



Borderline personality disorder in Alex Michaelides's *The Silent Patient*

Daniel Filbert

Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: Artsdanielf@gmail.com

Y. B. Agung Prasaja

Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: Agungprasaja@gmail.com

Abstract. This research aims to identify and analyses the symptoms, causes, and effects of Borderline Personality Disorder that appears in Alex Michaelides's *The Silent Patient*, especially in the two main characters of Theo Faber and Alicia Berenson. The writer uses the qualitative method and employs the psychological approach to analyses the data. There are nine symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder namely, extreme mood swings, shifting self-image, emptiness, paranoia and dissociation, unstable relationship, fear of abandonment, tantrums or uncontrolled anger, impulsivity, and suicide and self-harm. Meanwhile, the cause of Borderline Personality Disorder is divided into two, biological factors and environmental factors. Lastly, the effects of Borderline Personality Disorder are classified into four aspects namely, relationship, work or school, law, and physical health. The result of the study suggests that Theo Faber exhibit eight symptoms out of nine excluding tantrums or uncontrolled anger. Meanwhile, Alicia Berenson also exhibiting eight symptoms out of nine excluding fear of abandonment. The environmental factors that caused Borderline Personality Disorder to emerged in Theo Faber is his traumatic childhood of physical abuse by his father. Similarly, Alicia also suffers from traumatic childhood of verbal abuse by his father and aunt. Besides that, she also experiences a car accident and witnessing her mother's death, and she also experiencing sexual harassment by her husband's brother. Lastly, the effect of Borderline Personality Disorder found in Theo Faber are relationship, law, and physical health, meanwhile the effect of Borderline Personality Disorder in Alicia Berenson are relationship and law.

Keywords: Borderline, Personality, Disorder, Patient, Symptoms.

INTRODUCTION

Borderline Personality Disorder is a severe mental health disorder that can cause massive distress, and identified by a common pattern of unstable mood and interpersonal relationship, low self-image and apparent impulsivity that starts by early adulthood and can interfere with social and working function (Skodol et al., 2013). The term Borderline Personality Disorder was introduced by Adolf Stern for the first time in 1937. Stern uses the term "borderline" implying that his patients could not be diagnosed between psychosis or neurosis, but rather something in between, and exhibiting the worst symptoms after the analytical treatment (Paris, 2018). Therefore, the issue of Borderline Personality Disorder is often reflected in literary works as a representation of human life experience.

One of the pieces of literary works that touch on the issue of Borderline Personality Disorder is *The Silent Patient* (2019) by Alex Michaelides. This psychological thriller novel tells a story about Alicia Berenson, a thirty-nine years old famous painter from London that murders her own husband, Gabriel Berenson, an in-

demand fashion photographer. One night, Alicia shot Gabriel five times in the face after he returns home late from a photoshoot and then refuse to speak again. Theo Faber, a psychotherapist is applying for a job at The Grove, forensic Unit in North London six years after the incident. He is quite obsessed with helping Alicia to get her to speak again and learning the truth behind the murder of Gabriel, and unravel the mystery. Although Alicia refuses to speak, the story starts to unravel itself through Theo's point of view as he investigates further with those in Alicia's life and snippets from Alicia's journal. Theo's personal life are also presented in the narrative which helps to piece the puzzle together.

The writer of this research is interested in analyzing the Borderline Personality Disorder condition portrayed in the novel since it entices the writer to explore in detail about the phenomenon, experience, and anticipation toward the topic of mental health issue and hopefully led people to be more aware about the disorder. The indications of Borderline Personality Disorder in the novel are presented through the narratives of both characters' s childhood upbringing, actions, thoughts, and their relationships with others. The writer is also interested to expand the field of psychological study in literary works and provide materials for any future studies on the same subject.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Review

Literature and psychology have a strong connection with each other, both deals with human behaviour through their perception of the world and their mental process. Psychology can be used to clarify issues within a literary work, and literature can give perceptions to psychology through a deep literature study by applying various psychological approaches (Aras, 2015). The psychology of literature pertains to the exploration of writers as individuals, their creative processes, the psychological aspects depicted in literary works, and the impact on readers' psychology (Holland in Nurhadi, 2019). In addition, Santos et al, in *Psychology of Literature and Literature in Psychology* (2018) proposed five studies of psychology of literature study, there are; (1) Study of the author's psychology as a human being, (2) Psychological study of the author's creative process, (3) Study of psychological issues and the diagnoses applied in the literary works, (4) Study of the psychological perspective for the reception of literary works, and (5) The reception of the literary works and the response to the environment.

B. Borderline Personality Disorder

According to American Psychiatric Association (2013), Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental health disorder that is identified by a common pattern of unstable mood and interpersonal relationship, low self-image and apparent impulsivity that starts by early adulthood. Borderline Personality Disorder might be stem from traumatic childhood experience such as, abuse, and/or neglect. Furthermore, this traumatic experience can cause disturbances in the development of the personality and as the results, their way of thinking and their perception of the world can be distorted, maladaptive, and under-developed. These conditions can cause interruptions and interfere with daily routine of social and working function (Brune, 2016). Furthermore, there are several more aspects surrounding Borderline Personality Disorder like the symptoms, causes, and effects that can be used to identify the disorder.

C. The Symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder

American Psychiatric Association in DSM-V (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder Fifth Edition*) (2013). proposed nine diagnoses for Borderline

Personality Disorder. Individuals who meet at least five out of nine of these symptoms could be diagnosed with the disorder. The symptoms mentioned are described as follow:

1. Extreme Mood Swings and Mood Reactivity

Phases of anger, panic, or sorrow often interrupting the basic mood regulation in individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder and is difficult to be relieved and satisfied. This symptom also appeared as the result of the parents or the caregiver's emotional negligence during adolescent years (Skodol et al., 2013).

2. Shifting Self-Image

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often experience an unstable sense of self and what they believe in. This can result in anxiety, feeling uneasy and lack purpose or direction. This happens as a result of lack in meaningful relationship, nurturing, and supportive environment (Elliott & Smith, 2021).

3. Emptiness

Individual with Borderline Personality Disorder often feels hopelessness and constant fear in long term. They may experience uncomfortable feeling of hollow or emptiness (Cappucino, 2022).

4. Paranoia and Dissociation

As stated in the third symptoms, individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often feel like they do not even exist at all. During the time of extreme stress, these individuals often experience temporary paranoia and then dissociate lasting minutes to hours (Skodol et al., 2013).

5. Unstable Relationship

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often have trouble in their interpersonal relationship regarding their emotional regulation. These individuals are vulnerable to anxiety and distrust in their perception towards their loved-ones. Those with Borderline Personality Disorder are also struggling with anger and hostility, perceived rejection and poor communications in threatening conversations, and greater stress response with their lover (Lazarus et al., 2018)

6. Fear of Abandonment

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder have strong desire to be constantly noticed or accompanied by someone like their family, friends, or lovers and may struggle with unrealistic and uncontrollable fear of abandonment, whether it is realistic or imagined. These individuals have complex issue of separation, abandonment, loneliness, and clinginess (Gunderson et al., 2018).

7. Tantrums or Uncontrolled Anger

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often having difficulty in controlling their inappropriate tantrums. The tantrums are usually expressed in the form of sarcasm, bitterness, and verbal outburst. These tantrums are often expressed on to their loved-ones (caregivers or their lover) when they do not live up to the expectation of the individuals. This symptom is usually followed by a feeling of extreme guilt and feeling of being evil (Skodol et al., 2013).

8. Impulsivity

Individual with Borderline Personality Disorder often exhibits impulsive behaviour because of their inability to control their immediate desires and wants. These individuals are driven to do impulsive behaviour to fill the emptiness they feel inside, but the more they tried to satisfy their uncontrolled desires, the more their feeling of hollowness grow (Elliott & Smith, 2021)

9. Suicidal and self-harm

individuals might often show persistent suicidal behaviour in a form of threats, gesture, or self-mutilation behaviour (Paris, 2019) These behaviours are usually triggered by the inability to cope with a possible rejection, separation, and abandonment. Self-mutilation behaviour is also triggered by relieving and reaffirming the sense of being evil or bad (Skodol et al., 2013).

D. The Cause of Borderline Personality Disorder

Kreger et al (2022) proposed two major causes that contributes to the development of Borderline Personality Disorder in person's life which is biological factors and environmental factors. However, to determine the biological factor it require scientific attention that is not described in the data source. Therefore, the writer will only determine the cause of Borderline Personality Disorder from the environmental cause.

1. Environmental Factors

Many individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder report traumatic childhood experience of physical, sexual, and verbal abuse, physical and emotional negligence from caregivers, and separation as children (Leichsenring et al., 2011) Individuals often experienced negative family and relatives influence, failed parenting (real or perceived), dangerous or chaotic home environment, parents, and child conflict, and being raised in an invalidating environment. As a result of unable to process and cope with these childhood circumstances, Borderline Personality Disorder starts to emerge in individuals' life (Taravati & Kaklar, 2013)

E. The Effects of Borderline Personality Disorder

As stated in the previous section, Borderline Personality Disorder can be destructive and cause interfere with daily routine of social and working function in individual life. Four aspects of life that are impacted by Borderline Personality Disorder in individuals, are; (1) Relationship, (2) Law, (3) School or work, and (4) Physical health.

METHOD

The researcher will be using the qualitative method, which is often characterized as interpretative and naturalistic approach that concerned with exploring the interior of human life phenomena. Qualitative methods often related to words of image as data rather than numbers (Lewis & Nicholls, 2014). Therefore, qualitative method is suited for this study since the data presented in this study are taken from the novel are in the form of quotations. Moreover, Data source according to Blaxter et al (2010) must be examined for its authenticity, credibility, and accuracy. Thus, the data source in this study is based on *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. A psychological thriller novel published in 2019, the novel consists of 342 pages. The data collected are in the form of quotations from the novel which are relevant to the topic of Borderline Personality Disorder that will be discussed by the researcher.

Since all the assembled data are collected without any equipment, the instrument of this study will be the researcher himself as Yin (2016) would state that the "lens" of qualitative research heavily relies on the researcher acting as an instrument to collect and analyses the data as in field observation. Meanwhile, in collecting the data, the writer will be conducting some steps using the observation methods proposed by Lambert & Lambert (2012) that will be conducted, as follows; (1) Reading the primary subject, *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides repeatedly. (2) Identify and highlighting any relevant sentences and dialogues based on the topic of the study. (3) Writing down the relevant data and classifying it.

In analysing the data, the writer will conduct data analysis procedure by Yin (2016) which proposed five phases of data analyzing in qualitative research, which are; (1) compiling some relevant data based on *The Silent Patient* novel with the main topic of Borderline Personality Disorder. (2) disassembling the data source based on the writings of Borderline Personality Disorder such as symptoms, causes, and effects. (3) reassembling by organizing the data into a table form of sequence of events. (4) interpreting the data which will be arrayed in the form of description, and (5) concluding the research based on the results and the discussions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder

This section will identify and described any symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder portrayed by the main characters of *The Silent Patient* namely, Alicia Berenson, and Theo Faber. To identify these symptoms, the writer uses the nine diagnostic criteria of Borderline Personality Disorder which namely: extreme mood swings, shifting self-image, emptiness, paranoia and dissociation, unstable relationship, fear of abandonment, impulsivity, tantrums and uncontrolled anger, and suicidal and self-harm. Individuals must meet at least five out of nine of these criteria to be diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (Skodol et al., 2013).

1. Extreme Mood Swings and Mood Reactivity

The evidence of extreme mood swings can be identified in Theo Faber experience that suggest this symptom. The first evident happen during his first term at university. Theo described how his extreme feelings of fear immobilized him and prevent him from going out, socialize, and make any friends.

During my first term at university, that first cold winter, the voices got so bad, so paralyzing, they controlled me. Immobilized by fear, I was unable to go out, socialize, or make any friends. I might as well have never left home. It was hopeless. I was defeated, trapped. Backed into a corner. No way out. (Michaelides, 2019)

Based on many studies, individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often have negative emotions than other people. They may experience more anxiety, sadness, anger, and jealousy more because of their distorted, dim, and mistrustful view of the world (Elliott & Smith, 2021). This evidence explained Theo's overwhelming feelings of fear during his first term of University, as he just steps out of his house which filled with many negative memories of his father's abuse. Theo's perception of the world is rather distorted after experiencing many domestic abuses resulted in social anxiety that prevent him to socializing and make friends with other people.

Meanwhile, the evidence of extreme mood swings is also present in Alicia Berenson and could be identified through Alicia's own behaviour that suggest this symptom. The third evident was experienced by Alicia after she had just got back from the park and found Gabriel cleaning his gun that his father gave him. She explains how much the gun had upsets her and had begs Gabriel to get rid of it yet Gabriel didn't listen because the gun had a sentimental value to him. Alicia does not believe him and instead believe that there is other reason of him keeping the gun, both of them end up in a heated argument towards each other.

I had raised my voice, but he raised his louder, and before I knew it, we were yelling at each other. Maybe I was a bit out of control. But I was only reacting to him—there's an aggressive side to Gabriel, a part of him I only glimpse occasionally, and when I do, it scares me. For those brief moments it's like living with a stranger. And that's terrifying. (Michaelides, 2019)

Alicia describes how she was only reacting to Gabriel, yet she admitted that she had raised her voice and that she was a bit out of control. Alicia had experienced a sudden mood change after walking in the park and then getting upset when find Gabriel cleaning his gun, this happened because of Alicia's increased mood reactivity that drive her to rage and throwing violent fits.

2. **Shifting Self-Image**

The evidence of shifting self-image in Borderline Personality Disorder can be identified in Theo Faber's own experience. The evident can be observed during Alicia's first therapy session which came in the form of his intrusive thoughts. Theo felt extremely nervous when Alicia agreed to saw him after Yuri took her from the courtyard. Theo suddenly experienced his self-image shifting in the form of his father's voice telling him that he is incompetent, useless and a fraud, he then desperately tried to silence it.

So, she was coming. I tried to contain my nerves and prepare myself. I tried to silence the negative voice in my head—my father's voice—telling me I wasn't up to the job, I was useless, a fraud. Shut up, I thought, shut up, shut up— (Michaelides, 2019)

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often experience an unstable sense of self and what they believe in. this can resulted in anxiety, feeling uneasy and lack purpose or direction this happen as a result of lack in meaningful relationship, nurturing, and supportive environment (Elliott & Smith, 2021). Therefore, this evident suggest Theo's unstable senses of who he is, resulted in dramatic changes in his view of himself.

Similarly, the indication of shifting self-image can also be identified in Alicia Berenson through her thoughts and behaviour. The first evident of Alicia shifting self-image is when she tried to paint Gabriel depicting Jesus on a cross. Alicia notice something was wrong about her painting, she mainly points out about how she could not capture the sparkle in Gabriel's eyes and that the eyes remained dead. Alicia continues to doubt her skill and thought that she was pushing too hard.

But something was wrong. I don't know what—maybe I was pushing too hard. I just couldn't get the shape of his eyes right, nor the color. The first thing I ever noticed about Gabriel was the sparkle in his eyes—like a tiny diamond in each iris. But now for some reason I couldn't catch it. Maybe I'm just not skilled enough—or maybe Gabriel has something extra that can't be captured in paint. The eyes remained dead, lifeless. I could feel myself getting annoyed. (Michaelides, 2019)

Experiencing an unstable, sudden, and dramatic sense of self marked by a change of goals, and career is part of the symptom of shifting self-image (Skodol et al., 2013). Alicia experience sudden and dramatic change of sense of self indicated by her self-doubt in her painting skill when she was having difficulty finishing her painting which might affect

her career as an artist. Alicia further experiencing a lack of direction on her painting a felt annoyed at herself indicating lack of direction in her artwork.

3. **Emptiness**

The next symptom of Borderline Personality Disorder is emptiness that can be identified in Theo Faber through his experiences. The evident of emptiness is experienced by Theo Faber after he had caught his wife cheating with another man. Theo made a conclusion about his future and thought about how he would not survive the world without Kathrine and that he might return to the empty, solitary existence that he endured before.

Between the two of us, I had the most to lose, that was obvious. Kathy would survive—she was fond of saying she was tough as nails. She'd pick herself up, dust herself off, and forget all about me. But I wouldn't forget about her. How could I? Without Kathy, I'd return to that empty, solitary existence I had endured before. I'd never meet anyone like her again, never have that same connection or experience that depth of feeling for another human being. She was the love of my life—she was my life—and I wasn't ready to give her up. Not yet. Even though she had betrayed me, I still loved her. (Michaelides, 2019)

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often feeling hopelessness and constant fear in long term. They may experience uncomfortable feeling of hollow or emptiness (Cappucino, 2022). Each evidence suggests that Theo had been suffering from chronic feeling of emptiness and dissociation after years of enduring his father's abuse during childhood. He implied that Kathrine had pulled him out of the place of despair and dread.

The indication of emptiness was also experienced by Alicia Berenson through her behaviour. The first evident of emptiness in Alicia is happen when she killed her husband, Gabriel. Alicia made a conclusion that she would never feel safe and loved, she felt hopeless, all her dream shattered and leave nothing. She further implied that her father was right, that she does not deserve to live and that she was nothing.

The truth is Gabriel had my eyes, suddenly—and I had his. Somewhere along the way we had swapped places. I saw it now. I would never be safe. Never be loved. All my hopes, dashed—all my dreams, shattered—leaving nothing, nothing. My father was right—I didn't deserve to live. I was—nothing. That's what Gabriel did to me.
That's the truth. I didn't kill Gabriel. He killed me.
All I did was pull the trigger. (Michaelides, 2019)

Like Theo, this thought indicated Alicia's chronic feelings of emptiness as a result of years of enduring verbal abuse from her father. Gabriel was the one that save Alicia from the place of hopelessness and despair. Gabriel's affair has break Alicia and made her return to that place of nothingness, hence her impulses of murdering him.

4. **Paranoia and Dissociation**

The symptom of paranoia and dissociation can be observed through Theo Faber's thoughts and behaviour. The evident suggesting dissociation experienced by Theo happen during his counselling service with Ruth at University. Theo talked about his suicidal impulses and his painful childhood memories, his home, his parents. As he talks about

his distressing childhood, he simply felt nothing as if he was disconnected from his own emotions.

I found it—in the form of Ruth, a psychotherapist referred to me through the university counseling service. Ruth was white-haired and plump and had something grandmotherly about her. She had a sympathetic smile—a smile I wanted to believe in. She didn't say much at first. She just listened while I talked. I talked about my childhood, my home, my parents. As I talked, I found that no matter how distressing the details I related, I could feel nothing. I was disconnected from my emotions, like a hand severed from a wrist. I talked about painful memories and suicidal impulses—but couldn't feel them. (Michaelides, 2019)

Dissociation in individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often happens during times of intense stress. This experience might feel as if they have left their body and are looking at it from the outside like behind a glass or underwater (Cappucino, 2022). This is evident suggesting how Theo had dissociated himself from his emotions despite telling Ruth the details of his traumatic childhood and his suicidal impulses. Theo might feel as if he had detached from his body in order to tell Ruth about his childhood story, in a way he had dissociated himself in an attempt to ease the intense emotion that came up when he told his story.

Similarly, the symptom of paranoia and dissociation also experienced by Alicia Berenson. The evidence of paranoia was told by Dr Christian West, Alicia's private psychiatrist which emerged after Alicia's father had committed suicide during her adolescent years. During the confrontation between Dr West and Theo Faber, Dr West describes about the incident in Hampstead where Alicia had accused a blind old man of spying on her.

“She had a history—the same thing happened at the place they lived before Hampstead. That's why they had to move. She accused an elderly man across the street of spying on her. Made a huge fuss. Turned out the old guy was blind—couldn't even see her, let alone spy on her. She was always highly unstable, but it was her father's suicide that did it. She never recovered.” (Michaelides, 2019).

When individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder are experiencing paranoia, they tend to be delusional by interpreting other people's innocent remarks as something threatening (Elliott & Smith, 2021). In this case, Alicia is experiencing paranoia in the form of delusion as a result of her father's suicide. Alicia describes her feeling of being watched, being followed, and spied upon which was further confirmed by Dr West's explanation of Alicia accusing a blind old man of spying on her.

5. Unstable Relationship

The next symptom of Borderline Personality Disorder is an unstable relationship that is experienced by Theo Faber when he caught his wife cheating on him. Theo tried to silence his thoughts by focusing his attention on the ticking clock, but the intrusive thoughts in his head grew louder and would not be silenced. Theo thought to himself about how Kathrine was bound to be unfaithful and that he was worthless, ugly, nothing

and that he will never be good enough for her. He continues to think that he does not deserve Kathy, he does not deserve anything.

Between the two of us, I had the most to lose, that was obvious. Kathy would survive—she was fond of saying she was tough as nails. She'd pick herself up, dust herself off, and forget all about me. But I wouldn't forget about her. How could I? Without Kathy, I'd return to that empty, solitary existence I had endured before. I'd never meet anyone like her again, never have that same connection or experience that depth of feeling for another human being. She was the love of my life—she was my life—and I wasn't ready to give her up. Not yet. Even though she had betrayed me, I still loved her. (Michaelides, 2019).

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder are vulnerable to anxiety and distrust in their perception towards their loved-ones (Skodol et al., 2013). In this case, Theo's opinion about Kathrine had changed swiftly that he immediately think that Kathrine is bound to be unfaithful. Theo had experienced a black and white thinking towards Kathrine instead of seeing her to have qualities and weaknesses.

Similarly, the symptom of unstable relationship can be identified through Alicia Berenson thoughts and behaviour. The evident happened to Alicia after she found Gabriel cleaning his gun that his father gave him. She described in her diary how she hates cause Gabriel pain, seeing him do upset and yet sometimes, she desperately wants to hurt him.

Gabriel said it was my fault we argued. I suppose it was. I hated seeing him so upset, looking at me with hurt eyes. I hate causing him pain—and yet sometimes I desperately want to hurt him, and I don't know why. (Michaelides, 2019).

Both end up in a heated argument towards each other about the gun and Alicia describes how she was only reacting to Gabriel, yet she admitted that she had raised her voice and that she was a bit out of control. In the morning, they both resolve their problem through sex and made up, she further implied that it is easier for them to resolve all their problems when they are half-naked and half asleep. When all defences and bullshit justifications are discarded.

This morning we had sex and made up. We always seem to resolve our problems in bed. It's easier, somehow—when you're naked and half-asleep under the covers—to whisper, "I'm sorry," and mean it. All defenses and bullshit justifications are discarded, lying in a heap on the floor with our clothes (Michaelides, 2019).

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often exhibiting intense and unstable pattern of relationship that made them switch from idealizing their partner of caregivers to devaluing them (Skodol et al., 2013). This evident suggest Alicia's intense relationship with her husband Gabriel Berenson. A switch from devaluing their relationship from their fight about Gabriel's gun, to idealization from their forgiveness in the next morning proved Alicia's dramatic shift view of Gabriel.

6. Fear of Abandonment

The symptom of fear of abandonment experienced by Theo Faber and his relationship with Kathrine. The evident was experienced by Theo Faber after finding out Kathrine's affair. Theo described that he would never find someone like Kathy that have the same connection or experience. He explains how Theo still love Kathy and even if she betrayed him, he is not ready to give her up.

Between the two of us, I had the most to lose, that was obvious. Kathy would survive—she was fond of saying she was tough as nails. She'd pick herself up, dust herself off, and forget all about me. But I wouldn't forget about her. How could I? Without Kathy, I'd return to that empty, solitary existence I had endured before. I'd never meet anyone like her again, never have that same connection or experience that depth of feeling for another human being. She was the love of my life—she was my life—and I wasn't ready to give her up. Not yet. Even though she had betrayed me, I still loved her. (Michaelides, 2019)

When faced with separation, individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often attempting to prevent abandonment by behaving in a fearful and anxious manner (Cappucino, 2022). This evident suggests how Kathrine's affair triggered Theo's fear of abandonment through his frantic thoughts. When Theo was presented with a potential separation, Theo was too scared and anxious to give her up and choose to stay with her and pretend that he never caught her cheating.

7. Tantrums or Uncontrolled Anger

The evidence of tantrums and uncontrolled anger can be identified through Alicia Berenson's behavior that suggest this symptom. The evident was experienced by Alicia after she had just got back from the park and found Gabriel cleaning his gun that his father gave him. She explains how much the gun had upsets her and had begs Gabriel to get rid of it yet Gabriel didn't listen because the gun had a sentimental value to him. Alicia does not believe him and instead believe that there is other reason of him keeping the gun and both of them end up in a heated argument towards each other. Alicia describes how she was only reacting to Gabriel, yet she admitted that she had raised her voice and that she was a bit out of control.

I had raised my voice, but he raised his louder, and before I knew it, we were yelling at each other. Maybe I was a bit out of control. But I was only reacting to him—there's an aggressive side to Gabriel, a part of him I only glimpse occasionally, and when I do, it scares me. For those brief moments it's like living with a stranger. And that's terrifying. (Michaelides, 2019)

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often having difficulty controlling their tantrums which usually express in the form of verbal outburst. These tantrums often expressed on to their loved ones if they do not live up to their expectations followed by the feeling of extreme guilt after (Skodol et al., 2013). In this case, Alicia had experienced tantrums that drives her to have a verbal outburst to Gabriel. This tantrum happens because Gabriel does not live up to her expectation of getting rid of the gun that his father gave him. In this case, it can be concluded that Alicia Berenson had suffer from uncontrolled anger.

8. Impulsivity

The second evident of impulsivity in a form of substance abuse can be observed through Theo's behavior of smoking marijuana. After a long day at work Theo find out that Kathrine was out and he impulsively took the jar of weed that he hides from her and started rolling a joint

I took the jar of weed from its hiding place and started rolling a joint.
(Michaelides, 2019)

Marijuana is one of the common substances that people with Borderline Personality Disorder abuses in attempt to either ease their uncontrolled emotions, or tried to fill in their feeling of emptiness inside (Elliott & Smith, 2021) In this case, Theo tried to ease his overwhelming feelings of fear of socializing with other people therefore, in order to fit in the party and pleased other people, he impulsively accepts the marijuana after smelling it and knowing well that the substance is highly addictive.

The symptom of impulsivity can also be found in Alicia Berenson experiences which indicate a lot of aggressive behavior. The evident of Alicia's impulsivity can be observed through her violent behavior towards Theo Faber during her second therapy session. After sat in silence for fifty minutes, Theo decided to end the session by stating that he wants to help Alicia to see clearly and that she need to believe him. Alicia glared at Theo cynically and as he gathers his thoughts, she leaped from her chair and attack him. Theo described how Alicia had her hands outstretch like a claw and threw herself towards him and both fell on the floor.

Before I could finish the thought, Alicia leaped from the chair. She threw herself toward me, hands outstretched like claws. I had no time to move or get out the way. She landed on top of me, knocking me off-balance. We fell to the floor. The back of my head hit the wall with a thud. She bashed my head against the wall again and again, and started scratching, slapping, clawing—it took all my strength to throw her off. (Michaelides, 2019)

This aggression towards Theo suggests Alicia's inability to control her anger hence, impulsively attack Theo during her therapy session. Alicia does not consider the immediate consequences of her actions which she ended up restrained, drugged up and locked up by the Grove's staff.

9. Suicidal and Self-Harm

The evidence of suicidal and self-harm can be identified in Theo Faber experience that suggest this symptom. The evident of suicidal happen during his first term at university. Theo described how his extreme feelings of fear immobilized him, made him felt hopeless, defeated, and trapped and prevent him from going out, socialize, and make any friends. Theo attempt to commit suicide by swallowing packets upon packets of paracetamol that he had bought from chemist to chemist buying a few packets at a time.

I went from chemist to chemist buying packets of paracetamol. I bought only a few packets at a time to avoid arousing suspicion—but I needn't have worried. No one paid me the least attention; I was clearly as invisible as I felt. (Michaelides, 2019)

Threaten or attempting to commit suicide is quite common for individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder (Skodol et al., 2013). This evident suggest Theo's attempt to commit suicide by ingesting a lot of paracetamols pills. Theo is attempting to commit suicide because he thinks it's the only way to escape his overwhelming feelings of fear that immobilize him, made him feel hopeless, defeated, and trapped.

Similarly, the symptom of Suicidal and self-harm also experienced by Alicia Berenson through her action. The evident of suicidal occur after Alicia murdered her own husband, Gabriel Berenson. Theo described how the police had found and a knife next to Alicia's feet and blood everywhere. An officer that that grabbed her arm found deep fresh cuts across her veins in her wrist.

Blood was everywhere—splashed on the walls, running in dark rivulets along the floor, along the grain of the wooden floorboards. The officers assumed it was Gabriel's blood. But there was too much of it. And then something glinted in the torchlight—a knife was on the floor by Alicia's feet. Another beam of light revealed the blood splattered on Alicia's white dress. An officer grabbed her arms and held them up to the light. There were deep cuts across the veins in her wrists—fresh cuts, bleeding hard. (Michaelides, 2019)

Later when Theo was rummaging Alicia's file, it is revealed that the first time Alicia was admitted to the Grove, she tried to self-harmed with whatever she could get her hands on and attempting to suicide by cut her wrist twice. This resulted in two on one observation by the staff for the first six months

The file revealed little. When she was first admitted, Alicia slashed her wrists twice and self-harmed with whatever she could get her hands on. She was kept on two-on-one observation for the first six months—meaning two nurses watched over her at all times—which was eventually relaxed to one-on-one. Alicia made no effort to interact with patients or staff, remaining withdrawn and isolated and for the most part, the other patients had left her alone. If people don't reply when you speak to them and never initiate conversation, you soon forget they're there. Alicia had quickly melted into the background, becoming invisible. (Michaelides, 2019)

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder use cutting as a common method to self-harm. This behavior could be done as an attempt to give themselves the punishment that they feel like they deserve (Elliott & Smith, 2021). This evident not only reveal Alicia's suicidal impulses but as well as her self-harm tendencies. In order to cope with her husband's death Alicia harming herself in attempt to give her punishment that she thought she deserve after murdering her husband.

B. Causes of Borderline Personality Disorder

This section will identify and described any causes of Borderline Personality Disorder portrayed by the main characters of The Silent Patient, Alicia Berenson, and Theo Faber. The cause of Borderline Personality Disorder is divided into two namely biological factors and environmental factors. However, to determine the biological factor it require scientific attention that is not described in the data source. Therefore, the writer will only determine the cause of Borderline Personality Disorder from the environmental

cause. To present the data of this section, the writer will divide and classify the symptoms for each character.

1. **The Cause of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo Faber**

Environmental factor of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo Faber came in the form of traumatic childhood experiences. Theo described how it was his abusive father that often having arbitrary rages that might turn into potential minefield. He remembered how the house would shake as his father shouted, chasing him upstairs into his room and he would hide under the blanket. But he would grab him and dragged him out of the blanket and beat him with a belt. Theo would curl up on the floor like a rag doll discarded by an angry toddler.

My father's unpredictable and arbitrary rages made any situation, no matter how benign, into a potential minefield. An innocuous remark or a dissenting voice would trigger his anger and set off a series of explosions from which there was no refuge. The house shook as he shouted, chasing me upstairs into my room. I'd dive and slide under the bed, against the wall. I'd breathe in the feathery air, praying the bricks would swallow me up and I would disappear. But his hand would grab hold of me, drag me out to meet my fate. The belt would be pulled off and whistle in the air before it struck, each successive blow knocking me sideways, burning my flesh. Then the whipping would be over, as abruptly as it had begun. I'd be tossed to the floor, landing in a crumpled heap. A rag doll discarded by an angry toddler. (Michaelides, 2019)

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder often experienced being raised in dangerous, chaotic, and invalidating home environment (Taravati & Kaklar, 2013). In this case, Theo experienced traumatic home environment during his childhood as a result of his father's verbal and physical abuse. he would recall that his father would have a rage over trivial matters that made him as if he walked on an egg shell, his father is also went violent and would physically abuse him using belt. Theo also suffering from an invalidating home environment as his father would be scream at him that he was shameful, worthless, and a failure by his father. This evident suggest the result of his inability to process and cope with these childhood circumstances and cause Borderline Personality Disorder to emerge in Theo's life.

2. **The Cause of Borderline Personality Disorder in Alicia Berenson**

The environmental factors that caused Borderline Personality Disorder to emerge in Alicia Berenson's life is the traumatic childhood events that she experience. The first evident of Alicia's childhood trauma is witnessing her mother's death in a traumatic car accident. in Alicia's diary, she describes her confusion about why was she strapped in the passenger seat and then sped the car towards the redbrick wall by her mother.

Why she strapped me into the passenger seat of her yellow mini and sped us toward that redbrick wall? I always liked that car, its cheerful canary yellow. The same yellow as in my paint box. Now I hate that color—every time I use it, I think of death. (Michaelides, 2019)

Alicia describes further about how she used to think that the accident was her mother's suicide, but now she thinks it was an attempt murder, because she was in the car too.

Sometimes Alicia thinks that she was the intended victim that her mother wants to kill, but never know why would she do that. Traumatic childhood experience is a common report for individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder (Leichsenring et al., 2011). In this case, Alicia had experienced a traumatic car accident that is also killed her mother. Alicia explained how her mother strapped her in the passenger seat of their mini and sped them up into a redbrick wall. Alicia had survived the accident but her mother does not. Therefore this traumatic event might trigger Borderline Personality Disorder to emerged later in her life.

C. Effects of Borderline Personality Disorder

This section will identify and described any effects of Borderline Personality Disorder portrayed by the main characters of Alicia Berenson, and Theo Faber in *The Silent Patient*. To identify the effects, the writer will be looking at it from the aspects of relationship, work or school, law, and physical health.

1. The Effects of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo Faber

The writer identified three out of four effects of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo Faber mainly affecting his relationship, law, and physical health. The effect of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo's relationship with his wife emerges when he caught Kathrine having an affair with another man. The evident shows Theo shifting his opinions about Kathrine into devaluing their relationship. After Theo found out about Kathrine's affair, he thought to himself about how Kathrine was bound to be unfaithful and that he was worthless, ugly, nothing and that he will never be good enough for her. He continues to think that he doesn't deserve Kathy, he does not deserve anything.

I became conscious of the clock ticking. It seemed louder now somehow. I tried to focus on it and anchor my spinning thoughts: tick, tick, tick—but the chorus of voices in my head grew louder and wouldn't be silenced. She was bound to be unfaithful, I thought, this had to happen, it was inevitable—I was never good enough for her, I was useless, ugly, worthless, nothing—she was bound to tire of me eventually—I didn't deserve her, I didn't deserve anything—it went on and on, one horrible thought after another punching me. (Michaelides, 2019)

This suggests Theo's negative assumption about Kathrine and how his view of himself had shifted negatively. Theo had experienced a black and white thinking towards Kathrine instead of seeing her to have qualities and weaknesses. This can lead to a bigger mistrust towards Kathrine therefore, affecting their relationship.

The next effect of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo Faber is his how his behavior affecting the law. The evident of Theo's Borderline Personality Disorder effect in law can be identified when he attempted to kill Alicia Berenson by overdosing. The next day after Alicia's confession, Theo was about to see her again until he saw Yuri and was informed that Alicia was taken to the extensive care ward after found overdose in her room. Theo decided to visit and observe her, he found a tiny hypodermic needle hole left along her vein suggesting that she was injected with a massive dose of morphine. Later in her diary, Alicia explained that Theo silently came back to her room minutes after the confession and did not say anything. instead, he grabbed her wrist and stuck the needle on her vein.

That's why he came back a few minutes ago. He didn't say anything this time. No more words. He grabbed my wrist and stuck a needle in my vein. I didn't struggle. I didn't fight back. I let him do it. I deserve it—I deserve this punishment. I am guilty—but so is he. That's why I'm writing this—so he won't get away with it. So he will be punished. (Michaelides, 2019)

Theo was aware that Alicia recognized him when she made a false confession about the murder of her husband, he stated that he was forced to silence. In this case, Theo's impulsivity had escalated and he tried to silence Alicia by attempting to murder her which could get him in more big trouble when authority found out. The act of attempting murder is illegal in most countries and that could result in jail time and a massive fine for the perpetrator.

The next effect of Borderline Personality Disorder in Theo Faber is how his behavior affecting his physical health. The first evident of his physical health affected by his Borderline Personality Disorder happened during his first term in university. Theo described how his extreme feelings of fear immobilized him and prevent him from going out, socialize, and make any friends.

During my first term at university, that first cold winter, the voices got so bad, so paralyzing, they controlled me. Immobilized by fear, I was unable to go out, socialize, or make any friends. I might as well have never left home. It was hopeless. I was defeated, trapped. Backed into a corner. No way out. (Michaelides, 2019)

This evident suggest Theo's extreme fear had paralyzed his whole body and was affecting his physical health preventing him from socializing and going out.

2. **The Effects of Borderline Personality Disorder in Alicia Berenson**

The effect of Borderline Personality Disorder that intervene in Alicia Berenson's life can be identified two out of four effects, mainly the effect on her relationship and law. The evident of her Borderline Personality Disorder affecting her relationship happened after she had just got back from the park and found Gabriel cleaning his gun that his father gave him. She explains how much the gun had upsets her and had begs Gabriel to get rid of it yet Gabriel did not listen because the gun had a sentimental value to him. Alicia further implied that both end up in a heated argument towards each other. Alicia describes how she was only reacting to Gabriel, yet she admitted that she had raised her voice and that she was a bit out of control

I had raised my voice, but he raised his louder, and before I knew it, we were yelling at each other. Maybe I was a bit out of control. But I was only reacting to him—there's an aggressive side to Gabriel, a part of him I only glimpse occasionally, and when I do, it scares me. For those brief moments it's like living with a stranger. And that's terrifying. (Michaelides, 2019)

Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder have issues with their mood and anger that can affect their relationship with their loved ones. In this case, Alicia extreme mood swings had affected how she react when Gabriel is cleaning his gun that resulted in a fight, therefore affecting their relationship.

The next effect of Borderline Personality Disorder in Alicia Berenson is how her behaviour affecting the law. The first evident of his Borderline Personality Disorder can affect law is when Alicia Berenson impulsively killed her husband, Gabriel Berenson. In her diary, Alicia admits that she had killed Gabriel. But in her defense, somewhere along the way she felt like they had swapped places and that Gabriel is the one that killed her, all she did was pull the trigger.

The truth is Gabriel had my eyes, suddenly—and I had his. Somewhere along the way we had swapped places. I saw it now. I would never be safe. Never be loved. All my hopes, dashed—all my dreams, shattered—leaving nothing, nothing. My father was right—I didn't deserve to live. I was—nothing. That's what Gabriel did to me.
That's the truth. I didn't kill Gabriel. He killed me.
All I did was pull the trigger. (Michaelides, 2019)

This event suggests Alicia's impulses and inability to control her anger and unprocessed trauma that she has, had led her to get in trouble in the eye of law. The act of murder is illegal in most country and that could result in jail time and a massive fine for the perpetrator.

CONCLUSION

After conducting data analysis in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the indications of Borderline Personality Disorder occur in *The Silent Patient* especially within the two main characters of Theo Faber, and Alicia Berenson. The analysis is divided into three parts namely, the symptoms, the cause, and the effect of Borderline Personality Disorder based on the review of related literature. The writer found eight out of nine Borderline Personality Disorder symptoms in Theo Faber in the form of his behavior, thoughts, and observation from other people around him namely, extreme mood swings, shifting self-image, emptiness, dissociation and paranoia, unstable relationship, fear of abandonment, impulsivity, and suicidal and self-harm. Furthermore, the writer also found eight out of nine Borderline Personality Disorder symptoms in Alicia Berenson in the form of her behavior, thoughts, and observation from other people around her namely, extreme mood swings, shifting self-image, emptiness, dissociation and paranoia, unstable relationship, tantrums or uncontrolled anger, impulsivity, and suicidal and self-harm.

The cause of Borderline Personality Disorder is divided into two namely biological factors and environmental factors. However, because of the scientific nature of biological factors, the writer can only analyses from the environmental factor based on the novel. The cause of Borderline Personality Disorder for Theo Faber stems from his traumatic childhood of physical abuse that he had to endure from his abusive father which causing him to have intense fear of abandonment and unstable relationship. Similarly, Alicia Berenson's environmental factors also originated from her traumatic childhood of witnessing her mother's death in a car crash and dealing with verbal abuse from her father and aunt which leads her to have paranoia, uncontrolled anger, and patterns of mood

swings. After analyzing about the cause of Borderline Personality Disorder, the writer identify about the effects found in both of the characters.

There are four aspects in the effects of Borderline Personality Disorder namely relationship, work or school, law, and physical health. The effect that experienced by Theo Faber are relationship, Law, and physical health. The aspect of relationship is told through his unstable relationship with Kathrine after he found out about her affair. The aspect of law that are affected occur when Theo is attempting to murder Alicia by injecting her with morphine when she is asleep, and holding Alicia and Gabriel hostage when he tried to confront Gabriel about his affair with Kathrine. The aspects of physical health that are affected is in the form of Theo's paralyzing body that is cause by his extreme feelings of fear when he was a university student during his first-term. Furthermore, the effect that are experienced by Alicia Berenson are Relationship and Law. The aspect of relationship can be observed through Alicia's unstable and intense relationship with Gabriel Berenson when she found Gabriel cleaning his gun. The aspect of Law occurs when Alicia murder Gabriel Berenson after Theo revealed his affair with Kathrine.

REFERENCES

- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2010). How to Research. In *McGraw-Hill Education* (4th ed., Issue January). Open University Press.
- Cappucino, R. (2022). *Talking About BPD A Stigma-Free Guide to Living a Calmer, Happier Life with Borderline Personality Disorder*.
- Elliott, C. H., & Smith, L. L. (2021). *Borderline Personality Disorder for Dummies* (T. Boggier, T. Gallan, & S. Shaik, Eds.; 2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Gunderson, J. G., Herpertz, S. C., Skodol, A. E., Torgersen, S., & Zanarini, M. C. (2018). Borderline personality disorder. *NATURE REVIEWS DISEASE PRIMERS*, 4(18029), 78. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrdp.2018.29>
- Kreger, R., Adamec, C., & S., L. D. (2022). *Stop Walking on Eggshells for Parents: How to help Your Child (of Any Age) with Borderline Personality Disorder without Losing Yourself*. New Harbringer.
- Lambert, V. a., & Lambert, C. E. (2012). Qualitative Descriptive Research: An Acceptable Design. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(4), 255–256.
<http://antispam.kmutt.ac.th/index.php/PRIJNR/article/download/5805/5064>
- Lazarus, S. A., Scott, L. N., Beeney, J. E., & Wright, A. G. C. (2018). Borderline personality disorder symptoms and affective responding to perceptions of rejection and acceptance from romantic versus nonromantic partners. *Personality*

Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment, 9(3), 197–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

- Leichsenring, F., Leibing, E., Kruse, J., New, A. S., & Leweke, F. (2011). Borderline Personality Disorder. *Lancet*, 1(377), 74–84. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(10\)61422-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61422-5) Full text linksCite
- Lewis, J., & Nicholls, C. M. (2014). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (J. B. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. M. Nicholls, & R. Ormston, Eds.; 2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Michaelides, A. (2019). *The Silent Patient*. Orion Fiction.
- Nurhadi, M. (2019). TRAUMATIC NEUROSIS OF WAR IN COLLIN’S MOCKINGJAY. *Anaphora : Journal of Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 49-55. <https://doi.org/10.30996/anaphora.v2i1.2741>
- Paris, J. (2018). *Handbook of Personality Disorder: Theory, Research, and Treatment* (W. J. Livesley & R. Larstone, Eds.). The Guilford Press.
- Paris, J. (2019). Suicidality in borderline personality disorder. *Medicina*, 55(223), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina55060223>
- Skodol, A. E., Oldham, H. M., Krueger, R. F., Alarcon, R. D., Bell, C. C., Bender, D. S., Clark, L. A., Livesley, W. J., Morey, L. C., Siever, L. J., & Verheul, R. (2013). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders fifth Edition. In *American Psychiatric Association* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Taravati, S., & Kaklar, A. E. (2013a). *Borderline personality disorder (BPD): An overview General Physician and Researcher in Psychological Science , Sirjan , Iran*. 3(6), 326–330.
- Taravati, S., & Kaklar, E. (2013b). *Borderline personality disorder (BPD): An overview. European Journal of Experimental Biology*, 3(6), 326–330.
- Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.