

Antisocial Personality Disorder of the Main Character in *The Bad Seed* Movie

Ika Veronika¹, Rahmawati Azi², Nur Israfyan Sofian³

^{1,2,3}English Literature Study Program, Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Humanities Universitas Halu Oleo, Kendari, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: ikaveronika0302@gmail.com

Abstract

This study intended to show antisocial personality disorder as reflected in Emma in *The Bad Seed* movie, directed by Rob Lowe. This study applies the theory of personality disorders by Theodore Millon. This research uses descriptive qualitative research. Data collection was carried out through four steps, such as watching, screenshots, note-taking, and identifying data. The results of this study indicate that the main character has antisocial personality disorder. The main character in *The Bad Seed* movie shows five criteria for antisocial personality disorder, namely: swindler or a liar, manipulative, aggressive and irritable, impulsive, and lack of empathy and remorse. While the variant of antisocial personality disorder is reflected in the main character, namely the pure variant or the jealousy/envy.

Keywords: *antisocial personality disorder, character, psychology*

INTRODUCTION

A literary work is a work of fiction in which the author uses imagination to describe various problems and events in human life, forming the integrity of the story. The literature depicts life, and life is primarily made up of social realities (Wellek and Warren, 1989). The life that is conveyed in literary works cannot be separated from the reality or problems in society. When an author writes a piece of literature, he draws on the experiences he has had living in a society. These experiences are then put into the form of a literary work.

Not much different from literary works, movies have the same story as literary works, which are always related to fictional stories. Fiction in the movie is a story that has ties to the plot, and the story is presented from the imagination of the scriptwriter. The movies not only present imaginary or entertaining things but also reflect social reality. The movie always captures the changing realities of society and projects them onto the screen (Sobur, 2006). Social reality is a reality or fact that occurs in people's lives, either individually or in groups. Usually, some things can't all be directly described in people's lives. For example, mental illnesses that can't be expressed carelessly need the help of other means to express this, one of which is a movie.

A movie is one of the communication media and is used as a means of entertainment to convey a story. Moreover, as a medium of communication, the movie has the function of conveying messages in the form of information, education, and entertainment. Through movies, messages related to every aspect of life can be conveyed with interesting audio-visuals. According to [Wibowo et al. \(2006\)](#), a movie is a medium for communicating several messages to an audience through a story. In addition to being a form of artistic expression, the movie is a tool for artists and filmmakers to present their story ideas.

In movies, the character is one of the important elements of the story. The character is created by the author to carry and convey messages or something to the audience. [Abrams \(1999\)](#), defines character as someone who has certain "intellectual", "emotional", and "moral" qualities and tendencies as expressed in what they say and what they do. However, to make the story more interesting, movies often show deviant personalities, even with unhealthy thinking and behavior patterns, or what can be called personality disorders. Characters that show personality disorders can be seen in the 2018 movie, *The Bad Seed*. *The Bad Seed* is a 2018 American-made horror thriller movie directed by Rob Lowe. *The Bad Seed* movie tells the story of the main character, a 9-year-old girl named Emma Grossman (Mckenna Grace). She lives with her father, David Grossman (Rob Lowe), while her mother died after giving birth to Emma. Emma is smart, focused, perfectionist, ambitious, always wants to be a winner, doesn't like to be beaten, and has no fear. From the outside, Emma looks like a very sweet and normal child, but her personality changes when she feels threatened and has a rival or someone who will hinder her from achieving her goals. Emma will also do anything to get what she wants, even if it means hurting other people.

The story begins with Emma, who was defeated by her classmate, Milo Curtis, who got a medal from school for his achievements. Emma thinks the medal should belong to her. Finding herself defeated, Emma doesn't accept it and plots to kill Milo and take the medal. After killing Milo by pushing him off a cliff, she doesn't feel guilty for her actions, even though she pretended to look sad when she came to Milo's funeral. From these events, Emma's series of abnormal behaviors begin. Emma is very clever at manipulating the situation and can divert from one case to another, and she doesn't even feel guilty or regret that she has committed all the series of crimes she has committed.

In *The Bad Seed* movie, it can be seen that the main character has a personality disorder, which, according to the [American Psychiatric Association \(2013\)](#), personality disorders are unhealthy thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that deviate from the social norm and last for a time to time. Differences in the character of people with personality disorders can be seen in the way they look at things, the way they think, and the way they interact with other people. A person's personality background can be disturbed by both outside and inside factors, such as a bad environment or bad parenting, or a traumatic event from the past, which can make a person physically and mentally disturbed.

The main character in *The Bad Seed* movie shows the characteristics of one type of personality disorder, namely antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). People with ASPD cannot distinguish right and wrong, lack empathy, often ignore the rights, desires, and feelings of others, treat others badly to get what they want, and never feel guilty no matter what they've done. According to [Millon \(2004\)](#), someone with antisocial personality disorder is more than just a swindler; they are often manipulative, reckless, aggressive, irresponsible, exploitative, and lack empathy, and remorse.

According to the [American Psychiatric Association \(2013\)](#), antisocial personality disorder has another term, namely, psychopath. Most ASPD sufferers are not necessarily psychopaths, whereas most psychopaths satisfy the diagnostic criteria for ASPD ([Hare & Neumann, 2009](#)). This study only refers to the problem of Emma's antisocial personality disorder. So the researcher will analyze this movie using Theodore Millon's theory of personality disorders, which focuses on antisocial personality disorder.

Antisocial personality disorder research can reveal that human behavior that seems normal, smart and charismatic turns out to have unhealthy thought patterns and behavior that is difficult to comply with societal norms that cause a lot of harm to others and can benefit themselves or only think about themselves. And also antisocial personality disorder is still a lot of people who misinterpret ASPD. Many people think that someone who doesn't want to make friends or socialize with other people and prefers to be alone is ASPD, but in fact it is not an antisocial personality disorder but rather a social phobia. Because, as previously explained, ASPD is a personality disorder that can harm oneself and others if left unchecked.

This analysis aims to determine the description of antisocial personality disorder in the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie. *The Bad Seed* movie was chosen by researchers because it is very interesting, especially the main character. Researchers see a disturbed psychological condition in this movie where the main character shows personality deviations or personality disorders that are worthy of research. Based on the explanation above, the researcher raised the problem with the title "*Antisocial Personality Disorder of the Main Character in The Bad Seed Movie*".

RESEARCH METHOD

This study will use a qualitative descriptive method. Because the data being studied is qualitative, the relevant form of research is to describe the research results. The data that is used by the researcher is divided into two, which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data obtained from the object of research, which is *The Bad Seed* movie consist of characters, actions, dialogues and picture. Secondary data sources are obtained from journals, thesis and books concerning the object of research. The data collection was done by watching, screenshotting, note taking, and identifying the data. The data were analyzed by describing, interpreting the data, and drawing the conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study showing antisocial personality disorder of the main character in *The Bad Seed*. This discussion will show 5 the characteristics of ASPD that are reflected in the main characters of *The Bad Seed* movie, such as (1) swindler or lying, (2) manipulative, (3) aggressive and irritability, (4) impulsive, and (5) lack of empathy and lack of remorse. Then the researcher concluded the five ASPD variants that match the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie, namely the pure variant using Theodore Millon's theory.

Characteristics of Antisocial Personality Disorder

Swindler

Individuals with an antisocial personality disorder often lie or cheat on purpose to gain personal goals or even harm others, such as dishonest actions or words with the intent to mislead, outsmart, or seek profit. In antisocial criteria, lying is considered a personality trait, a long-standing pattern of behavior that is expressed over time and in many different

situations (Millon, 2004). The researcher then sees that this character swindler is reflected in Emma's character, which is strengthened by the conversations.

Millo's mother : Has anyone seen Milo?
Emma's father : I haven't seen him.
Millo's mother : Emma, have you seen him?
Emma : Um, the last place I saw him was by the bonfire.

Milo's mother asked if anyone had seen Milo. Because no one had seen Milo, Milo's mother also asked Emma when approaching her father to ask to go home. Then Emma replied "**Um, the last place I saw her was by the bonfire**". At that time, Emma is actually lied to by Milo's mother, because when Emma asks to go home to her father, she goes with Milo to the cliff behind the school to do something bad to Milo because Emma doesn't accept that Milo has won a medal.

At that time, Emma cheated or lied to Milo's mother to get what she wanted, which was to take Milo's medal. In this situation what Emma did is a category of swindler because she lied so as not to be suspected of doing something that caused Milo to lose his life and profit from taking Milo's medal without anyone knowing. Those with antisocial personality disorder are very dishonest and always lie repeatedly to benefit themselves and harm others (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). And another example, when his father entered Emma's room, he found Milo's medal. And he asked Emma.

Dr. March : I understand that your friend Milo recently passed away.
Emma : That's right.
Dr. March : How did that make you feel? Pretty sad, I bet.
Emma : I cried for two days.
Dr. March : Oh. I understand.

In this conversation, Dr. March, a psychiatrist, asks about Milo's death and how Emma feels about the incident. Emma said "**I cried for two days.**" about the loss of her friend, Milo. Emma's words to those who cried for two days, were in stark contrast to her daily life in the two days after Milo died. Emma lived her day as usual without any feelings of sadness after the incident, and Milo lost his life.

Like most ASPD, they are very smooth in their lies for their benefit, even various tricks they use to achieve the benefits they will get (Millon, 2004). In Emma's case, he not only lied to his father because he always wanted to win his father's trust, but she lied to everyone who he

thought would benefit her, especially at the beginning of the problem that was always related to her, namely Milo's death.

Manipulative

Individu with ASPD manipulate to attack or influence the emotions and mentality of her opponent, so she can control the person and get what she wants, so she will do anything to make the victim feel confused and weak. Like Emma, the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie.

Emma's father : *You weren't ever out on that rock face, were you?*
Emma : *No.*
Emma's father : *Mrs. Ellis says you were.*
Emma : *She's lying.*
Emma's father : *Honey, why would Mrs. Ellis lie?*
Emma : *Because she hates me. She never liked me. I don't know why. Why would she say that?*
Emma's father : *I... I don't know what's going on, I'm just... just worried about you.*

This conversation Emma manipulates her father, and makes his father feel guilty and has to question himself whether he is right and her daughter is wrong or vice versa. Initially, the teacher Emma Ms. Ellis comes to Emma's house to ask Emma about what happened to Milo because some of the other students saw her last with Milo. Hear about that, Emma pretended to fall so as not to meet and was questioned by Ms. Elis. When her father medicates Emma, he also asks whether what his teacher said is true that he was the last time Milo was with him. Emma also replied that Ms. Elis lied and continued to say, ***"Because she hates me. She never liked me. I don't know why. Why would she say that?"***

It can be seen from Emma's words that she questions why her father said this, as if Emma did something wrong to make Emma's father feel guilty again and that he was worried about her daughter. Like most people with ASPD, Emma also tends to be very manipulative, making it difficult for others who deal with them to tell when they are telling the truth or not (Millon, 2000). Another example is when Emma manipulated the situation and made her father lose his life.

Emma : *Help! He's trying to kill me!*
Emma's father : *Don't listen to her! She's not right, there's something wrong with her.*

In this conversation Emma is manipulative of the situation. At first, Emma knew her father was going to kill her by giving her a lot of sleeping pills, but apparently, Emma didn't take

them. Knowing her father's plan, Emma secretly got up and took a gun from her father's bedroom drawer and pointed the gun right at her father, who was still asleep.

Emma fired a bullet in his father's shoulder, and his father woke up and saw Emma holding a gun and without a guilty expression. Hearing a commotion in David's house, their neighbor came to see how they were with a gun in his hand just in case. Then Emma said, "**Help! He's trying to kill me!**" because Emma was still a child, and believed her to be a good and intelligent child. Finally, the neighbor believed Emma and shot David to death on the spot, and Emma witnessed this in front of her eyes while crying loudly. Their antisocial personality disorder will shed as many tears as possible to make the other person or their victim believe, just as Emma did. They never feel that they have had enough, never reach a sense of satisfaction, and feel unfulfilled despite their successes, remaining forever dissatisfied and never satisfied (Millon, 2000).

Aggressive and Irritability

Aggressive is behavior that refers to violence, intimidation, and other emotional behavior. In verbal or physical terms, aggressiveness is the act that people become involved in when they try to harm another person. Individuals with antisocial personality disorder tend to be irritable and aggressive and may repeatedly get into physical fights or commit acts of physical, verbal, or psychological aggression, a tendency to get angry quickly, and difficulty controlling anger (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

*Emma : Katie, are you all right? Are you ok?
I'm so sorry,
I didn't mean to hurt you.
Here, let me help you up. I'm so sorry.*

Emma, on purpose, bumps into her classmate because she feels jealous that her classmate named Katie has a new good watch that her other classmates praise so Emma plans to steal the watch by deliberately crashing Katie and making her fall. Then Emma said, "**I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you**". Emma's statement is not valid where she apologized by accident, and the fact is that Emma, on purpose bumped into her friend because she wanted to take her friend's watch when she finished helping Katie to stand back up and say sorry once again, and Katie continued to play with her friends who were. On the other hand, Emma took out a watch from her pocket which was Katie's watch. The specific behavioral characteristics of antisocial personality disorder fall into one of four categories: aggression toward people or

animals, destruction of property, fraud or theft, or serious violation of rules ([American Psychiatric Association, 2000](#)).

Emma : I didn't mean to hurt him. When I pushed him... he fell. He kept on yelling, yelling that he couldn't swim, but I didn't believe him, he always over-exaggerated. And after a while he stopped yelling and I couldn't see him anymore. I'm so sorry, daddy, I didn't want to get into trouble.

Emma realized what she was doing, but she ignored it as long as she was okay. She tells and confesses to his father the truth about her aggressively pushing Milo off a cliff until Milo loses his life. When Milo falls, Milo asks for her help because Milo can't swim, but Emma tells his father that Milo is always overdoing it and in the end he doesn't help Milo, so Milo drowns and loses his life. The specific behavioral characteristics of antisocial personality disorder fall into one of four categories: aggression toward people or animals, destruction of property, fraud or theft, or serious violation of rules ([American Psychiatric Association, 2000](#)).

Impulsive

Impulsive behavior is an attitude when someone acts without thinking about the consequences of what is done. People who have impulsive behavior will work as they please without admitting that the behavior is not normal. The pattern of impulsivity in individuals with ASPD can be manifested by a failure to plan. Decisions are made suddenly, without forethought, and without considering the consequences for oneself or others ([American Psychiatric Association, 2013](#)).

This section shows the impulsive behavior of Emma, who mindlessly drops a glass jar and hits her in the arm. In this scene, Emma's teacher and the school's lawyer come to Emma's house to ask what happened when Milo fell off a cliff. Some of Emma's friends say that they last saw Emma with Milo, and Emma's teacher asks to meet her and ask the truth. Emma, who was listening to this behind the wall, panicked until, without thinking, she accidentally dropped the jar along with herself hitting her arm without thinking how dangerous it would be to her safety. The pattern of impulsivity in individuals with ASPD can be manifested by a failure to plan. Decisions are made suddenly, without forethought, and without considering the consequences for oneself or others ([American Psychiatric Association, 2013](#)). Just like

Emma, she doesn't think about the safety of herself or the people around her when she takes actions like this data.

Lack of Empathy and Remorse

People who lack empathy often say things or do things that hurt others. Usually, they do this accidentally because people who lack empathy really can't understand other people's feelings or don't have emotions like normal people ([American Psychiatric Association, 1994](#)). Lack of empathy makes a person tend to be selfish and don't care about other people and the surrounding environment. Therefore, ASPD sufferers will not care about the loss, pain, and suffering of the victim.

*Chloe (Emma's nanny) : So are you sad about the kid that drowned?
Emma : I don't think it matters if I'm sad. He's dead, anyway.*

This conversation reinforces that Emma has no guilt and empathy for others. When Chloe asks about Milo falling off a cliff, Emma replies, **"I don't think it matters if I'm sad. He's dead, anyway"**. From these statements, it has been proven that Emma does not have the slightest sense of empathy and guilt toward other people or towards her victims. It is known that it was Emma who made Milo lose his life, but he feels neither sad nor guilty for doing so. Antisocial personality disorder causes them to experience a limited range of human emotions. This may explain the lack of empathy for the suffering of others because they are unable to share the feelings associated with empathy or grief ([Millon, 2004](#)), as happened to Emma in the conversation above. She did not feel sad that her friend died because of her own doing. Another example that shows Emma has absolutely no empathy and remorse in her, can be seen in the scene where Emma tells her father that what she did was not wrong.

*Emma : I told you, I didn't do anything wrong.
I would never hurt anyone for no reason. I would never, ever do that.*

In this conversation, it is evident that Emma shows a lack of empathy and guilt for herself. Individuals with antisocial personality disorder show little remorse for the consequences of their actions, or they may show complete indifference to their efforts. They may be indifferent to having hurt, abused, or stolen from someone, and people with ASPD will blame the victim for being stupid, helpless, or deserving of their fate ([American Psychiatric Association, 2013](#)). Emma feels that everything she did was right and not wrong. The statement **"I told you, I didn't do anything wrong. I would never hurt anyone for no**

reason. I would never, ever do that". Which makes it clear that Emma lacks the empathy and guilt that goes with her and instead blames the victim for what she thinks they deserve.

Varian Antisocial Personality Disorder

Millon (2004), classifies five variants of antisocial personality disorder, namely, (1) antisocial jealousy/envy (pure variant), (2) reputational antisocial, (3) antisocial risk-taking, (4) antisocial nomadic, and (5) envy antisocial. Of the five ASPD variants, the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie shows a pure variant, where the pure variant is dominated by jealousy, they are driven by envy and will do anything to take what they think is theirs. Whether through deception or destruction, their goal is to get what they want (Millon, 2004). Like the portrayal of the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie, which shows the traits of pure variant antisocial personality disorder, where the beginning of all is jealousy and wanting to have everything she thinks she deserves. Their greatest pleasure lies in taking possession of other people's property. Even though ASPD have little compassion or guilt about the effects of their behavior, they never feel that they have had enough, never achieve satisfaction, and feel unfulfilled despite their successes, but they are never satisfied (Millon, 2004). Pure variant antisocial personality disorder is a simple, even manipulative thief who exploits people as objects to satisfy their desires.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the findings and discussion, the researcher can conclude that there is one personality disorder in the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie, namely antisocial personality disorder. An antisocial personality disorder is a personality disorder in which a person is unable to distinguish right and wrong and ignores the rights and feelings of others. They show no guilt or remorse for their behavior. There are seven characteristics of ASPD and five variants of ASPD, according to Theodore Millon. There are five of the seven antisocial personality disorder traits in the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie that match the antisocial personality traits and one of the five ASPD variants that match the characteristics described in the main character in *The Bad Seeds* movie. The characteristics of ASPD that are reflected in the main characters of *The Bad Seed* movie, namely (1) swindler or lying, (2) manipulative, (3) aggressive and irritability, (4) impulsive, and (5) lack of empathy and or lack of remorse after what she did. The five ASPD variants that match the main character in *The Bad Seed* movie, namely the pure variant where the pure variant has

the desire to have something to dominate. Jealous of those who have accepted the good life, they are driven by an envious desire for vengeance to take what they think is theirs. Of the five characteristics of antisocial personality disorder found in Emma as the main character, the most data found were lack of empathy and no guilt. The main character shows a lot of lack of empathy, so she doesn't feel guilty even though her actions have hurt or harmed other people around her.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Australia, Canada, Mexico, Singapore, and United Kingdom States : Heinle & Heinle.
- Alex, Sobur. (2006). *Semiotika Komunikasi*. Bandung: Rosda
- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition Text Revision, DSM-IV-TR*. Arlington, VA : American Psychiatric Association
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Effendy, Onong Uchjana. (1986). *Dimensi -Dimensi Komunikasi*. Bandung : Rosdakarya.
- Endraswara, Suwardi. 2008. *Metode Penelitian Psikologi Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo.
- Hare, R. D. & Neumann, C. S. (2009). *Psychopathy: Assessment and forensic implications*. The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 54(12), 79 - 802.
- Houser, M. C. (2015). *A history of antisocial personality disorder in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental illness and treatment from a rehabilitation perspective*. Carbondale, Il, USA.
- Millon, T & Davis R, (2000), 'The Antisocial Personality', in *Personality Disorder in Modern Life*, John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, p.102-36
- Millon, Theodore. (2004). *Personality Disorders in Modern Life: Second Edition*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Minderop, Albertine. (2010). *Psikologi Sastra. Karya sastra, Metode, Teori, dan Contoh Kasus*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Nurdiyantoro, Burhan. (2007). *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada.
- Wellek, Rene dan Warren, Austin. (1989). *Teori Kesusasteraan*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia.
- Wibowo. (2006). *Kajian tentang Perilaku Pengguna Sistem Informasi dengan Pendekatan Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)*. Jakarta: Universitas Budi Luhur.