

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter lays the foundation for the present study, which explores the depiction of narcissism in Oscar Wilde's novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" through the lens of psychoanalytic, specifically narcissism theory. The chapter begins with an exploration of the intricate connection between literature and psychology.

1.1 Background of The Study

The intricate connection between literature and psychology is a captivating path for understanding the complexities of human behavior depicted in novels. As acclaimed psychologist and literary critic Jonathan Gottschall asserts, "Literature is a treasure trove of psychological insight, offering a rich discourse of human emotions and motivations that beg exploration through the lens of psychology" (Gottschall, 2012). Psychologist Lisa Zunshine, in her groundbreaking work "Why We Read Fiction," emphasizes the role of narrative in shaping readers' understanding of human psychology (Zunshine, 2006). Thus, psychology, being a study that analyzes human behavior, can be utilized to fully comprehend the characters in novels.

In the field of psychology, Sigmund Freud's theories and thoughts inspired the early development of fundamental theories, mainly in psychoanalysis. “Psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of medicine or psychology; it helps understand philosophy, culture, religion, and first and foremost literature. In developing his theory of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud has often related it to art in general and to literature in particular” (Hossain, 2017).

One of the significant branches of psychoanalytical study is narcissism (Freud, 1914; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971). Narcissism is a complex psychological construct that has been defined and explored by various experts in the field. Freud's pioneering works regarding narcissism placed the groundwork for understanding it as an ordinary developmental phase and as a pathological state when overly fixated (Freud, 1914). Later, Kernberg (1975) elaborated on the position of narcissism in personality disorders, particularly in the setting of borderline and narcissistic personality structures. Kohut (1971) further advanced the study by introducing the concept of self-psychology, emphasizing the developmental aspects and the influence of early relationships on the creation of a positive self-concept.

Kohut argues that narcissism arises from developmental deficits in early childhood, wherein caregivers fail to provide adequate empathy and mirroring, leading to the fragmentation of the self and the emergence of pathological narcissistic traits (Kohut, 1971). This theory posits that individuals with narcissistic tendencies exhibit a pervasive need for admiration, a lack of empathy,

and fragile self-esteem, often masking deep-seated feelings of insecurity and inadequacy

(Kohut, 1971). Kohut described narcissism as a developmental issue where the individual's needs for validation and empathy were not met in childhood, leading to a fragile self. He differentiated healthy narcissism that contributes to self-esteem and ambition, and pathological narcissism, which results in grandiosity and a lack of empathy (Kohut, 1971).

In the context of literary analysis, Kohut's narcissism theory provides invaluable insights into the motivations and behaviors of fictional characters, such as Dorian Gray from Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" which was published in 1890. It is a timeless work in Gothic literature that explores themes of aestheticism, moral corruption, and identity. The character of Dorian Gray is known for his moral depravity and the consequences of his pursuit of eternal youth and beauty (Wilde, 1890). Dorian Gray's narcissism is shown through his obsessive concern with his appearance and his lack of empathy for others. This is illustrated by his relationships with characters like Basil Hallward and Sibyl Vane, which are characterized by manipulation and disregard for their well-being (Wilde, 1890). Kohut also posits that narcissism results from deficiencies in early childhood experiences, particularly in the context of empathy and the development of the self (Kohut, 1971). Thus, this theory is instrumental in analyzing Dorian Gray's character, as it offers insights into the formation of his narcissistic personality and the role of his interpersonal relationships.

Several studies have been conducted on narcissism and psychoanalytic theory in novels or on psychoanalysis regarding "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Previous literature that used this novel as the corpus indicates that "under the influence of all the elements, Dorian experiences the psychic transformation and gradually ends up in self-destruction after alienating his self-identification. During the process of Dorian's transformation, the elements function as mirror images and are influential" (Zhang, 2016). This could also contribute to his narcissistic traits' alteration. In their research, Roisiah et al. (2021) argue that there are some traits that indicate narcissistic disorder in "The Girl on The Train" novel, "her behaviors, such as her big ego, over-self-confidence, exploitation of interpersonal relationships, being an arrogant woman, and deficient social conscience, clarify that Megan is a narcissist" (Roisiah et al., 2021). Gerber (2020) also argues that oedipal or electal complexes could influence the narcissistic traits in a character, "... in contrast to Freudian theory, which focuses on the role of the Oedipal Complex, modern psychoanalytic theory explores the turning of early preverbal aggression inward against the self, a process described by Spotnitz as the narcissistic defense. Both Spotnitz and Winnicott explore how failures in the early maternal environment, such as an emotionally absent mother, can lead to narcissistic self-hatred and the development of the False Self personality. The absence of the nurturing mother seems to have left Dick trapped in a state of narcissistic self-absorption and hopelessness hidden behind a mask of grandiosity and charm, the façade of the False Self" (Gerber, 2020).

"The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a timeless piece which addresses themes of aestheticism, moral corruption, and the duality of human nature—topics that remain relevant in contemporary discourse. Dorian Gray is also a prominent example of a narcissistic personality and provides a profound psychological portrait of its protagonist. The novel meticulously details Dorian's psychological transformation, from an innocent young man to a morally corrupt individual consumed by his vanity and hedonism. This psychological complexity makes it uniquely suited for an in-depth psychoanalytic study. Despite its age, this novel continues to influence modern literature, film, and popular culture. Its exploration of the consequences of a narcissistic lifestyle and the pursuit of eternal youth resonates in today's society, where such themes are increasingly prevalent. The novel's lasting impact is evidenced by numerous adaptations and references in various media, highlighting its enduring relevance (Baker, 2010).

Therefore, this thesis investigates the phenomenon of narcissism in the character of Dorian Gray from Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" using the theoretical frameworks of narcissism theory and self-psychology by Heinz Kohut. The primary aim is to analyze the narcissistic traits of Dorian Gray's shown in the novel and the underlying causes of Dorian Gray's narcissism, specifically his relations with his parents and peers that contribute to his narcissism.

Despite extensive analysis of prior studies, gaps remain in understanding how Dorian's relations with other characters, mainly his parents and peer's influence that contribute to his narcissism. Most of the previous studies on this topic and corpus only used rudimentary and Freudian psychoanalysis and did not

thoroughly examine the underlying causes of narcissism that link up with his relationship and interpersonal dynamic with his primary caregivers. Furthermore, those studies did not use Kohut's narcissism theory to analyze the novel's main character's traits. Therefore, this research aims to examine the underlying causes of Dorian Gray's narcissistic traits and the influence of his relationships' role on the development of his narcissism. Mainly Kohut's narcissism theory, Kohut's self-psychology, as well as other theories, will be applied in examining this novel.

It is hoped that the results of this study can be used as additional material for studies on the application of psychoanalytic theory to literature. This thesis is also expected to contribute knowledge about the study of psychoanalytic criticism of literature.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the elaboration above, the researcher will identify the problem which are in the research will be formulated as follows:

1. How are the narcissistic traits of Dorian Gray shown in the novel?
2. What are the underlying causes of Dorian Gray's Narcissism?

1.3 Scope and Limitation of The Study

The researcher focused this research by limiting the analysis to only Dorian Gray's psychological condition and attributes that contributes to his narcissism. In

doing so, the general aim of this study is to comprehend the narcissistic characteristics of the novel's main character as well as the causes and the role of his relationships on his psychological condition.

1.4 Objectives of The Study

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze how are the narcissistic traits of Dorian Gray shown in the novel?
3. To analyze the underlying psychological causes that influence Dorian Gray's Narcissism?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Two practical aspects were considered during the execution of this study. The significance of this research lies in its theoretical and practical applications. The goal of this research is to theoretically expand literature research, particularly those that deal with the psychoanalysis of the main character's psyche, especially with reference to narcissism and narcissistic disorder. In practice, this study attempts to put literary theories into practice, allowing the researcher to investigate the formulated objectives adequately. It will provide insight into how narcissism and narcissistic disorder is caused by various factors, how it affects the character, and how it can influence a person's traits as they work toward achieving their goals.

The outcome of this research would also become a reference and other data of future studies.

