

OBSSESIVE LOVE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN SOLCHE'S *CRY, BETTER OR YET, BEG*

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the obsessive love of the main character as seen in the novel *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg* by Solche. It aims to determine the characteristics of obsessive love experienced by Matthias Von Henhardt as the obsessor and the negative impacts of obsessive love on Layla Llewellyn as the target of obsessive love. The method of collecting data in this research is library research, and the method of analyzing data is descriptive qualitative. The research focuses on psychological approach. Susan Forward and Craig Buck's theory was employed to identify the characteristics of obsessive love, while Belton and Bailey theory was also applied to identify the negative impacts of obsessive love. The results show that the characteristics of obsessive love in the novel are one magic person, rejection, revenge, and the savior complex. Additionally, the negative impacts of obsessive love are stalking and domestic violence. Domestic violence happens in the forms of physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, and sexual abuse. These results improve understanding of how obsessive love can turn into toxic relationship as portrayed in a popular digital literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every human being must have felt the beauty of falling in love and hoped to be loved forever by his partner and always to be happy. Those feelings can be obtained from a healthy love. Forward and Buck in their book *Obsessive Love: When It Hurts Too Much to Let Go* state that, "Healthy love aspires to trust, caring, and mutual respect. Obsessive love, on the other hand, is dominated by fear, possessiveness, and jealousy." (2002, p. 9). These characteristics differentiate healthy love from obsessive love. Forward and Buck also conceptualize that those involved in obsessive love can be called the obsessor and the target of obsessive love (2002, p.5). An obsessor is a person who is obsessed with someone. Meanwhile, the target of obsessive love is the victim affected by the obsessor.

Furthermore, Forward and Buck state that obsessive love does not differentiate between genders and ages (2002, p.7). Men and women can be the obsessor and men and women can be the target of obsessive love. The obsessor may be successful, intelligent, and rational, but feel powerless towards the people they love. Likewise with the target of obsessive love, no matter their position, anyone can become the target of obsessive love and continuously be pursued by the obsessive. Obsessive love, characterized by a need to control or possess the loved one and intense preoccupation, can rapidly intensify into toxic and even abusive situations. Although it may start



with intense emotions, obsessive love's underlying lack of healthy boundaries and emotional control can result in manipulation, violence, jealousy, and violence.

People who have obsessive love for someone live a different love life. Forward and Buck affirm that the obsessor's life is dominated by desires, fantasies, and excessive urges to be attached to the target. Meanwhile, a target's life is dominated by the desire to escape from endless pursuit (2002, p.13). Sometimes obsessive love can be dangerous. Belton and Bailey in their book *The Essential Guide to Overcoming Obsessive Love* state that dangerous acts occur in obsessive love, such as stalking and domestic violence. Domestic violence that arises can be physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, and economic (2011, p.86). The impacts that occur in obsessive love are negative and very detrimental, especially to the target of obsessive love.

Obsessive love becomes a very interesting topic in literary work. Minderop in her book *Literary Psychology* stated that the novel as a literary form is a reflection of the reality that happens and the actors are considered as the characters (2016, p.78). One of the famous digital novels which talks about obsessive love is *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg*, which was written by Solche, a South Korean, in 2019.

Solche's *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg* novel tells the story of Matthias Von Herhardt's obsessive love to a girl named Layla Llewellyn. Layla is an orphan who comes to Arvis residence to live with the gardener named Bill Remmer. She is beautiful, cheerful, hard-working, and likes adventure and birds. That's why Layla often goes to the Arvis forest to play. There, she sees the lord of the Arvis residence, Duke Matthias Von Herhardt. Matthias is a handsome, smart, successful, and rich man who have an organized life, but goes according to his wishes. He also goes a bird hunting, such an activity that Layla does not like. Matthias' obsessive love emerges after seeing Layla. He even likes seeing Layla cry and beg him. Matthias also likens Layla to a beautiful bird. Even though he has already had a fiancée, Matthias still insists on having Layla. Matthias's obsessive love torments Layla so much that she chooses to run away from him, but Matthias continues to chase and try to get Layla no matter what.

This *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg* novel describes the main character's obsessive love which is very interesting to discuss, in which Matthias is the obsessor and Layla is the target of obsessive love. The novel is widely known among young adults in Asia, especially Indonesia. As the topic relates to the toxic relationship experienced by the main characters, readers can be more aware of the danger of obsessive love. The urgency of this research is that young adults are particularly vulnerable to experiencing toxic relationships due to factors like identity searching, emotional instability, and lack of experience. That is why by being more aware of the characteristics and negative impacts of obsessive love, readers can avoid getting involved in toxic relationship.

The psychological approach was employed to analyze the topic as it relates to the mental state of the characters depicted in the novel. Bernhardt in his book *Practical Psychology*, state that the subject of psychology is what an individual does, thinks, and feels (306). Through a psychological approach, the writer can analyze the character's psychology which includes the character's actions, the character's thoughts, and the character's feelings.

The research is focusing the characteristics of obsessive love experienced by Matthias Von Henhardt and the negative impacts of obsessive love towards Layla Llewellyn as seen in *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg* by Solche. the theory of obsessive love by Susan Forward and Craig Buck and the theory on the dangers of obsessive love theory by Belton and Bailey. People with obsessive love



disorder love another person too much and want to control that person's life. Kristeen Cherney in his article entitled "Obsessive Love Disorder" obsessive love disorder refers to a condition in which a person becomes obsessed with one person he or she may love. A person may feel the need to protect someone they care about obsessively, or even control them as if they were their own (1).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some researches related to obsessive love have been written. The first one is *Obsessive Love Disorder of the Main Female Character in Charlotte Levin's If I Cannot Have You* by Firnanda Larasati. She talks about the obsessive love of the main female character, explaining the symptoms, causes and effects of the main female character's obsessive love as well as the recovery. She applies Susan Forward and Craig Buck's theory of obsessive love in her research. The second research is *Obsessive Love in John Fowles' The Collector (1963) and Caroline Kepnes' You (2014): A Comparative Study* by Ammi Sabrina and Zermani Kahina. They discuss the main characteristics of obsessive love and explain the reactions of the two targets in facing their obsessive love. In analyzing the topic, they use Susan Forward and Craig Buck's theory of obsessive love. The other is an article entitled, "The Causing Aspects of Johannes Betzler's Obsessive Love in *Caging Skies* (2004)" by Intan Nur Sya'banal, Eni Nur Aeni, and Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati. They focus on aspects that led to Johannes' obsessive love for Elsa Kor. They apply the theory that is based on the collaborative work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth.

Although this study uses the same theory of obsessive love formulated by Susan Forward and Craig Buck to see the obsessor's love to the target, it adds additional theory for the research. This study applied Belton and Bailey's theory to uncover the negative impacts of obsessive love toward the female character Layla Llewellyn. In addition, studies that look at the psychological effects of compulsive love in the context of popular Asian digital literature, like Solche's work, are still rare. The research becomes a reference for the future study on digital literature that focusing on toxic relationship experienced by young adults' characters.

2.1 Healthy Love vs Obsessive Love

Love is a beautiful feeling that every individual has experienced. Langeslag and Strien in their journal entitled *Regulation of Romantic Love Feelings: Preconceptions, Strategies, and Feasibility* stated that love is related to positive emotions such as euphoria, happiness, and life satisfaction (1). Moreover, the *Collin Dictionary* defines love as when someone prioritizes the happiness of the person they love. Love makes someone behave well and care about the people they love (1). So, someone in love has positive emotions and actions because they do anything to make the person, they love happy as it will make him happy.

Furthermore, Talkspace in article entitled "Experiencing 'Healthy' vs 'Unhealthy' Love" states that healthy love has the characteristics of being supportive, empathetic, encouraging, and authentic. A person who experiences healthy love will be himself (1). Besides, someone who experiences healthy love always wants to dedicate time to the person they love and that feeling is reciprocated (1). It can be concluded that someone who experiences healthy love has equal feelings. One person loves and the other loves back. Healthy love and love both prioritize the partner's happiness without needing to lose one's identity. Thus, healthy love allows a person to remain themselves.



In contrast, obsessive love reflects a dysfunctional and extreme form of attachment. Edward in her article entitled "The Difference between Healthy and Obsessive Love" stated that in obsessive love, the feelings of love become more extreme and become obsessions (1). Healthy love knows boundaries; meanwhile, obsessive love does not. Thus, the feeling in the latter becomes increasingly uncontrollable and becomes an obsession. Belton and Bailey in their book *The Essential Guide to Overcoming Obsessive Love* stated that "obsessive lovers believe the person they are obsessed with is the only person who can make them happy" (2002, p.9). In addition, someone with obsessive love is obsessed with a person and their fear of rejection makes them encourage obsessive love (19). This belief intensifies obsessive behaviors, which may include control, surveillance, and emotional manipulation.

2.2 Obsessor and Target of Love

The obsessive love relationship emerged between the obsessor and target of obsessive love. An obsessor is a person who is obsessed with someone. *Collin Dictionary* defines an obsessor as "a person who is continually preoccupied with a particular activity, person, or thing (1). In obsessive love, an obsessor spends a lot of time on someone. This occurs due to uncontrolled feelings, so they are very extreme and end up becoming obsession.

Forward and Buck in their book *Obsessive Love: When It Hurts Too Much to Let Go* state that many obsessors are intelligent, attractive, and successful in life, but fail and always feel hopeless to do anything when has obsessive love for someone (2002, p.5). Also, a person who loves obsessively is that when an obsessive is facing the loss or disinterest of his partner in, he will not let go (2002, p.9). That is why an obsessor's life is usually dominated by desires, fantasies, and excessive urges (2002, p.13). An obsessor does not want to lose the person he wants. When he wants a person, he will strive to get the target of obsessive love. The relationship built by an obsessor will finally lead to toxic as an obsession with love and connection grows out of the residual pain. This leads to an unhealthy and obsessive fixation on relationships as the dread of being abandoned again feeds compulsive behaviors to ensure attachment (12).

Meanwhile, the target of obsessive love is someone who is a victim of an obsessor. Bev in her article entitled "Are You the Target of Obsessive Love?" states that the target of obsessive love is an object of another person's obsessive love (1). Everything the obsessor does will certainly have impact on the target.

Forward and Buck in their book *Obsessive Love: When It Hurts Too Much to Let Go*, everyone can become an obsessor and everyone can become a target of obsessive love (2002, p.7). The target of obsessive love has something in common with the oppressive and tireless pursuit of obsessor (2002, p.13). Anyone can be the target of obsessive love, no matter who she or he is. Often, this results in dangerous actions that can endanger the target itself. Therefore, the life of the target of obsessive love is often dominated by a strong desire to escape from endless pursuit.

2.3 Characteristics of Obsessive Love

Obsessive love typically exhibits four key traits: one magic person, rejection, revenge, and savior complex.

2.2.3.1 One Magic Person

This characteristic confirms that people who have an obsessive love for someone think they only have one person who is very valuable in their life. Belton and Bailey in their book *The Essential Guide to Overcoming Obsessive Love* state that someone who has an obsessive love for another



person believes that the person is one who makes him happy and gives meaning to his life (2011, p.12). Thus, the target of obsessive love is a one magic person for the obsessor. The obsessor believes that the target is the only person who can bring happiness to his life. He does not search for other love because he thinks that one magic person can give him everything. In this way, the target of obsessive love turns into someone who is necessary in the obsessor's life.

2.2.3.2 Rejection

Rejection can make someone feel unwanted, unworthy, and humiliated. *Cambridge Dictionary* defines rejection as the act of refusing to accept, use, or believe someone or something (1). Besides, Forward and Buck state that "rejection is an obsessor's ultimate nightmare" (2002, p.9). The act of rejection carried out by the target of obsessive love towards the obsessor will make the obsessor feel insulted.

Overcoming rejection is difficult, especially for an obsessor. Forward and Buck claim that the obsessor tries to do something to overcome the pain of rejection, namely by hurting themselves or bullying the target of their obsessive love, or doing both (2002, p.39). Belton and Bailey also state that someone who has obsessive love for another ignores rejection and thinks the person they love can change and come back to him (2011, p.88). Obsessors sometimes cannot accept rejection from the target of obsessive love. Thus, they create the illusion that everything will be fine.

Suppression of targets of obsessive love is carried out to prevent their relationship from ending. They tried to contact and pursue the targets in various ways to get one magic person interested in them again. According to Forward and Buck, pursuits carried out by obsessors are generally excessive, invasive, and sometimes dangerous, such as sending unwanted gifts, creating excuses to meet the target, repeatedly driving by the target's home or workplace, stalking the target, and threatening silence to harm the target (2002, p.43). The actions of an obsessor to get back his target are indeed worrying. However, people who have obsessive love for someone are willing to do anything to get back with their partner.

2.2.3.3 Revenge

This characteristic of obsessive love is still related to rejection. Continuous rejection by the target of obsessive love makes the obsessor angry. Belton and Bailey state that rejection that occurs repeatedly causes anger to increase, so it is necessary to control the situation (2002, p.88). Anger as the result of rejection must be controlled properly so that it does not cause harmful effects to the target of obsessive love.

The next stage of anger is revenge. *Cambridge Dictionary* defines revenge as "harm done to someone as a punishment for harm that they have done to someone else" (1). Besides, revenge is the final path of the obsessor. They are at the point of giving up on the one magic person and finding a new purpose to punish the person who caused their pain (Forward and Buck. 2002, p.67). Revenge done by an obsessor is a form of punishment for the target of obsessive love. Revenge is the final stage of the pursuit carried out by the obsessor.

2.2.3.4 The Savior Complex

This savior correlates with the one magic person. An obsessor who has one magic person forms a savior complex so that the target of his obsessive love never leaves him. The savior believes the problem will be resolved, and there will be no more obstacles in their relationship; the target will be grateful to be one magic person. (Forward and Buck, 2002, p. 78). This is done by helping and



saving his partner excessively, so his lover will feel dependent on him and always need him. In addition, the savior is attracted to his target's helplessness. (Forward and Buck, 2002, 83).

2.4 Negative Impacts of Obsessive Love

Obsessive love has negative impacts on the victim. Belton and Bailey say in their book *The Essential Guide to Overcoming Obsessive Love* that dangerous acts occur in obsessive love, such as stalking and domestic violence. Domestic violence that arises can be physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, and economic (2011, p. 86). There are two negative impacts of obsessive love, namely stalking and domestic violence. Four types of domestic violence can occur, namely physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and economic abuse.

2.4.1 Stalking

Stalking is the act of following or harassing someone secretly. Belton and Bailey in their book *The Essential Guide to Overcoming Obsessive Love* state that "stalking is repeated, unwanted contact that incites fear or implies a threat against one person, by another person" (2011, p. 87). Based on the definition, stalking is an unwanted act carried out intentionally by someone that makes other people afraid.

An obsessor never wants his relationship with the target to end. Belton and Bailey in their book believe that a person who has an obsessive love with someone stalks to show their love by being around them. (2011, p.87). Therefore, an obsessor can be called a stalker. Obsessors do not think stalking is wrong. They just want to see their loved ones.

There are many forms of stalking, such as following someone, sending unwanted letters, and giving unwanted gifts. Belton and Bailey in their book state that examples of common stalking behavior are following, spying, repeatedly showing up at places where the target is, continuously calling, giving unwanted letters and gifts, and making threats against the target (2011, p. 87). Thus, the act of stalking performed by a stalker has many forms. It can be done simultaneously by the stalker to the victim.

2.4.2 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is experienced by the target as a negative impact of obsessive love. Belton and Bailey in their book *The Essential Guide to Overcoming Obsessive Love* state that domestic violence is about controlling someone, so he/she cannot easily leave. Domestic violence can happen to anyone (2011, p.89). Domestic violence is used to control someone and prevent him/her from leaving.

The terms "domestic violence" and "domestic abuse" similarly are used in this discussion to refer to violence in obsessive love. Davis in her article stated that "domestic violence primarily focuses on physical harm, domestic abuse encompasses a broader spectrum of behaviors that extend beyond physical violence" (1). Domestic abuse can include physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, and economic.

The domestic violence allows a person to control and control others by using his or her strength. The four forms of domestic violence mentioned by Belton and Bailey are physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and economic abuse (2011, p. 86).



2.4.3 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person physically hurts and harasses another person. Radhika Kapur in her article entitled "The Impact of Physical Abuse upon the Lives of Women" states that "physical abuse is an intentional act of causing injury or trauma to another person by way of hurting someone physically" (1). Thus, physical abuse that hurts another person's body can make a person hurt both physically and mentally because it causes trauma. The examples of physical violence are hitting, slapping, punching, choking, pushing, denying medical care, denying basic and needed functions, such as food, water, or sleep (Belton and Bailey 2011, p.90). Thus, neglect related to one's health and bodily needs is also physical violence.

2.4.4 Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse is the act of someone who wants to control others by hurting the person's mental or psychological well-being. Belton and Bailey in their book state that emotional abuse is aimed at degrading, humiliating, and controlling a partner as a result of which a person can lose self-esteem and independence (2011, p.90).

The examples of emotional abuse are isolating the partner from friends or family, humiliating the partner either in private or in public, constantly criticizing the partner, ignoring the partner, name-calling or yelling (2011, p. 90). It is not uncommon for this emotional abuse to also involve the environment around the couple, such as friends and family.

Emotional abuse is not visible in a short time because it does not show any injuries on the body. Emotional violence becomes more dangerous if it occurs over a long time. Emotional abuse can lead to depression and other disorders, such as substance abuse and suicide (2011, p. 90).

2.4.5 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the compulsion to do something without sexual consent. Belton and Bailey mention that sexual abuse is the use of violence to get a person involved in sexual activity (2011, p. 90). Here, an obsessor invites his target to engage in sexual activity to show their strength in a relationship. In addition, they do not care if the passion to act is reciprocal (2011, p. 90). Sexual activity is used to show who has control over another. Someone who has obsessive love for another person sometimes does not care whether their partner wants to have sex or not. They just want to gain power over others.

As the target of an obsessive, sometimes a person has no choice. Belton and Bailey say that it is difficult for a partner to refuse for fear of the consequences (90). A target can become indifferent to their physical or emotional condition and fulfill the obsessive's wish so that something bad will not happen to him.

2.4.6 Economic Abuse

Economic abuse is an act of restriction by a person to another person regarding the use of money, resources, or abilities. Gupta in his article entitled, "Domestic Abuse: Types, Causes, and Impact" stated that economic abuse is financial control by someone by controlling their income, limiting their ability to work, or accumulating debt in their name (1). Economic abuse occurs when a person takes control of another person's financial affairs by force.

Various economic abuses that a person can experience are only allowing someone to hold a little money, not being allowed to decide financial matters, and not having access to finances. Belton and Bailey state that a person that has obsessive love for someone will try to block the opportunity for his loved one to leave (90). All of this is done by the obsessor so that the target



does not run away and only depends on him. In addition, this is intended to make someone feel worthless and unwanted by others (90).

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method was applied in this research. Moser and Korsrjens (2017) contend that qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems without having to quantify data (2). The data was taken from the novel *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg* by Solche as the primary data. Other supportive materials are taken from theoretical books and articles published in journals related to obsessive love topic. These sources were beneficial in terms of providing theoretical frameworks and information related to obsessive love, characteristic of obsessive love, and negative impacts of obsessive love. The correlations of various sources ensured a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues presented in the novel.

The data analysis was carried out using the descriptive qualitative method. The data collection and analysis process employed in this research can be divided into several systematic steps. First, the researcher conducted a close reading of *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg* to gain a comprehensive understanding of the story and its intrinsic elements. Second, specific quotes—such as dialog, narration and descriptive passage were identified and highlighted, particularly those that depict some characteristics of obsessive love, and impacts of obsessive love. Third, these selected excerpts were analyzed through the obsessive love concept proposed by Susan Forward and Craig Buck regarding the characteristics of assessor and negative impacts of obsessive love on the target. Lastly, pertinent secondary sources and academic literature were explored to bolster the analysis's validity and bolster the interpretations and conclusions presented in the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the novel *Cry, or Better Yet, Beg*, the male character Matthias Von Henhardt was the one who suffered the obsessive love disorder. Von Hendhart is the the obsessor, while Layla Llewellyn becomes the target of his obsessive love.

4.1 Mathias von Herhardt as an Obsessor and Layla Llewyn as the Target of Obsessive Love
Matthias is said to be an obsessor because his obsessive love makes him spend a lot of time on Layla. This happens because of the uncontrolled feelings that form within him. Forward and Buck's statement that many obsessors are intelligent, attractive, and successful in life but fail and always feel hopeless to do anything when has obsessive love for someone (5) seems to fit Matthias' condition.

Matthias is a nobleman with the title of Duke. He comes from the famous Henhardt family, that is always associated with intellect, gracious demeanor, and self-possession. Matthias never doubts his life as Duke Henhardt. He knows what his role is and what everyone wants from him. Matthias can carry out his role easily (Solche, 2019, p. 2).

From the quote above, it can be seen that Mathias possesses several obsessor's traits such as an intelligent, attractive, and successful person in life. When he is falling in love with someone, he wants to own her possessively.

As an obsessor, Mathias is incapable in controlling his feeling towards his lover. He enjoys his obsessiveness towards Layla and he enjoys Layla's submission on him.



Matthias admits that he is a monster who is willing to live in hell if it is with Layla and their child (Solche, 2019, p. 137).

His willingness to live even in hell with Layla and his child mirrors his uncontrollable feeling to be with his lover forever. He wants to spend time with Layla in every second he got, that is the proof that Mathias is the obsessor figure.

Layla Llewellyn is the target of Matthias's obsessive love. Becoming the target of Matthias' obsessive love affected her life a lot, and she experiences oppressive and tireless pursuit as Matthias "had chased be down like a wild beast, tormented her, and then humiliated her all the more by bidding her this graceful farewell" (Solche, 2019, p. 51) and "she was exactly what he wanted" (Solche, 2019, p. 88). The fact that Layla experiences persecution, torture and humiliation from Matthias proves Matthias's obsessive love for Layla as the target.

4.2 Characteristics of Obsessive Love Experienced by Matthias Von Henhardt

4.2.1 The Obsessor Demands The Target to be His One Magic Person

The first characteristic of obsessive love is the existence of one magic person. In the novel, Matthias considers Layla to be one magic person for him. Layla is very precious in his life. To Matthias, Layla is everything and the only woman he needs in his life to make him happy as Forward and Buck state that one magic person alone can make the obsessors feel happy and fulfilled, solve all their problems, give them whatever they want, and make them feel wanted and loved more than before (2019, p. 21)

The evidence that Laila is one magic person to Matthias is seen when he strongly desires to make Layla his woman as it is stated that "as soon as he wrapped his arms around her warm body, he realized how strong his desire for her had been during the time he hadn't been able to see her.

Having her in his arms at that moment thus feel like the most natural thing in the world. Layla Llewellyn was the only woman in the world who could make him feel this way. She was exactly what he wanted. Not just any woman, but Layla. His little bird, Layla Llewellyn (Solche, 2019, p. 88).

Considering the fact that Mathias calls Layla as her little bird suggests his obsession towards Layla. He demands Layla to be his one magic person who is always be there and obeys him perpetually. He wants her to be anything that he wants and to do anything under his command. Those match the characteristics of obsessive love where the obsessor utilizes his target of love to be that one magic person to make him feel happy and fulfilled, solve all their problems, give them whatever they want, and make them feel wanted and loved more than before

4.2.2 Obsessor's Unwillingness to Accept the Target's Rejection

The second characteristic of obsessive love is the unwillingness of the obsessor in accepting the target's rejection. Rejection is the act of refusing someone. Matthias experiences rejection from Layla, which makes him feel humiliated and unwanted. Rejection is the ultimate nightmare for the obsessor (Forward and Buck, 2019, p. 9). Obsessors do not want rejection because they would not be able to accept it. Someone who has obsessive love for another ignores rejection and thinks the person they love can change and come back (Belton and Bailey, 2011, p. 88)

The first rejection Layla does is refusing Matthias's orders to eat, as she says:

"No, I don't want to," she said, shaking her head as she approached him. "I don't feel like eating. I can't stomach anything right now. I hate it." Her frightened eyes were quivering.



She was amazed to hear the bold words coming out of her mouth. Matthias tightened his grip on the hat and stood up from his seat. Looming over her ominously, he asked, "You hate it?" (Solche, 2019, p.11)

Despite her fear to Matthias, Layla refuses him forcing her to eat. The rejection causes Matthias to react displeasedly. Layla's rejection to his orders has made him unhappy. The feeling creeps in his heart as he always wants his target to obey him. This correlates with the need of maintaining his power on the target. Simpson et al. (2015) define power as "the ability or capacity to change a partner's thoughts, feelings, and/or behavior so they align with one's own desired preferences, along with the ability or capacity to resist influence attempts imposed by the partner" (in Korner and Schutz, 3).

The rejection Matthias receives from Layla also happens when he wants to kiss her. Before, Layla has rejected a kiss from Matthias; however, now Matthias has learned from the previous incident as it is stated in the novel: 'If I kiss you, you'll probably resist again', he thought. By now, he had learned that whatever resistance she put up was easy for him to get past" (Solche, 2019, p.63). As he knows that Layla will reject him kissing her, he will ignore her rejection and keep kissing her even though she fights him. Although Layla rejects him many times, Matthias ignores her rejection. He keeps forcing Layla to obey his order. This correlates with the fact that the obsessor does not accept the target's rejection. It is necessary for Mathias to instill his domination over Layla as the target of his obsession. In addition, Layla's rejection can be a source of Mathias' satisfaction, as an obsessor always seeks a challenge to make his target obedient.

4.2.3 Obsessor Wants to Seek Revenge on the Target

The third characteristic of obsessive love is the revenge conducted by the obsessor. This is still related to rejection; continuous rejection causes the obsessor to become angry and seek revenge. Revenge becomes the final path for the obsessor. They are at the point of giving up on the one magic person and finding a new purpose to punish the person who caused their pain (Forward and Buck, 2002, p. 67).

The first evidence of Matthias seeking revenge on Layla is when Layla deceives and runs away from him.

"What are you thinking?" she asked. "What are you planning to do? Are you just going to keep tormenting me? Is that how you're planning to get revenge on me for deceiving you and running away? Do you think you have the right to do that?"

"As the father of the baby you're carrying, surely I have at least that right, don't you think?" (Solche, 2019, p. 130).

Here, Layla wonders what Matthias wants to do to her. Matthias is seeking revenge on Layla because she dared to cheat and run away from him. Matthias believes he has the right to do everything he has done to Layla, including continuing to torture her. This is a form of revenge because Mathias is punishing Layla because Layla is trying to escape. The obsessor feels that the target is his possession, he cannot runaway from him. Layla has wronged him. That is why, he thought he has the right to seek revenge on the target. Several studies on dating violence indicate that there are several factors underlying the violence experienced by female victims in order to maintain the relationship they are in, such as jealousy, infidelity, and not following their partner's desires (Jailani 2020, Khair & Suriadi 2022).



The second evidence of revenge is when Matthias, who almost gives up on Layla, finds a way to get revenge as he states; “If I’ve really lost her forever... If I can really never get her back... then I should just kill her instead” (Solche, 2019, p.119). Matthias shows his despair when Layla leaves him. He feels that if he loses Layla forever, it would be better for him to just kill her. He wants Layla to be back to him, but if it does not happen, killing her becomes Matthias’s option. In conclusion, Matthias is looking for a new way to take revenge because he has almost given up on Layla, his one magic person. As an obsessor, Mathias cannot control his obsession to always own the target by his side, the thought of killing becomes a way where no other person can have her.

4.2.4 The Savior Complex Suffered by the Obsessor

The last characteristic of obsessive love is the savior complex suffered by the obsessor. The savior complex is related to the one magic person. Matthias as an obsessor wants Layla to be his woman, and he is willing to do many things to ensure Layla becomes his woman. He wants Layla to depend on him and always need him. As an obsessor, he is attracted to his target's helplessness (Forward and Buck, 2002, p. 83).

Matthias as a savior can be seen is when he plans to help Layla in the case of her uncle’s arrest due to explosion he accidentally commits and he is taken to custody. Helplessly, Layla cries and begs Matthias to drop the charges.

He knew he had found a way to clip that beautiful bird's wings and stop her from escaping. Having found the way, he was carrying it out. It was that simple (Solche, 2019, p. 68).

He is very interested in her helplessness and despair because by depending on him, Layla will never leave him (Solche, 2019, p. 69).

Here, seeing Layla begging him to save her uncle makes him feel that he is highly desired and needed as she becomes dependent to him. It can be seen that Mathias saves Layla as he wants her to feel helpless and dependent. He wants Layla to consider him as his savior. That way, Mathias expects to keep Layla as his one magic person forever. That correlates with the obsessor’s intention to make the target feel helpless and need him.

4.3 Negative Impacts of Obsessive Love towards Layla Llewellyn

The negative impact of Matthias' obsessive love to Layla can be seen through many dangerous acts she experiences, which are stalking and domestic violence.

4.3 1 Experiencing Stalking from the Obsessor

The first negative impact of obsessive love towards the target is stalking. Being obsessed to Layla, Matthias stalks her, and it causes Layla's fear. Stalking itself is repeated, unwanted contact that incites fear or implies a threat against one person, by another person. There are many forms of stalking, such as following someone, spying on someone, showing up where someone usually goes, and giving unwanted letters and gifts (Belton and Bailey, 2011, p. 87).

Layla experiences stalking when Matthias comes to the school where she teaches. Matthias's sudden arrival at the school has made her feel scared, but Matthias remains calm as usual. Matthias comes with the aim of seeing Layla, ignoring school matters regarding the school building company (Solche, 2019, p. 54). This action is considered stalking. Matthias shows up where Layla usually goes. He deliberately makes contact that Layla does not want and makes her feel afraid of his presence.



The next stalking done by Matthias is sending Layla a gift she does not want. Layla receives a package while at school. She opens the box, which has no sender's name or return address. Inside, Layla finds a black pen with gold decoration.

When she sees it, Layla knows who sent the package to her. Matthias is the one who did it (Solche, 2019, p.51).

She feels many emotions raging inside her, such as discomfort and frustration (Solche, 2019, p. 55)

Receiving unwanted gift from Matthias makes Layla feel discomfort and annoyed. Layla's discomfort emerges as she does not expect to receive the gift. Receiving a gift from him makes her feel frustrated as well. Layla's frustration comes as deep down she understands Matthias has another hidden intention by sending the gift. The obsessor's stalking makes the target feel discomfort and frustration as the obsessor always terrorize her with his presence or unwanted gift everywhere she goes.

4.3.2 Domestic Violence Experienced by the Target

Domestic violence occurs in the private sphere and is used to control a partner and prevent them from leaving. Domestic violence is about controlling someone, so they cannot easily leave. Domestic violence can happen to anyone (Belton and Bailey, 2011, p. 89). The domestic violence happens to Layla in the forms of physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, and sexual abuse.

4.3.3 Physical Abuse Experienced by Layla

Physical abuse occurs when someone physically injures another person's body. Layla as the target of Matthias's obsessive love experiences physical violence done by Matthias, that is, the grip Matthias places on her shoulders and head. As he approaches and grabs her, he corners her body under the tree. Layla sheds tears as Matthias starts gripping her shoulders and hair.

Layla cannot leave Matthias and has to face a situation where she receives physical abuse on her body. Layla cannot do anything at that moment (Solche, 2019, p. 50).

"Please step aside," she said, glaring at him. "I don't know why you're... ack!" Before she could finish speaking, she let out a shriek. Matthias had leaned forward and bitten her ear. It happened in a flash (Solche, 2019, p. 22).

These excerpts point out the physical abuse experienced by Layla. She feels helpless, as if nothing can be done to fight against Matthias. This situation highlights the obsessor's domination. The obsessor's abuse meant to make the target obedient. Mathias wants to highlight his domination on Layla. The obsesor wants to instill the message that he is more powerful than Layla. That way he can control her, make her feel helpless and obedient. The long-term physical abuse experienced by the target also giving long-lasting physical consequences because of repeated assaults, including internal injuries and chronic pain.

4.3.4 Emotional or Psychological Abuse Experienced by Layla

Emotional abuse, also called psychological abuse, is violence that hurts the emotions or psychological well-being of other people. The obsessor carries out emotional abuse by degrading, humiliating, and controlling a partner. The examples of emotional abuse include isolating the partner from friends or family, humiliating the partner either in private or in public, constantly criticizing the partner, ignoring the partner, and name-calling or yelling.



Layla, as the target of obsessive love, experiences emotional abuse from Matthias. It happens when Matthias wants to do good by buying Layla a coffee. However, he highlights Layla's status as just an orphan living in his area. Even though Matthias's behavior seems to be good, he also insults and humiliates Layla at the same time (Solche, 2019, p. 28). This, of course, hurts Layla's mentality.

Another evidence that Layla experienced emotional abuse was when Matthias negatively comments on her body. Indifferently, he gives crude comment that she is skinny and not fun to look at (Solche, 2019, p. 73). Here, he definitely insults and humiliates her. This is a form of emotional abuse. These emotional abuses done by the obsessor are intended to make the target feel weak. The target becomes vulnerable and it enables the obsessor to instill his control more easily. The psychological impact of verbal and physical violence on victims is feeling traumatized and stressed with their partner's demands due to fear of being abused, whereas the impact of sexual violence on victims is self-blame, low self-esteem, feeling worthless, relying on their partner, and frequently hurting themselves. (Widyananda & Ashfaq, 35).

4.3.5 Sexual Abuse Experienced by Layla

Sexual abuse is forcing someone to engage in sexual activities without her consent. The obsessor commits sexual abuse against the target of obsessive love to demonstrate his power and control over the other person. In the novel, Matthias forces Layla to make difficult decisions regarding their sexual activities. Even though Layla does not want it, Matthias persists, leaving Layla with no choice but to give up. This is evident when Matthias forces kisses to her. At that time, due to her fear to Matthias, she cannot think about anything when Matthias touches her. She only feels fear, which makes it difficult for her to breathe. Matthias punctuates the kiss with intense kisses. Layla feels cornered because of Matthias. She realizes that when Matthias kisses her neck, she is trapped in a cycle until he deliberately tears the buttons on her blouse (Solche, 2019, p. 23). At this point, Layla experiences sexual abuse by Matthias that she does not want to happen.

The next sexual abuse suffered by Layla occurs when she surrenders herself to Matthias as she wants to save her uncle. Through an agreement, Matthias has complete control over her body. Here, Layla is forced to comply with Matthias's request, making her body the price of the deal. When she says that she will not forgive Matthias for what he does to her, he does not care whether she forgives him or not; he wants her at that moment. She finally gives in when he takes off her clothes by destroying them (Solche, 2019, p. 68). This constitutes sexual abuse because, even though there is an agreement, Matthias does it without Layla's sexual consent. Definitely, she does not want to be forced into this, but she has no choice.

After that, Matthias and Layla have many sexual encounters. Layla always engages in them unwillingly. Matthias always lusts after Layla, who he thinks as lovely for her appearance, yet detestable for her social condition. Thus, he forcefully has sex with her again. Layla is in a bad situation because Matthias does not let her go. Although she has showed her dislike expression and said that she hates him, Matthias, does not care because in the end, she is still his. Hatefully, Layla can only cry because of how he treats her (Solche, 2019, p. 95). This is a negative impact of obsessive love in the form of sexual abuse where Layla cannot fight Matthias who treats her as a mistress. The sexual abuse experienced by the target gives severe impacts psychologically. Researchers McFarlane and Malecha also found that the sexually assaulted women in the study had worse mental and physical health than women who had been physically but not sexually



abused (Taylor & Laniyan, p. 13). In addition to being anti-social, adolescent victims of toxic relationships have been found to lack self-confidence (Chatterjee & Kulakli, 2015; Denanti & Wardani, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

The novel has depicted the obsessive love of the main character, Matthias, and its impacts to his target of love, Layla. Matthias's obsessive love itself has four characteristics: the obsessor demand the target as the one magic person, obsessor's unwillingness to accept rejection, Obsessor's wants to seek revenge, and the savior complex suffered by the obsessor. Layla is Matthias' one magic person because he considers her the most valuable person in his life, and her presence makes Matthias feel happy. The second characteristic is rejection. Layla rejects Matthias's love to her repeatedly that it leads to his unhappiness. The third is revenge. This occurs because Matthias accumulates anger due to Layla leaving him which leads to revenge. The last is the savior complex; it is done as Matthias likes to make Layla feel dependent on him and always needs him.

The obsessive love has brought about negative impacts to Layla. They are stalking and domestic violence. Layla experiences stalking from Matthias: visiting her place of work, and receiving unwanted gifts. Domestic violence happens to Layla in the forms of physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, and sexual abuse. Physical abuse includes the gripping and biting that injure Layla's body. Meanwhile, emotional or psychological abuse involves humiliating Layla in public and making harsh comments. Lastly, sexual abuse includes forced kissing, forced touching, and forced sexual relations. All those negative impacts made Layla feel traumatized, terrorized, and depressed.

To sum up, obsessive love may give rise to negative impacts to the target as it tends to cause more harm and dangers. This study highlights the need for awareness of power relations in the representation of love in digital literature. The unequal power relation on obsessive love relationship can happen to anyone, especially young adults as they are vulnerable and lack of experience. Understanding some characteristics and negative impacts of obsessive love is necessary to keep ourselves from get involved in such toxic relationship. The study can also become a future reference for a future research focusing on psychological issue derived from popular digital literature.

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