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BIPOLAR DISORDER IN JOHN GREEN'S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS

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Abstract

This research analyzes Bipolar Disorder that is portrayed in a novel entitled *the Fault in Our Stars*. The problem found in this research is the symptoms of Bipolar Disorder and the main character ways in overcoming it. The purpose of research is to find out which Bipolar Disorder symptoms occur in the novel. In resolving the issue, the researcher uses the theory of Bipolar Disorder by Norman Sartorius. The concepts used are Manic episode and Depressive episode. Each of the Manic and Depressive episode has their own symptoms. The research method used by the researcher is a qualitative research method. The researcher finds several symptoms that Hazel has and Hazel ways in overcoming the Bipolar Disorder that is family support and keep fighting. She overcomes the Bipolar Disorder by getting support from her family which make she could withstand her disease.

Keywords: *Manic Episode, Depressive Episode, Manic Symptoms, Depressive Symptoms.*

I. Introduction

Bipolar Disorder is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. According to Sartorius (1993: 97), the changes in mood, energy, and

activity levels range from periods of extremely "up," elated, and energized behavior (known as Manic Episodes) to very sad, "down," or hopeless periods (known as Depressive Episodes).

Bipolar Disorder is chosen as the main issue because of a few reasons, one of the

them is the lack of accurate information patients and their families can understand about this disorder. Dr Wes Burgess (2006, Intro) states that, “There are more than seven million adults and children with Bipolar Disorder in the United States.” Most of these people do not even realize that their extreme mood changes are classified into Bipolar Disorder or get wrong diagnosed by their psychiatric. This becomes a huge problem when their mood changes start to have a big effect on their life. Imagine when a doctor starts to laugh and then cry in front of his/her patients, it could lead to bad reputation or lose the job which later could be suicide.

According to Greenberg (1993), it is normal for people to experience ups and downs during their lives, those who have clinical depression experience specific symptoms daily for two weeks or more, making it difficult to function at work, at school and in relationships. In shorts, most common people think that their unusual shift in mood (mostly woman) is just some side effect of menstruation period while the truth is not.

Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars* is chosen as a study source because this novel was on *Wall Street Journal*, *Indie bound*, *Bookseller*, and *New York Times* bestseller list. Besides, this novel portrayed Hazel, the

main character depression that shows the symptoms of Bipolar Disorder.

II. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Bipolar Disorder by Sartorius

According to Sartorius (1993: 97), Bipolar Disorder is characterized by repeated (i.e. at least two) episodes in which the patient's mood and activity levels are significantly disturbed, this disturbance consisting on some occasions of an elevation of mood and increased energy and activity (mania or hypomania), and on others of a lowering of mood and decreased energy and activity (depression). As explained above, there are two main episodes that are parts of Bipolar Disorder. It is between mania (Manic) and depression (Depressive) episode.

2.2.1 Manic Episode

Manic episode or the changes in mood, energy, and activity levels range from periods of extremely “up,” elated, and energized behavior must have at least four manic symptoms including altered mood that causes marked functional impairment and hospital admission. It means that, during the manic episode the patient will have a significant change in mood like unusually happy or extreme self-confidence. Although it seems that patient during manic episode is

only doing positive action, actually there are a lot of negativity that can be found. It can be found through the symptoms of manic episode.

Manic Symptoms consist of: Abnormally upbeat, jumpy or wired; Increased activity, energy or agitation; Exaggerated sense of well-being and self-confidence; Decreased need for sleep; Unusual talkativeness; Racing thoughts; Distractibility; Poor decision-making. As can be seen above, there are two symptoms that is not correspond that is “increased activity, energy or agitation” and “decreased need for sleep”. When a patient have an increased of activity, of course there is a lot of energy is used but as “decreased need for sleep” symptom shows up, it could be seen that the patient will suffer or get sick during this episode.

2.2.1 Depressive Episode

Major Depressive Episode or the change in mood from Manic Episode to very sad, “down,” or hopeless periods must have at least five or more persistent depressive symptoms and cause serious distress or functional impairments. This episode is the worst episode that causes a lot of patient die. During this episode, the patient feels depressed mood, lost interest and the worst,

feeling of worthlessness which lead to thinking about, planning, or attempting suicide.

Depressive Symptoms consist of: depressed mood, such as feeling sad, empty, hopeless or tearful (in children and teens, depressed mood can appear as irritability); marked loss of interest or feeling no pleasure in all or almost all activities; significant weight loss when not dieting, weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite (in children, failure to gain weight as expected can be a sign of depression); either insomnia or sleeping too much; either restlessness or slowed behavior; fatigue or loss of energy; feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt; decreased ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness; thinking about, planning or attempting suicide.

III. Method of the Research

In analyzing this novel, the researcher uses qualitative method. Bogdan (1928-28) said: “Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected is in from of words or picture rather than numbers. In collecting and presenting the data, the researcher uses qualitative method, that is descriptive. The data collected were in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The researcher

analyzes this novel by doing close reading and library research.

IV. Findings

4.1 Bipolar Disorder Symptoms in John Green's *the Fault in Our Stars*

The researcher analyzes the symptoms of any episode of Bipolar Disorder that occurs in John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* because it can determine which episodes it belongs to. There are several symptoms that are displayed below:

4.1.1 Exaggerated Sense of Well-being and Self-confidence into Marked Loss of Interest or Feeling No Pleasure in All or Almost All Activities

According to Sartorius (1993: 95), exaggerated sense of well-being and self-confidence as parts of manic symptoms refers to "*marked feeling of well-being and both physical and mental efficiency*". It means that, a person experiences pleasure or excitement and intense feeling of well-being and happiness. In this novel the intense feeling of well-being and self-confidence is found in the way Hazel (the main character) has an excitement where she believes she will have a longer life than other cancerous people. It is found in the quotation below:

"Like, I realize that this is irrational, but when they tell you that you have, say, a 20 percent chance of living five years, the math kicks in and you figure that's one in five . . . so you look around and think, as any healthy person would: I gotta outlast four of these bastards." (P5)

The quotations above represent Hazel self-confidence. The sentence "so you look around and think, as any healthy person would" is an irony where she found her own self-confidence. Although she is not a healthy person, she uses the word "healthy" as a satire to remind her that she is special which means even though the others also have cancer she feels like at least she is the healthiest cancerous one. She creates a self-confidence on which she thinks she will defeat time that is represented by "these bastards" as for time is the one chasing her not her cancer. Although the word "look around" might make people think that she is talking about people around her but it is not, she is talking about beating the 80% chance of her time that she might die at young age.

Even though she has such strong self-confidence but it didn't last long enough. Soon after, she immediately broke down and feels loss of interest and no pleasure in all or almost all activities on which is parts of the

depressive symptoms. According to Sartorius (1993: 100), marked loss of interest or feeling no pleasure in all or almost all activities refers to *“loss of interest or pleasure in activities that are normally enjoyable, lack of emotional reactivity to normally pleasurable surroundings and events”*. In shorts it means a psychological state where one totally has no interest in any kind of activities. In this novel the loss of interest or feeling no pleasure in all or almost all activities is found in the way she sighing each other not long after her self-confidence thought. It is found in the quotation below:

“Isaac and I communicated almost exclusively through sigh. Each time someone discussed anticancer diets or snorting ground-up shark find or whatever, he’d glance over at me and sigh ever so slightly. I’d shake my head microscopically and exhale in response.” (P6)

The quotations above represent Hazel loss of interest. As the word “sigh” comes a lot it can be seen that both Hazel and Isaac have no interest on anything people say there in that support group even if it could help them. It is also supported by the word “whatever” which represent her loss of interest. She doesn’t care with anything that they said in the support group since she never wants to be there in the first place. This situation

happened right after she narrates about her self-confidences which show early symptoms of Bipolar Disorder.

4.1.2 Thinking about, Planning or Attempting Suicide

In this novel not only lost of interest of any activities that Hazel, the main character shows but there are also another Depressive symptom that is thinking about, planning or attempting suicide right just in the next pages after showing her self-confidence. According to Sartorius (1993: 100), thinking about, planning or attempting suicide is *“an ideas or acts of self-harm or suicide. Acts of self-harm associated with mood affective disorders, most commonly self-poisoning by prescribed medication, should be recorded by means of an additional code from Chapter XX of ICD-10 (X60-X84). These codes do not involve differentiation between attempted suicide and “parasuicide”, since both are included in the general category of self-harm”*. In shorts it is refers to a psychological state where one no longer value their own body and tend to harm or hurt themselves. It can be seen in the novel in the parts where she against her mom to go to support group but still goes at the end. It is found in the quotation below:

“I went to Support Group for the same reason that I’d allowed nurses with a mere eighteen months of graduate education to poison me with exotically named chemicals: I wanted to make my parents happy. There is only one thing in this world shittier than biting it from cancer when you’re sixteen and that’s having a kid who bites it from cancer.”
(P8)

The quotations above represent Hazel suicide plan. It is obvious from the whole paragraph that Hazel have had plan her suicide or she have think about it. It is can be seen from the sentence “to poison me” and “I wanted to make my parents happy” she surely have a plan her suicide for a long time on which supported by the sentence “having a kid who bites it from cancer”. Even thought it seem pathetic, her suicide plan is kinds of noble where she feels like, just by living in this world she is a big burden for her parents but still it is not normal for one to chose suicide rather than living on which classified into Depressive episode that she suffers from.

4.1.3 Feelings of Worthlessness or Excessive or Inappropriate Guilt

Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt are one of the Depressive symptoms. According to

Sartorius (1993: 100), feelings of worthlessness are “*reduces self-esteem and self-confidence, ideas of guilt and unworthiness*”. It is a psychological state where one feels that he/she is worthless or having an extreme unnecessary guilt. In this novel what happened are the feelings of worthlessness. Hazel worthlessness feeling happened right after Gus answer about his fear in the support group. It is found in the quotation below:

“I fear oblivion,” he said without a moments’ pause. “I fear it like the proverbial blind man who’s afraid of the dark.”

.....
“There will come a time,” I said, “when all of us are dead. All of us. There will come a time when there are no human beings remaining to remember that anyone ever existed or that our species ever did anything. There will be no one left to remember Aristotle or Cleopatra, let alone you. Everything that we did and built and wrote and thought and discovered will be forgotten and all of this” I gestured encompassingly “will have been for naught. Maybe that time is coming soon and maybe it is millions of years away, but even if we survive the collapse of our sun, we will not survive forever. There was time before organisms experienced consciousness, and there will be time after. And if the inevitability of human oblivion worries you, I encourage you to

ignore it. God knows that's what everyone else does." (P12-13)

The quotations above represent Hazel worthlessness feeling. As the word "oblivion" represents a condition of afraid to be forgotten that is said by Gus, Hazel feels otherwise. Hazel feels that she as human and all of us are a worthless creature that is sooner or later will be forgotten. She feels that no man/woman shall be afraid to be forgotten since no one can remember at the end. It is can be seen from the sentence "There will be no one left to remember Aristotle or Cleopatra, let alone you". As the word "Aristotle" and "Cleopatra" shows up she compare Gus to the famous ancient Greek philosopher (Aristotle) and the last queen of Ptolemaic Egypt (Cleopatra). The sentence "let alone you" represents her comment that is; why would anyone wants to remember you a common people when they are not even going to remember Aristotle nor even Cleopatra which more famous than Gus. Hazel sentence also represents her pessimism about human where all human is going to die at the end. It is found in the sentence "Maybe that time is coming soon and maybe it is millions of years away, but even if we survive the collapse of our sun, we will not survive forever". The sentence "we will not survive forever" obviously represents her

final thought about humans where we all are going to die at the end. All of this representation of her worthlessness feeling is a part of Depressive episode that she suffers from.

4.1.4 Depressed Mood into Racing Thought

According to Sartorius (1993: 100), depressed mood are "*loss of interest and enjoyment, and reduced energy leading to increased fatiguability and diminished activity. Marked tiredness after only slight effort is common.*" It also means that a psychological state where one feeling sad, empty, hopeless or tearful (in children and teens, depressed mood can appear as irritability). Depressed Mood is a part of Depressive Symptoms. What happened in the novel is that when Gus asks about what Hazel disease is, she suddenly feels hopeless and sad. It is found in the quotations below:

"I told Augustus the broad outline of my miracle: diagnosed with stage IV thyroid cancer when I was thirteen. (I didn't tell him that the diagnosis came three months after I got my first period. Like: Congratulations! You're a woman. Now die.) It was, we were told, incurable." (P24)

The quotations above represent Hazel depressed mood. It can be seen from each sentence that is “Congratulations!” “You’re a woman.” “Now die.” It is a satire in each of the sentence that represents her hopeless and sad mood. Right after three months after she becomes a woman she got the diagnosis of the cancer. Obviously depressed is what happened next. This is another early depressive symptom that creates her Bipolar Disorder.

In the next few pages after having a depressed mood she suddenly have a racing thought which is part of the Manic symptoms. According to Sartorius (1993: 9), racing thought are “*flight of ideas and pressure of speech that may result in the individual becoming incomprehensible*”. In short, it is a psychological state where an individual had an episode where the mind uncontrollably brings up a random thoughts and memories and switches between them very quickly. In this novel the Racing Thought is happened in the way she thinks about Gus parents when they arrive at Gus house. It is found in the quotation below:

“They didn’t seem too surprised by my arrival, which made sense: the fact that Augustus made me feel special did not necessarily indicate that I was special. Maybe he brought home a different girl every night to

show her movies and feel her up.” (P27)

The quotations above represent Hazel random thought. Out of nowhere she thought that Gus is just a good man who *maybe* always loves to cheer any sad girl. It can be seen in “Maybe he brought home a different girl every night to show her movies and feel her up.” There is no connection between how Gus parents reaction and the maybe Gus is a good man. This random thought of her is kind of clueless since she doesn’t know them yet. Although racing thought is a part of manic symptoms but in this case it seems that racing thought is just a continuing episode of depressed mood. However the writer still diagnosed that those situation is a parts of extreme shift of mood that is the characteristic of Bipolar Disorder.

4.1.5 Distractibility

According to Sartorius (1993: 95), distractibility as parts of Depressive symptoms is “*Normal social inhibitions are lost, attention cannot be sustained, and there is often marked distractibility*”. It refers to a psychological condition where one has inability to sustain one’s attention or attentiveness, which is rapidly diverted from one topic to another. Unlike racing thought that brings up a random thought,

distractibility distracts their attention from one topic to another. The topic could be in form of thought. In this novel Hazel during narrating the story, she distracted enough to think about three topics at once. It is found in the quotations below:

"I returned to the book, where Staff Sergeant Max Mayhem was regretting that he had but one life to give for his country, but I kept thinking about that little kid, and how much I liked her. The other thing about Kaitlyn, I guess, was that it could never again feel natural to talk to her." (P47)

The quotations above represent Hazel distractibility. There are three topics that she distract to here which are "the book" "the little kid" and "Kaitlyn". As she fall back in reading the book as in "I returned to the book" she still can define what the main character in her book feels like when suddenly she change the topic and think about the little kid she just met as in "but I kept thinking about that little kid" and then she suddenly think about Kaitlyn as in "The other thing about Kaityln". All of it happened instantly that she don't even have the chance to think about what she just think. The distraction is so strong that she not even re-thinks about the first think she think about

(the book). Obviously all of it is a part of Depressive symptoms.

4.1.6 Poor Decision-making

According to Sartorius (1993: 96), poor decision-making is "*the individual may embark on extravagant and impractical schemes, spend money recklessly, or become aggressive, amorous, or facetious in inappropriate circumstances.*" In shorts it is a psychological state where a person tends to make a poor decision on their life. This is actually another disorder that usually affected old people, those who have Alzheimer's disease and dementia but still include in Depressive symptoms. In this novel, the poor decision-making is found when Hazel makes bad decision during her time when she receives a phone call from Gus. It is found in the quotation below:

"..., so per tradition it was his turn to call. But he didn't. ... We were seated around our little circular table in the kitchen when my phone started singing, but I wasn't allowed to check it because we have a strict no-phones during-dinner rule. ... I ate faster than I'd ever eaten, transmitting items from my plate into my mouth with a speed and ferocity that left me quite out of breath, which of course made me worry that my lungs were again swimming in a rising pool

of fluid. I banished the thought as best I could.” (P65)

The quotations above represent Hazel poor decision-making. As on in this parts, Gus hasn't call Hazel yet for a while and she can't wait anymore to just hear anything even just a few simple words which displayed in “so per tradition it was his turn to call. But he didn't”. As can be seen in the sentence “I ate faster than I'd ever eaten” and “which of course made me worry that my lungs were again swimming in a rising pool of fluid” it is referring to a condition where she wants some words from Gus so bad that she doesn't care that there is a huge chance she might died just from doing that. It is supported by the sentences “I banished the thought as best I could”. She risks her lives by eating so fast without considering the consequences that just only to hear some words from Gus.

4.2 Hazel Ways to Overcome Bipolar Disorder as Portrayed in John Green's *the Fault in Our Stars*

The most significant way on overcome Bipolar Disorder is that family support. It is found in the quotation below:

“You are not a grenade, not to us. Thinking about you dying make us sad, Hazel, buy you are not a grenade. You are amazing.

You can't know, sweetie, because you've never had a baby become a brilliant young reader with a side interest in horrible television shows, but the joy you bring us so much greater than the sadness we feel about your illness.” (P103)

The quotations above represent family support. The sentence “the joy you bring us so much greater than the sadness we feel about your illness” represents how Hazel father feel about her disease. It is clear that her father feel grateful rather than sadness about her. He supports her no matter what. One way or another, family support is the best things one would receive. With the support of Hazel parents, she could withstand her disease more than other does.

Another way Hazel overcome Bipolar is that she keep fighting. No matter what keep fighting the disease is the best thing one possibly could do. In this novel it can be seen in Hazel favorite quote. It is found in the quotation below:

“There's a great quote in Gus's house, one that both he and I found very comforting: Without pain, we couldn't know joy.” (P272)

The quotations above represent Haze fighting spirit. As Gus once said at the page 57, “Pain demands to be felt” it fit perfectly

with the quotation above. The sentence “Without pain, we couldn’t know joy” refers to the way Hazel thinks about pain. What she thinks is that, if pain can’t be avoided, the best way to handle it, they suggest, is head on. It is clear that from the explanation above that the only way for Hazel to handle pain is to keep fighting.

V. Conclusion

After analyzing some quotations from *the Fault in Our Stars*, the researcher found several things in Bipolar Disorder. The first thing is that there are side effects from having Bipolar Disorder. The most significant effect from having Bipolar Disorder is that people will run away and do not want to be their friend. It happens because they tend to change their mood which is confusing and sometimes make others angry. In addition of anger, sadness is also another side effect. People usually feel pity when they found their friends suffer from Bipolar. In addition, even though there is more depression that occurs in the novel, but Hazel, the main character is always capable of conquering her problems with a support of both her parents and two of her close friends.

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