wulan (2019) define depression as a state of low mood and aversion to activities that are capable of impacting on a person's thoughts, behavior, feelings, worldview, and physical well-being.

Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that depression is a common emotional condition that has the potential to have a significant and detrimental impact on various aspects of a person's life. Depression is not only a common phenomenon, but it is also a serious disorder that has an impact on the well-

being of those who suffer from it. Simply put, the impact of depression is not only an emotional burden, but it also has the potential to reduce the quality of life of individuals suffering from depression. It is critical to underline that the impact of depression can be so severe that the affected person may consider or have thoughts of harming themselves, including the urge to terminate their life.

## **2.4 Type of Depression**

According to Billett & Bays (2018), types of depression are mild depression, moderate depression and severe depression as described in the following sections.

### **1. Mild Depression**

Mild depression is depression whose symptoms are mild than other types of depression, namely: (1) feelings of anxiety, (2) sadness, (3) difficulty sleeping, (4) lack of appetite, (5) difficulty concentrating, (6) feeling tired and lethargic, (7) lack of enthusiasm for carrying out activities as usual, and (8) feelings of hopelessness which often disappear very quickly. For example, when someone is facing the exam, he frequently worry that he will not be able to answer the questions correctly, which causes him to become restless and have difficulties sleeping. However, once the exam is over, he usually feel fine again. Therefore, this type of depression is the most common in anyone.

### **2. Moderate Depression**

Moderate depression is depression with a more serious level of symptoms than mild depression but lower than severe depression. People with moderate levels of depression generally experience more intense and disturbing symptoms than those with milder levels of depression, namely: (1) greater feelings of sadness, (2) more



significant loss of interest or pleasure, (3) more serious sleep disturbances, (4) weight changes, (5) greater feelings of tiredness, (6) difficulty concentrating, (7) social withdrawal, (8) avoidance of friends, (9) feeling useless and insignificant, and (10) having deeper negative thoughts about the future.

### **3. Severe Depression**

Severe depression is depression with serious symptoms that may occur when someone experiences a tragic event that impacts themselves and hurts them emotionally. Apart from that, severe depression can also occur due to a lack of support from family or friends in overcoming the level of depression experienced previously. Thus, severe depression is the peak of the sufferer's emotional condition. As Billett & Bays (2018) states that people with severe depression will feel “like being pulled endlessly into deeper darkness, trapped in a vortex of negativity with no way out, and like being in a dark tunnel with no light at the end.” It means that people with severe depression often feel empty, life no longer has meaning and suicide is often seen as a way to end suffering. In this case it can be concluded that the difference between the symptoms of severe depression and the two previous types of depression are: (1) suicidal thoughts, and (2) suicidal actions.

### **2.5 The Impact of Depression**

Everything we do and experience has an impact on our lives and the lives of others, both positively and negatively. However, Yuniarti (2015) believes that the impact is more likely to be negative. In other words, impact is the negative outcome of anything done. As a result, the term "impact" is employed in this study. Thus, the

focus is only on the impact or negative effects of depression experienced by the protagonist in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*.

According to Sintami et al. (2022), self-blame, low self-esteem, loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping and frequently think about died are some of the impacts of depression. While, Xiang (2022) emphasized that depression can have negative impacts on the lives of sufferers where sufferers often have thoughts of negative, pessimistic, always immersed in self-condemnation, inferiority, pessimism, and despair for the future. In addition, Utari & Manugeran (2021) establish three potential impacts of psychological issues (depression, anxiety, and trauma), they are: (1) insomnia, (2) loss of focus, and (3) truancy.

Based on the explanation above, there are many impacts of depression according to several previous studies. Some of the impacts of each theory also have similar meanings. Therefore, combining the impacts of depression identified by several of these thoughts can strengthen the ideas underlying the impact of depression experienced by a person. Some of these impacts of depression are also indicators in analyzing the protagonist's depression in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* which is discussed as follows:

### **2.5.1 Self-blame**

Self-blame is synonymous with self-condemnation, which is an activity that depression sufferers are prone to taking in which they attribute unfavorable occurrences to flaws inside themselves and then punish themselves for these perceived flaws. Furthermore, sufferers may blame themselves for events that are unrelated to them and, in serious cases, may commit violence against themselves.

They have a tendency to blame themselves for occurrences that are obviously not their fault. In other terms, self-blame is a stage in which a person repeatedly blames himself for unfavorable and unwanted events in his life, despite the fact that these circumstances are beyond his control, usually because he believes he is not on the same level as his peers. However, some depression sufferers usually also blame themselves after carrying out actions that hurt themselves as a manifestation of a sense of awareness that their actions were wrong.

### **2.5.2 Inferiority**

Inferiority is commonly defined as a sense of being lower or unequal to others, whether in terms of abilities, performance, intelligence, health, strength, physical attractiveness, popularity, or financial resources. People who suffer from depression tend to compare themselves to others, claiming that they are inferior. Feelings of inferiority, on the other hand, frequently occur as a result of feeling unappreciated, ignored, and lonely, so they spend more time thinking about real or imagined problems. Because of that, depressed persons usually lack energy and are unable to experience pleasure as much as they can.

### **2.5.3 Frequent Thinking about Death**

Frequent thinking about death is a form of negative thinking for depression sufferers in which they always imagine death since they believe there is no value in staying alive in this world. In this cases, suicide is frequently considered the sole way for depression sufferers to end their suffering. They claim that their problems will never be resolved and things will never get better and conclude that their future will

be gloomy and full of darkness. In other words, they believe that there is no solution to every problem they face and consider things like this to be the end of the journey.

## 2.6 Previous Studies

There are several previous studies related to this research. Where these studies use the same research object, namely the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher, but the focus of discussion or analysis approach is different. Firstly, "Depression as Reflected on Hannah Baker in Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*" by Nur Idayu (2021). The focus of this research is the symptoms and causes of Hannah Baker's depression. Researchers used a literary psychology approach to find out what the symptoms and causes of Hannah Baker's depression were. This research reveals that there are six symptoms experienced by Hannah Baker, namely irritability, difficulty making decisions and lack of focus, loss of interest in doing daily activities that she enjoys, feelings of worthlessness or self-deprecation and blaming herself for all bad events, reduced passion in lovemaking, and frequent thoughts of committing suicide. This research also revealed that the causes of Hannah Baker's depression were bullying, social isolation and sexual harassment.

Secondly, "An Analysis of Depression in The Novel of *Thirteen Reasons Why* Written by Jay Asher Through Psychoanalytic Theory" by Liza Annisya (2020). This research also focuses on discussing the symptoms and causes of depression of the protagonist, namely Hannah Baker like the first previous research. However, the researcher uses psychoanalytic theory and the theory made by Aaron Beck to find out the definition of depression, depression symptoms, and the causes of depression in Hannah Baker's character.

Thirdly, "Hannah Baker's Suicide as Seen in Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*" by Cahyaningsih Pujimahanani and Mochammad Haqqi Firdaus (2018). This research focuses on analyzing Hannah Baker's suicide. The author uses qualitative methods and suicide theory. Researchers are trying to find evidence that Hannah committed suicide. The results of this research show that Hannah was proven to have committed suicide by using pills. This research also reveals the causes and effects of Hannah's suicide on her parents and friends.

Based on these studies, it is considered that their research has unique characteristics from others. Likewise, in this research, the focus is on the type and impact of Hannah Baker's depression. The advantage of this research compared to the previous studies above is that none of the previous studies discussed the types and impacts of Hannah Baker's depression in the novel. This is very important to discuss because it can increase the reader's knowledge about the types and impacts of depression, prevent the negative effects of depression, and complete the analysis of mental health, especially depression experienced by the protagonist in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*.