

## **AN ANALYSIS OF INNER EXPERIENCE OF BIPOLAR DISORDER SUFFERER OF THE MAIN CHARACTER AS SEEN IN THE FILM ENTITLED TOUCHED WITH FIRE BY PAUL DALIO**

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this research were: 1) To find out the inner experiences that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer in a film entitled Touched With Fire By Paul Dalio "TWF"; 2) To find out the impacts of inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer to themselves in a film entitled TWF By Paul Dalio; 3) To find out the impacts of inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer to the other character in a film entitled TWF By Paul Dalio. The researcher used qualitative research method with type of library research. This research used primary and secondary data as the sources. The technique of data collection was listen, watch, read, and note down important points of the film. In the technique of analyzing data, the researcher used qualitative data analysis by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, such as data collection, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. To find the validity of the research, was used by triangulation data. The result of the research showed that: 1) Marco and Carla experienced some inner experience relating to their bipolar disorder. They are thoughts; imagination; feelings and emotions; moral or ethical feelings. 2) The inner experience that had been experienced by them has some impact both to themselves and the other.

**Keywords :** *Touched With Fire, Paul Dalio, Bipolar, Inner Experience.*

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: 1) Untuk mengetahui pengalaman batin yang pernah dialami oleh Marco dan Carla sebagai penderita bipolar disorder dalam film yang berjudul Touched With Fire karya Paul Dalio "TWF"; 2) Untuk mengetahui dampak dari pengalaman batin yang telah dialami oleh Marco dan Carla sebagai penderita bipolar disorder terhadap dirinya sendiri dalam film yang berjudul TWF karya Paul Dalio; 3) Untuk mengetahui dampak dari pengalaman batin yang telah dialami oleh Marco dan Carla sebagai penderita gangguan bipolar terhadap tokoh lain dalam film lain dalam film yang berjudul TWF Karya Paul Dalio. Peneliti menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan sumber data primer dan sekunder. Primer dan sekunder sebagai sumber data. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara menyimak, menonton, membaca dan mencatat poin-poin penting dari film tersebut. Dalam teknik menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan analisis data kualitatif menurut Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana, yaitu pengumpulan data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi. Untuk menemukan keabsahan penelitian, digunakan triangulasi data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: 1) Marco dan Carla mengalami beberapa pengalaman batin yang berkaitan dengan gangguan bipolar mereka. Pengalaman-pengalaman tersebut adalah pikiran; imajinasi; perasaan dan emosi; perasaan moral atau etika. 2) Pengalaman batin yang dialami oleh mereka memiliki beberapa dampak baik bagi diri mereka sendiri maupun orang lain.

Kata kunci : Touched With Fire, Paul Dalio, Bipolar, Pengalaman Batin.

## INTRODUCTION

Literature, in its broadest sense, has always been a vital medium for expressing ideas, emotions, and experiences. Derived from the Latin word *littera*, meaning letter, literature encompasses a wide range of written or spoken works that engage the creative faculties of both the writer and the reader. Over time, the definition of literature has evolved, often being influenced by the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which it is situated. Despite these varied interpretations, the core essence of literature remains its ability to convey the complexities of human life through the power of language. As highlighted by Gyasi (2008), literature includes all written works, with a particular emphasis on those that are imaginative and artistic. Ade and Okunoye (2008) further define literature as an expression of thoughts and feelings that not only deals with life experiences but also uses words in a powerful, effective, and captivating manner. It is within this framework that literature functions as both a mirror of society and a tool for understanding the human condition. Among the many forms of literature, film has emerged as one of the most influential and accessible mediums in the modern era. A film, as defined by Hornby (2006), is a series of moving images accompanied by sound, designed to tell a story. Films are produced through a variety of methods, including live-action recording and animation, and span numerous genres such as action, drama, comedy, and romance. Each genre offers a unique lens through which audiences can explore different aspects of life, from the fantastical to the deeply personal. Romantic drama films, in particular, provide a rich tapestry of emotional narratives that often focus on love, relationships, and the internal struggles of the characters. These films are characterized by their emphasis on passion and emotional depth, as well as their exploration of the complexities of human connections. According to Himawan Prastista (2018), romantic dramas often revolve around love-related issues, whether it be the romance itself or the pursuit of love as a central goal. The narratives in these films can end happily or tragically, but they always seek to engage the audience on an emotional level.

In the context of mental health, romantic drama films offer a unique opportunity to explore the intersection between psychological experiences and romantic relationships. Paul Dalio's film *Touched With Fire* (2015) stands as a poignant example of this genre, blending the themes of love and mental illness. The film tells the story of two poets, Marco and Carla, who both suffer from bipolar disorder and fall in love after meeting in a mental hospital. Their relationship is marked by the intense emotional highs and lows characteristic of bipolar disorder, providing a compelling narrative that delves into the inner experiences of those living with this condition. Bipolar disorder, often referred to as manic-depressive illness, is a mental health condition that causes extreme mood swings, including emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression). The portrayal of bipolar disorder in *Touched With Fire* is particularly significant as it offers a window into the inner experiences of the characters, illustrating how their mental health impacts their perceptions, relationships, and overall quality of life.

The concept of "Inner Experience," as discussed by Bataille (1897), provides a theoretical framework for analyzing these psychological experiences. Bataille's notion of inner experience is concerned with the deep, often atheological, exploration of the self, focusing on the subjective, internal realities that shape one's existence. In *Touched With Fire*, the inner experiences of Marco and Carla are central to the narrative, revealing the profound impact of bipolar disorder on their lives. This study aims to explore these inner experiences in detail, analyzing how they are depicted in the film and what they reveal about the broader implications of living with bipolar disorder. By focusing on the psychological and emotional journeys of the main characters, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of mental health in literature and film. Additionally, it highlights the importance of accurate and empathetic representations of mental illness in media, which play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and fostering greater awareness and acceptance of mental health issues. The exploration of inner experiences in *Touched With Fire* also underscores the significance of relationships, support, and self-acceptance in managing bipolar disorder. While the

film does not offer a definitive resolution, it emphasizes the ongoing challenges faced by individuals with bipolar disorder and the potential for recovery and stability through understanding and connection. This study, therefore, not only adds to the academic discourse on mental health in literature but also offers practical insights for those who seek to better comprehend the lived experiences of those with bipolar disorder. The following research questions were developed to address the research objectives:

- 1) What are the inner experiences that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer in a film entitled "TWF"?
- 2) What are the impacts of the inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer to themselves in a film entitled "TWF"?
- 3) What are the impacts of the inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer to the other character in a film entitled "TWF"?

## METHODS

### *Source of the Data*

The data sources for this research are categorized into primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is defined as original information obtained directly through methods such as observation, interviews, questionnaires, or direct engagement with the research subject (Ajayi, 2017). In this study, the primary data source is the film "Touched With Fire," directed by Paul Dalio. This film serves as the core material for analysis, particularly focusing on the depiction of the main character's experiences with bipolar disorder. By analyzing the film's narrative, dialogue, and character development, the researcher aims to gain insight into the portrayal of mental health issues, particularly the inner experiences of individuals with bipolar disorder.

Secondary data refers to information that has been previously collected, processed, and documented by other researchers, organizations, or institutions (Creswell, 2014). This type of data provides additional context, background, and support for the primary analysis. For this research, secondary data includes a variety of sources such as academic journals, books, articles, online resources, and other films that explore similar themes of mental health, particularly bipolar disorder. These materials help to contextualize the findings from the primary source and to compare the depiction of bipolar disorder in "Touched With Fire" with other representations in literature and media. This combination of primary and secondary data sources allows for a comprehensive analysis of the film and supports a deeper understanding of the themes explored within the context of mental health and bipolar disorder.

### *Data Collection Method*

According to Taherdoost (2002:10), data collection is defined as the process of gathering information to gain an understanding of the research subject. The data collection method used in this study involves active listening, observation, reading, and taking notes on significant aspects. The data collection procedure in this research was carried out systematically as follows: First, the researcher read the film manuscript titled "TWF" attentively and noted important points. Next, the researcher organized the collected points into categories based on their respective meanings. Additionally, the researcher documented and gathered supporting data from the film manuscript. This thorough approach to data collection ensures a well-organized and robust foundation for subsequent analysis, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the research material.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis, as outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998:28), involves systematically organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials to enhance understanding. This study employs descriptive analysis, focusing on existing phenomena without controlling conditions.

The process of data analysis using the Miles & Huberman (in Widyahening,

2023:91) data source was analyzed in four steps as well as the analysis of the data: 1) data collecting, which involves observing and noting significant details from the film "TWF"; 2) data reduction, where data is summarized and coded to identify themes (Miles, 1994:10); 3) data display, which organizes data clearly to reveal patterns (Creswell, 2014:203); and 4) conclusion drawing, where patterns and relationships are identified and continually examined for validity (Miles and Huberman, 1994:11).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### a. Results

The Result presents the outcomes of data analysis pertaining to the previously identified research issues. It comprises two main sections: findings and discussion. The findings center on internal experiences related to bipolar disorder depicted in the film "Touched With Fire" "TWF", detailing the types of bipolar disorder and their respective symptoms observed in the film. The findings of the study are delineated below:

*The inner experiences that had been experienced by Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer in a film entitled TWF by Paul Dalio*

The first inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla is thought. In TWF, Marco and Carla experience manic episodes characterized by intense euphoria and a surge in creativity. Freud (1920: 56) describes euphoria as a heightened state of happiness often induced artificially. The film depicts Marco's mania through his enthusiastic and ambitious plans to decorate their walls with large murals of stars and constellations. His elevated mood and creative drive are evident, largely due to his omission of a sedative, which contributes to his euphoric and erratic behavior during this scene.

The second inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla is imagination. The example is when Marco and Carla are looking for kitchen tools to make a tool that can connect to another world. For example, a spoon as an antenna, a pan as a transmitter.

The third inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla is imagination. In TWF, Carla's depressive episode is poignantly portrayed in a scene where she talks to her mother. Kay (1993: 127) describes depression in bipolar disorder as an overwhelming sadness and a sense of worthlessness that can make daily tasks seem impossible. This is evident in the film as Carla expresses profound confusion and sorrow, reflecting her struggle with a sense of helplessness and an inability to understand her own condition. Her mother's concern about Carla's unusual behavior further highlights the depth of Carla's emotional turmoil.

The fourth inner experience that had been experienced by Marco and Carla is moral and ethical feelings. In *TWF*, moral and ethical themes are explored through the characters' experiences and decisions. Carla grapples with intense feelings of guilt and sadness following an abortion, particularly when Marco discovers what she has done. This inner turmoil reflects Kant's (1785: 39) notion of moral feelings, which arise from an individual's awareness of moral obligations and the struggle between right and wrong. Similarly, Marco faces an ethical dilemma when his father finds marijuana in his apartment. The father's shock by the mess in

his room and find of the drug leads Marco to deny its use, citing insomnia as the reason for having it. This scene highlights Marco's internal conflict and his attempt to navigate the moral implications of his actions, further emphasizing the complex interplay of ethics and personal responsibility depicted in the film.

*The Impacts Of The Inner Experience That Had Been Experienced By Marco And Carla As Bipolar Disorder Sufferer To Themselves In A Film Entitled Touched With Fire By Paul Dario.*

Ellen (2005: 14) explores how bipolar disorder disrupts interpersonal relationships, emphasizing that extreme mood swings can severely impact interactions with partners, family, and friends. This is vividly illustrated in the film *Touched With Fire* (TWF). The film portrays Marco's drastic mood swings, shifting from high mania to deep depression, and how these fluctuations affect his relationships. For instance, during a telephone conversation with his father, Marco's erratic claims about surviving on minimal food while facing financial difficulties highlight the confusion and distress his mood swings can cause. Additionally, the film depicts the strain on interpersonal relationships through a tense scene where Marco, after a calm start, abruptly intimidates Carla's mother, disrupting the gathering and escalating tensions between the families. Another poignant moment occurs when Marco's father discovers him using marijuana and faces Marco's accusations of causing his mother's death, further exacerbating their strained relationship. These scenes underscore the significant impact of bipolar disorder on both the sufferer and their loved ones, aligning with Redfield's (1993: 26) observations on the challenges faced in maintaining stable relationships.

*The Impacts Of The Inner Experience That Had Been Experienced By Marco And Carla As Bipolar Disorder Sufferer To The Other Character In A Film Entitled Touched With Fire By Paul Dario*

Miklowitz (2002: 9) emphasizes the profound impact bipolar disorder has on families and close relationships, noting how stress and uncertainty can affect emotional well-being and interpersonal dynamics. This is vividly illustrated in the film *Touched With Fire* (TWF), where the effects of bipolar disorder on others are portrayed through various distressing scenarios. For instance, Marco's intimidating predictions about the end of the world deeply unsettles Garry, demonstrating how bipolar symptoms can provoke fear and anxiety in others. Additionally, Marco's act of vandalizing street walls, which leads to his arrest, highlights the broader societal impact and the strain on community resources. The film also depicts the tragic consequences of bipolar disorder through Carla's decision to terminate her pregnancy by drinking alcohol, an action driven by intense emotional turmoil and a strained relationship with Marco. This scene not only underscores the personal tragedy of bipolar disorder but also raises moral and ethical concerns about the impact of such actions. Furthermore, Marco's reckless behavior during a police chase, which results in an accident, exemplifies the dangerous and often criminal outcomes that can arise from untreated bipolar disorder. These examples illustrate the significant and multifaceted impacts of bipolar disorder on both the individuals affected and those around them, highlighting the urgent need for effective management and support.

## **b. Discussion**

In *Touched With Fire*, the film intricately portrays the inner experiences of Marco and Carla as they navigate the complexities of bipolar disorder, revealing its profound impacts on both themselves and those around them. Marco and Carla experience extreme mood swings that vividly illustrate the nature of their condition. For example, their emotional responses fluctuate dramatically when Carla's parents express concerns about their relationship, leading to feelings of heartbreak and anger. This volatile mood is mirrored in their high levels of imagination and creativity, which often result in risky and irrational behavior. Marco's belief that he is from another planet and his subsequent actions, such as evading a police chase by jumping into a river, highlight the blurred line between fantasy and reality during manic episodes. Their creative endeavors, such as Marco's plan to cover his walls with space-themed murals, also demonstrate the intensity of their manic states.

The film also shows how these inner experiences affect others. Marco's vandalism of public and private property, including street walls and campus facilities, creates significant disruptions and financial burdens for those affected, including the local community and campus administrators. Similarly, Marco's apocalyptic statements in the hospital instill fear and anxiety in his fellow patients, illustrating the unsettling effects of his manic episodes on others. Carla's struggle with guilt and sadness following an abortion, and Marco's continued marijuana use despite his father's disapproval, underscore the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by the characters. Carla's emotional distress after her abortion, compounded by Marco's denial and the ongoing conflict over medication, highlights the personal and relational toll of their condition. These portrayals are consistent with research by Kay (1995: 13), which identifies key symptoms and phases of bipolar disorder, including extreme mood swings, heightened creativity, and mixed episodes. The film effectively captures these symptoms, showing how the disorder influences the characters' behavior and interactions. By depicting the multifaceted impacts of bipolar disorder, *Touched With Fire* provides a nuanced understanding of the disorder's effects on both individuals and their broader social environment..

## CONCLUSIONS

In *Touched With Fire*, the depiction of Marco and Carla's inner experiences of bipolar disorder sufferer reveals profound effects on their mental and emotional states. Their thoughts, marked by ambitious and fantastical projects, such as Marco's idea to transform his room into a cosmic mural, highlight the disorder's influence on their cognitive processes. Imagination plays a significant role as well, illustrated by Carla's creative reinterpretation of a spoon as a cosmic signal transmitter, and Marco's agreement with this idea, reflecting their altered perceptions. Their feelings and emotions are portrayed vividly through intense conflicts, like the argument over medication that leads to feelings of restriction and depression for Marco. Moral and ethical dilemmas are also central, with Carla's decision to have an abortion following a tumultuous argument with Marco, and Marco's substance abuse issues, which come to light through his father's visit. These examples underscore the extreme nature of bipolar disorder, affecting thoughts, imagination, emotions, and ethical decision-making, thereby providing a comprehensive view of its impact on both the individuals and their broader interactions.

In *Touched With Fire*, the impact inner experiences of Marco and Carla as bipolar disorder sufferer to themselves are depicted through extreme mood swings and heightened creativity. Their mood swings are evident when Marco and Carla's excitement shifts to heartbreak and anger after

Carla's parents express concerns about their relationship due to their disorder. Marco's vivid imagination is shown through his grandiose plans, such as decorating his room with a cosmic theme, and his reckless actions, like stealing a car and jumping into a river during a police chase, reflecting his belief in nature's aid. These aspects highlight how bipolar disorder profoundly affects their emotions and behavior.

In *Touched With Fire*, the impact of inner experience of bipolar disorder sufferer to the other character is portrayed through actions that significantly affect those around Marco and Carla. Marco's vandalism of street and campus property not only causes financial and emotional harm but also creates a broader stigma around bipolar disorder. Additionally, Marco's apocalyptic discussions in the hospital instill fear and anxiety in his fellow patients, exacerbating their own struggles. Carla's distress is highlighted by her decision to have an abortion and the ensuing alcohol abuse, spurred by a fight with Marco over his refusal to take medication. Marco's violent outburst towards Carla further illustrates the emotional and physical harm that can be inflicted. These actions underscore the often-unseen consequences of bipolar disorder on others, reflecting a difficulty in recognizing the impact of one's behavior and distinguishing between right and wrong.

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