



**MAIN CHARACTER'S POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER  
IN THE MOVIE OF *MANCHESTER BY THE SEA***

**THESIS**

*Submitted to fulfill a Partial of S1 Degree in the Department of English Faculty of  
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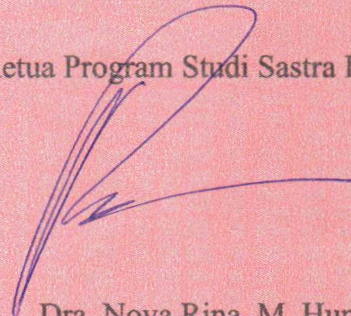
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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis I submitted to fulfil a requirement for a S1 degree in the English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. This thesis is entirely mine and there are no works or opinions written or published by other people except as reference or quotations by following the usual scientific writing procedures.

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# MAIN CHARACTER'S POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN THE MOVIE OF *MANCHESTER BY THE SEA*

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## ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the main character's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the film *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), directed by Kenneth Lonergan. The study focuses on identifying the PTSD symptoms experienced by Lee Chandler, the protagonist, and examining his personality traits before and after the traumatic incident. The analysis is carried out using the framework of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision* (DSM-V TR, 2022) for PTSD and the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality by McCrae and Costa. This study applies a descriptive qualitative method. The primary data were collected from the film's dialogues, scenes, and script, while the secondary data were obtained from books, journals, and online sources that discuss PTSD and personality theories. The collected data were analyzed by matching Lee Chandler's behaviors and expressions in the film with the PTSD diagnostic criteria and personality traits described in the theoretical framework. The findings show that Lee Chandler fulfills several PTSD diagnostic criteria in DSM-V TR, including intrusive memories, avoidance behaviors, negative changes in cognition and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity. These symptoms are portrayed through his flashbacks, nightmares, emotional detachment, anger outbursts, and social withdrawal. The study also finds that Lee's personality traits undergo significant changes after the trauma. Before the incident, he is described as more open, conscientious, and socially connected. However, after the traumatic loss of his children, his personality shifts to higher levels of neuroticism, reduced openness, lower extraversion, and diminished agreeableness. This research is significant because it demonstrates how psychological theories can be applied in literary analysis, particularly in understanding film characters. It highlights the impact of trauma on human personality and behavior, offering insights that may help readers and students recognize the representation of PTSD in literature and film. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the interdisciplinary link between psychology and literature, showing how films can reflect real psychological conditions and contribute to greater awareness of mental health issues.

**Keywords:** *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, DSM-V TR, Five-Factor Model, Psychology of Literature, Manchester by the Sea*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of The Study**

Literature is distinguished by imaginative and creative expression, utilizing language in new ways. It has artistic significance because of its form and organization, as well as its exploration of complex issues that provide insight into the human experience (Wellek and Warren 21). According to Warren and Wellek, literature often incorporates elements of fiction to convey deeper meaning. Literature is accessible to multiple interpretations and analysis from a variety of perspectives. Literature reflects and is influenced by its cultural and historical background, shedding light on contemporary challenges and values. Literary works that best fulfill these requirements include drama, poetry, and novels (22).

Wellek and Warren argue that literature offers readers satisfaction beyond standard characterizations. By critically analyzing literary works, readers can gain insights beyond the text itself (Wellek and Warren 15). Literature has long been a source of creative inspiration for humans. The presence of literature in human society is evident. Warren and Wellek state that literature serves different purposes for different readers. Literature provides satisfaction by expressing views similar to their own and provides a sense of release (Wellek and Warren 31).

According to Joseph and Dennis, theater, literature, music, painting, and sculpture, like film, are seen as powerful and distinct genres of art. Movies are literary works that express art. Many movies can be studied in literary studies, especially those that deal with psychological issues. Literary critics find studying and evaluating movies an interesting experience. As a relatively new form of literature, movies have similarities with prose, drama, and poetry (Joseph and Dennis 41). In addition, Joseph



and Dennis adds “Like poetry in particular, film communicates through imagery, metaphor, and symbol” (41). Film, like theater, communicates in both visual and verbal ways: verbally through words and visually through actions and gestures. Finally, movies, like novels, compress and expand space and time, thus allowing the viewer to freely explore their vast boundaries (Joseph and Dennis 3).

Movies often reflect psychological issues on their characters, which can contribute to extensive research on the topic. Miller and Stam write that "Film theorists, critics, and commentators have been drawn to psychoanalytic ideas to explain film because film seems to exhibit a fundamental kinship with the irrational that psychoanalysis seeks to explain" (Miller and Stam 123). Movies and psychology are inseparable. According to Shankar Pandey, literature has a long history of transporting readers to imaginary locations, evoking intense emotions, and encouraging contemplation (Shankar Pandey 96). Psychology as a field has investigated the complexities of human behavior, emotions, and mental processes, yielding a vast amount of information about how the human mind works (92). Literature, including movies and TV shows, can provide insights into human behavior, emotions, and mental processes.

The true meaning of psychology remains difficult to comprehend, particularly for beginners. Strong, states that, “the best definition of psychology is the science of behaviour.” McLeod defines psychology as the scientific study of thought and behavior. McLeod explains that psychology encompasses various sub-fields of study, including human development, sports, health, clinical, social behavior, and cognition (McLeod 26).

One of the topics of discussion that is included in the realm of psychology is trauma. Trauma is a response to a terrible event that happened to someone who is



emotional (DSM-5 TR 296). If a person cannot overcome the acute feelings of the events they have gone through, there is a possibility that they will experience trauma.

The definition of trauma in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5 Text Revision (DSM-5 TR) states that trauma must involve a person in an incident that could cause actual death, threat, or serious injury (APA, “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder: Fifth Edition Text Revision” 256). Examples of trauma that have a major impact on the lives of those who experience them usually include trauma resulting from sexual abuse, murder, natural disasters, and others. Victims will not easily forget these traumatic events; some traumas haunt them for years. Not all traumas can be categorized as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Trauma diagnosis can be seen through the criteria and symptoms that exist to be declared as PTSD (271).

According to DSM-5, PTSD is an anxiety disorder caused by traumatic events experienced or witnessed by the sufferer (302). These traumatic events can include sexual violence, accidents, and natural disasters. The presence or absence of PTSD in a person can be determined by several factors, such as the duration and intensity of the trauma (302). Both the duration and intensity of the trauma are important risk factors. Other factors include the level of reaction to the event, as well as the loss or injury experienced by a loved one or someone close to the person (305).

Personality is a trait or combination of traits that makes a person unique (Weinberg and Gould 30). The concept of personality encompasses a person's core characteristics and behaviors that reflect their adaptation to the world, including core values, personal interests (such as hobbies, needs, or preferences), self-concept, strengths such as traits, and so on. Although various theories explain how a person develops their personality, they generally agree that personality is a key factor in determining behavior. An individual is influenced by various characteristics that reflect



the way they think, feel, and act. This includes not only visible behavior, but also internal processes such as attitudes, emotions, and mindsets. Personality is most clearly seen in social interactions, where people express their unique personalities and characteristics when interacting with others. Although there is a diversity of theoretical approaches, all agree that personality plays a key role in shaping behavior. Personality becomes the perspective through which people interpret and respond to the world around them, influencing their choices, behaviors, and interactions with others (36).

The Big Five Personality Theory is a personality theory developed by McCrae and Costa and is often used in character creation and development. This theory consists of extroversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Personality traits are not fixed and unchanging; they have the potential to develop and change over time. Through various life experiences, facing challenges, and gaining knowledge, individuals can change their personalities. These changes affect their perception of the world, interactions with others, and overall navigation through life. Personality is closely related to identity, influencing individual uniqueness and shaping decision-making and behavior. Witnessing the dynamic nature of personality and its profound influence on life is truly fascinating (McCrae and Costa 64-67).

Based on the reasons presented above, the writer concludes that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a complex illness that affects a person after he or she has witnessed a frightening and horrifying event that happened to him or her or someone else. This condition will change the life of the sufferer because the symptoms continue to interfere with their routine activities. PTSD is difficult to treat, but not impossible to cure. The main support comes from the sufferer's family and friends.

"Manchester by the Sea," directed by Kenneth Lonergan, is a poignant exploration of grief, trauma, and the struggle for emotional healing, seen through the



lens of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). The film centres on Lee Chandler, a loner and emotionally scarred man who works as a janitor in Quincy, Massachusetts. Lee's life takes a drastic turn when he receives news that his older brother, Joe, passed away from heart disease. Lee is shocked to learn that Joe has appointed him as the legal guardian of his teenage nephew, Patrick.

Returning to his hometown of Manchester by the Sea, Lee is confronted with painful memories of a tragic past that he has long tried to avoid. A few years earlier, Lee had accidentally caused a house fire that resulted in the deaths of his three children. This event left Lee with intense guilt, depression, and symptoms consistent with PTSD, including flashbacks, emotional numbing, and social withdrawal. The film's narrative delves into Lee's inner struggles as she grapples with her responsibility towards Patrick while facing overwhelming reminders of her trauma. The small town that was once a place of family and happiness now triggers painful memories for Lee. Patrick, dealing with his own grief, inadvertently forces Lee to confront his pent-up emotions and the deep wounds that have hindered his ability to move forward.

Throughout the movie, Lee's interactions with those around him highlight the complexities of PTSD. His avoidance of emotional intimacy, inability to forgive himself, and frequent outbursts demonstrate the debilitating effects of unresolved trauma. Despite support and attempts at connection from friends and family, Lee remains trapped in a cycle of self-punishment and isolation.

From the statement above, that is why the writer wants to set the title as “Main Character’s Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder In The Movie of Manchester By The Sea,” and also from the background of the study, it is possible to analyze this film using the theory of literary psychology. Furthermore, this study is necessary to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological symptoms of trauma and traits as reflected in the

character of Manchester by the Sea. While previous studies have discussed trauma in general, there is still limited research that specifically applies the diagnostic framework of APA DSM- V TR to analyze the symptoms of PTSD and traits by FFM (OCEAN) in a literary context. By focusing on Lee Chandler's experiences, this research not only contributes to the field of literary studies but also highlights the relevance of psychological theory in interpreting character behaviors and struggles. Therefore, the study is important in bridging literature and psychology, while also offering insights that may help readers, scholars, and educators to recognize the manifestations of trauma and its consequences more clearly.

## **1.2. Research Question**

Based on Background of The Study, the writer poses the following statement of the problems:

1. What are the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced by Lee Chandler character in Manchester by The Sea movie?
2. How are Lee Chandler's personality traits before and after PTSD reflected in the film Manchester by the Sea?

## **1.3. Objective of The Study**

Based on Background of The Study, the writer poses the following objective of the study:

1. To describe the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that Lee Chandler experienced.
2. To analyze Lee Chandler's personality traits before and after PTSD.

## **1.4. Scope of The Study**

This study focuses on the psychological condition of Lee Chandler, the main character in *Manchester by the Sea*. The analysis is limited to examining the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as portrayed in the film, using the diagnostic



framework of the DSM-V TR (2022). In addition, the research explores Lee Chandler's personality traits before and after his traumatic experience, analyzed through the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. The study does not attempt to provide medical treatment or counseling perspectives, but rather interprets the character's condition through the lens of psychology of literature. The data are taken only from the film and its script, without extending to the actors' personal lives or other adaptations of the story.

### **1.5. Significance of The Research**

This research is expected to give both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it contributes to the field of literary studies by combining psychology and literature to analyze trauma and personality in a film character. It shows how psychological theories such as PTSD diagnosis and the Five-Factor Model can enrich literary analysis and deepen the understanding of character development. Practically, this study may help readers, students, and educators recognize how trauma is represented in film and how it affects human behavior and personality. The findings may also raise awareness of the impact of PTSD, encouraging empathy and understanding for individuals who struggle with similar conditions in real life.