

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DORMITORY LIFE IN ENID BLYTON'S *FIRST TERM AT MALORY TOWERS*

Triana Wulandari*
Anik Cahyaning Rahayu**

ABSTRAK. Artikel ini membahas hasil penelitian tentang efek psikologis kehidupan di asrama sekolah bagi para penghuninya seperti digambarkan dalam novel *First Term at Malory Towers* karya Enid Blyton. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan pendekatan intrinsik dan ekstrinsik, dengan memfokuskan pada karakter pada novel (intrinsik) dan efek psikologis (ekstrinsik). Data berupa deskripsi pengarang dan dialog antar karakter dalam novel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak atau remaja yang tinggal di asrama mengalami kesulitan pada awalnya karena mereka biasa hidup dengan orangtua lalu meninggalkan orangtua mereka dan mulai hidup bersama teman-teman yang baru. Berbagai aturan asrama dan berbagai karakter penghuni asrama memberikan efek psikologis bagi penghuni asrama tersebut. Penelitian ini membahas efek psikologis apa yang menimpa lima siswa di asrama *Malory Towers* dan bagaimana mereka mengatasinya.

Keywords : character analysis, psychological effect, dormitory life

INTRODUCTION

Literary works portrays various aspects of real life from the author's point of view. The real life is described and pictured through description and dialogues of the characters, and the stories are formed to express some message or values. The aspects of real life may vary, including moving to a different stage of life and adjusting to different living habits and cultures. The new stage of life for young people may include their experience of going to college and living in a dormitory, where they encounter people of different backgrounds, interest, goals, and fears, and the environment of which can be different from their comforts of home, family and friends. Students encounter people with different upbringings, they should learn to be tolerant and open to their ways of living, opinions, and habits. Living in dormitory evokes the students should be able to cooperate and work hard to get a bright future and reach good reputation of an individual. They learn how to deal with new friends, roommates, and teachers.

This study examines students' life in a boarding school as a part of their new experience of going

to college. The object of the study is Enid Blyton's novel entitled *First Term at Malory Towers*. This novel tells about a dormitory life in the early age and the changes of the characters' lives. It will be interesting to analyze the interactions among the members of dormitory, the problems they face, and how they solve them.

The novels presents the dormitory life and how to survive in dormitory and what the effect of dormitory life. The novel tells about the five characters, Darrell Rivers, Gwendoline Mary Lacey, Sally Hope, Mary-Lou, and Alicia Johns. Darrell Rivers, who finds school exciting, finds no problem and quickly settles into Malory Towers life, and gains acceptance of the girls in her form. The girls in the first form North Tower dormitory are a good example of the types of school-girl character. Alicia is the rebellious one with a wide array of tricks to play on the mistresses. Gwendoline is spoiled girl with her bad attitude. Sally Hope is a queer little girl because she seems doesn't want to interact with others. Mary-Lou is ridiculously timid, frightened of everything. Alicia is the trick player, she can be harsh and she does not have the kindness behind the temper.

* Triana Wulandari, S.S., alumni Prodi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

** Dra. Anik Ch. Rahayu, M.Pd., dosen Prodi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

The relationship between Darrell and Alicia is one of the most interesting and well-developed parts of the book. Darrell greatly admires Alicia and wants to be her close friend. This novel represents friendships and the effects of dormitory life to the students.

The problems of the study are: 1) What are the psychological effects of dormitory on the students; and 2) How do they solve their problems of dormitory life? The analysis focuses on intrinsic elements of the novel, including the characters, plot and the extrinsic element, that is the psychological effects of dormitory life.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This section discusses the nature of dormitory life and its psychological effects. Dormitories are center of social activities where students stay to study and share the room together, and more importantly, a place of opportunities for personal and educational growth. When children are sent away from their homes to live in institutions they quickly lose touch with their caretakers and the habit of being cared about. When boarding begins - sometimes from the age of six, but more frequently at 8, the girl finds herself in an unfamiliar world. While it is true that boarders are much more easily subject to bullying and abuse, since they are in large groups for 24 hours and without parents around them who love them. (Duffell, 2005:2).

Dorms come in varieties depending on the students' choice of what will suit them best. There are different types of college dorm: the single-sex dorms, chemical- or substance-free dorms and special-interest or theme housing. There are also kinds of rooms: single, double, and suites (www.collegeboard.com). Most of the time, single-dorms are always being chosen. As such, architectural matters might possibly affect a student's behavior as one's environment clearly becomes a guiding factor on one's mental and emotional state.

There are many ways in which children deal with the bewilderment of being sent away and arriving into this highly charged atmosphere.

Some are driven by revenge, and others decide to keep a low profile, or to be nice, or a fool (Duffell, 2000:5). Even if boarding begins at 13, there are many problems with being institutionalized from puberty. The idea that adolescent children do not need their parents much may be a fallacy. They need loving homes to come back to, at the end of a day where they can be safe (Duffell, 2005:3).

According to Amanda Goldfarb (www.ehow.com), Children are sent to boarding schools for a variety of reasons. They may go to a boarding school to get a better education, explore career options or for a strict environment in the presence of behavioral issues. Whatever the reason behind the placement, many psychological issues may result. These effects can be detrimental if they are left untreated. It is important to be on the lookout for signs and symptoms related to psychological issues related to boarding school. The effects of dormitory are revealed through anxiety, phobia, and depression cases. Some of young people that study in a dormitory feel ignored by their parents, some other feel free and do everything they want and some other are hardly to get appropriate friends.

Depression

Changes in their daily routines and loss of friends can be a difficult obstacle for children to overcome while immersed in a new setting. Children often become depressed when they are placed in the boarding school atmosphere. They often feel as though they are imprisoned and being punished for their actions. A study done by the University of Alaska Anchorage showed that the majority of students reported some type of abuse, whether physical or emotional, while enrolled in a boarding school. Many people interviewed for the study stated they became depressed because they felt as though they had no one they could trust. In situations where no abuse was reported, children were still likely to become depressed due to feelings of abandonment. Children who are depressed often appear withdrawn, sad and tired. They may suddenly stop enjoying things that were once enjoyable.

Separation Anxiety and Anxiety Disorder

Children who are sent to boarding school may experience symptoms of homesickness and separation anxiety such as anxiety, sweating, chills and inability to focus when faced with being separated from someone they enjoy. The frequent separation they feel increases their likelihood of developing a severe anxiety issue. Signs of clinical separation anxiety are excessive fear, overly clingy behavior and frequent nightmares. Allowing the child to contact their parents or receive notes from home may decrease these symptoms.

Attachment Issues

Strong attachments are formed between parent and child in the first few years of life. These bonds are meant to be difficult to break. When a child is sent to a boarding school, they may feel unwanted and blame their parents. These feelings only increase if there is abuse or neglect experienced at the school. As a result, children may shut down emotionally and instinctively pull away from everyone. Insecurity and violent outbursts may result when children feel like they are being forced into or out of close relationships.

Disruptive Behavior

Children who are sent to a boarding school may exhibit disruptive and rebellious behavior in an attempt to get attention. They may not feel as if they can achieve attention using traditional methods. Since they may also not have a traditional role model to look to for behavior cues, they may not know there are other methods available. Younger children may also be picking up on cues from older counterparts at the boarding school who may not be desirable role models. Encourage children to garner attention by getting good grades or helping others. Involving children in sports, clubs and other positive activities may help them avoid these issues.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts qualitative research design on literary work as it concerns with the

collection and analyzing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric as possible (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 1996:60). The novel *First Term At Malory Towers* consists of descriptive data of characters, dialogues, setting, actions, and events. Therefore the writer decides to conduct the descriptive data toward the qualitative research. Before starting to analyze, the writer reads the novel to find out the parts of data in the form of quotations that show the effect of a dormitory life on the characters and their ways to face them and also look for some references related to the analysis. The evidences that are found in the novel are collected, classified, and then analyzed in the form of words instead of numbers. The study uses intrinsic approach that regards the analysis of a literary work as a self-sufficient and set out to judge it solely the internal relation by intrinsic criteria such as, theme, plot, character, setting (Abram, 2009:26). Based on the above definition, the study focuses on the five characters, Darrell Rivers, Gwendoline Mary Lacey, Sally Hope, Mary-Lou, and Alicia Johns. The also uses extrinsic approach, in which the discussion is related to outside aspects of literary work such as the author and society (Wellek and Warren, 1993:78). The extrinsic approach applied in conducting this study is the psychological approach by using psychological theory such as depression, anxiety disorder, attachment issue and destructive behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dormitory life evokes psychological problems to the students who live far away from their parents. Most of them get depressed, homesick, and have friendship problems. The following sections discuss of the psychological effects of dormitory life on each character of the novel, Darrell Rivers, Gwendoline, Sally, Mary-Lou, Alicia and how they face them.

Darrell Rivers

Darrel Rivers is a young girl, twelve years old. Her parents send her to study in a dormitory, Malory Towers, a boarding school for girls in Cornwall. Darrell is sad to leave her friends, none

of which goes to Malory Towers, but Darrell is excited to get some new friends in the boarding school. Her father lets her go open-heartedly as he believes that Darrell will settle down over there. Malory Towers has four different boarding houses for its girls, there are "North Tower", "South Tower", "West Tower", and "East Tower". All are topped by a tower. Darrell is in the North Tower and the house mistress is Miss Potts, whose kindness is just like her mother.

The first week has passed. Darrell is happy and excited but she still doesn't get a proper friend. She hopes she will be Alicia's close friend but unfortunately Alicia has already had a close friend, Betty Hill. Darrell rather dislikes Sally or Gwendoline. Darrell tries to befriend Sally but she thinks that Sally seems difficult to get closer with. She has no expression when Darrell tries to talk to her and Darrell dislikes Gwendoline because when she helps to plait her hair in order to obey Miss Potts's rule, she doesn't even thank her. The psychological effect above is that Darrell gets separation anxiety. Separation anxiety disorder refers to persistent, developmentally inappropriate anxiety concerning separation from major attachment figures or someone they enjoy (Blair, 2010:11). Darrell may miss her friends she enjoys in her old school before because in Malory Towers she hardly gets an appropriate friend.

As a result, Darrell cannot control her temper. She begins to lose her temper in an incident in the pool. Gwendoline ducks Mary-Lou while Mary-Lou is swimming in the pool. Mary-Lou is afraid of everything. Then Darrell comes to Gwendoline and slaps her at her legs.

"Im not going to duck you, you little coward!" she cried. "But I am going to show you what happens to people like you!" there came the sound of four slaps and Gwendoline squealed with pain. (Enid Blyton, 1946:28).

Darrell can not control her temper. There is psychological effect here. Children who are sent to boarding school must lose parenting guides so Darrell loses her temper. She has her father's

bad temper. Alicia and the other friends consider that she has no right to slap her. To face this problem, Darrell apologizes to Gwendoline immediately. The good side after Darrell loses her temper is that she realizes it and regrets what she has done.

Darrell gets sleep disturbances that indicates her anxiety. She cannot imagine what her parents will do if they know that Darrell loses her temper once again. Then she goes quietly out of the room and goes to the San. She hears a familiar voice and it is her father's voice. Mr. Rivers comes to do the operation toward Sally who has appendicitis. After all, Darrell tells her father how funny and rude Sally has been and how Darrell loses her temper and everything but her father explains that appendicitis cannot be caused by a push. He will take Darrell away if she still does such a silly thing. Darrell should be able to control her temper though Sally is not nice toward her.

Gwendoline Mary Lacey

The other new girl from the first form is Gwendoline Mary Lacey. She is a quite spoiled girl and her mother is worried that she can do nothing without her. This dormitory life is hard for her that she cries all the time. The psychological effect begins at the first night in the room. All the first students should get into bed but Gwendoline spends time brushing out her fine golden hair which disturbs her room-mates. Alicia tries to stop her with harsh words which hurts her and makes her sad because she cannot do whatever she likes here. She is used to brushing her hair every night and she detests Alicia. Gwendoline begins to sob and try to get the girls' sympathy. Unfortunately, they dislike her and want her to sleep soon.

Gwendoline is used to be praised by her governess at home. She becomes selfish and doubtful. Since she is in Malory Towers, her opinion of her governess at home has declined and she realizes that she has not taught her the things she ought to know. Her governess just praises the sweetness of Gwendoline's temper and says how graceful she is in all she does. That

kind of thing is very enjoyable for a person like Gwendoline. However, a little more learning will be very useful for her at Malory Towers.

“What’s the matter Gwendoline?” inquired Miss Potts, unsympathetically.

“Well, my governess, Miss Winter, never showed me how to do sums like this,” wailed Gwendoline. “You’ll have to learn my way now,” said Miss Potts. (Enid Blyton, 1946:17).

The psychological effect for Gwendoline is that she gets depressed. Physical symptoms of depression include either a depressed mood or seriously diminished interest, although both can occur at the same time (Thakkar, 2006:9). Gwendoline has lost her zip and she doesn’t want to learn the subject that she does not know. Miss Winter never teaches her mathematics, French, and the others, so she is the most stupid girl in the class. Mam’zelle Dupont has exclaimed Gwendoline at the little she knows and even suggests extra French lessons in order to get her up to average standard of the class. To face this problem, she takes an extra lesson five times a week though she hates so much to study hard.

Dormitory life also evokes being jealous among students. Gwendoline is jealous when Alicia and Betty, well-known as leaders in the first form, already make a friend with Darrell instead of herself. After all, she thinks that she is much prettier and has much charmer manner than Darrell. Gwendoline is jealous with the way of Darrell’s swimming and tennis playing. Sally scolds Gwendoline that she can not do a thing and never will. That is why Gwendoline is so jealous toward Darrell. This makes Gwendoline angry, so she thinks that there is only one person that is worse than she is. She is Mary-Lou. Gwendoline knows that Mary-Lou is even more afraid of the pool than she is. Then Gwendoline ducks Mary-Lou in the pool.

Another psychological effect on Gwendoline is anxiety. She feels homesick and anxious. She misses her mother’s care and she doesn’t know what she must do. Gwendoline cannot do what

she likes in Malory Towers for the dormitory has rules, even Gwendoline should forgive Darrell and apologize to Mary-Lou the things she never likes to do. The pool incident makes Gwendoline hates Darrell. Then she pretends to be Mary-Lou’s friend to give a lesson toward Alicia and Darrell because she doesn’t like them all. Ignorant of her trick, Mary-Lou accepts her as a friend.

“And if I make close friends with Mary-Lou nobody would ever think I had anything to do with things,” thought Gwendoline, in delight. “Really, I’m very clever. I bet no one else in the whole of the first form could think of a plan like this.” (Enid Blyton, 1946:37)

Gwendoline wants to revenge to the three people she dislikes. Everyone knows how bad Darrell treats Mary-Lou because she always follows her and everyone knows how angry Alicia is with Mary-Lou because she has broken her mother’s photograph. So she puts a giant spider in Mary-Lou’s desk on the sly, and when the class becomes chaotic of Mary-Lou’s terrified scream, she gives the hints that Alicia or Darrell might have done it to her. Her anxiety is seen more obviously when she realized that she did not make good report at the end of the term, which she worried that her parents will not be happy about it. Gwendoline gets depressed. According to the Helga (2000:17) many highly anxious and depressed people constantly carry a load comprising a backlog of negative feeling, which they have not been able to accept or express. Then she realizes that she is weaker than Mary-Lou. She begins working hard to fix her report better. Miss Potts wonders that she finally can use her brain if she tries. But she wishes that next term she will not come back because she must work hard and make the girls forget all she has done in this term.

Sally Hope

Sally Hope, a quiet little girl, comes to the Malory Towers alone without her parents.

Alicia and Miss Potts wonder why she is not accompanied by her mother. According to Amanda Goldfrab (eHow Contributor, www.ehow.com), when a child is sent to a boarding school, they may feel unwanted and blame their parents. Sally Hope may get a symptom of attachment issues. She pretends to be tough but her face looks sad. Sally is a close-minded person and she doesn't mind if she has no friends at all. Darrell thinks that Sally is queer. The other girls also try to get closer and get her to talk about her family but all efforts are in vain. When half-term comes, the girls are excited because some of them are expecting visits from their parents. Any parents who live not too far away will be sure to come. When Darrell tells Sally that her mother may not come because of the baby, Sally gets rather stiff and angry then she tells Darrell that she is an only child in her family.

Darrell was puzzled. "But, Sally – don't be silly – my mother said in a letter that she had seen your baby sister – she's three months old, she said "I haven't got a baby sister!" said Sally, in a low queer voice. "Im the One. Mother and I have been everything to each other, because Daddy has had to be away such a lot. I haven't got a baby sisiter. (Enid Blyton, 1946:45)

Sally envies Darrell because her mother comes and spends all day long happily. Sally doesn't like Darrell to know about her and her family. Then Darrell lose her temper and pushes Sally till she falls across the chair and gets hurt. Matron takes Sally in the Sanatorium. The next day, Mrs. Hope comes to see her daughter and brings the letter from Darrell. Miss Grayling, the Head Mistress, meets Mrs. Hope and talks about the letter from Darrell telling about Sally's denial of having a baby sister. Mrs. Hope thinks that Sally is jealous at her little sister, Daphne. Sally Hope feels ignored by her parents because they send her away to a boarding school and loses their attachment. Attachment refers to the close, emotional bonds of affection between child and

their mother (Weiten, 2007:427). That is why Sally can not accept Daphne as her little sister. The jealousy of a much younger child is very common and very natural. To solve her daughter's problem, Mrs. Hope then makes Sally feel her love as much as ever she has done before.

Being sent to a boarding school, Sally gets separation anxiety. According to Blair (2010:232), separation anxiety is the anxiety disorder most directly linked to attachment relationships. This condition has received most attention as a childhood diagnosis. A Child with separation anxiety elicits frustration and other negative effects from the parents. This affects the relationship between child and mother. But now Sally finds out that her mother still loves her because she leaves the baby alone only to visit her. Sally is content and she isn't selfish anymore.

Mary-Lou

Mary-Lou is the youngest student in the North Tower. She is a coward girl and afraid of mice, beetles, thunderstorms, noises at night, the dark, and a hundred other things. She always screams loudly when she is frightened. She is afraid of water that she hates swimming lesson. Mary-Lou may be described as having phobic disorder. A phobic disorder is marked by a persistent and irrational fear of an object or situation that presents no realistic danger (Weiten, 2007:557). Although she knows that her fears are irrational, she is unable to calm herself when confronted with a phobic object. Her irrational phobia makes her an object of teasing. When Gwendoline ducks her in the pool, Darrell saves her and slaps Gwendoline. As a result, Katherine as the dorm head scorns Darrell for slapping Gwendoline. Although being saved by Darrel, Mary-Lou is anxious and does not defend Darrell. In her anxiety, she does not make even small decisions (Helga, 2000:37). She is just stucked, quiet and can say nothing. She just suddenly looks pale and feels worried. To show her thank, she follows Darrell and does things for her such as tidy her desk up, make her bed

each day, such things that Darrell doesn't like her to do.

"I'm not," said Mary-Lou gazing at Darrell out of her big, wide eyes. "I'm only just trying to make a- a little return to you, Darrell-for-for saving me from drowning."

"Don't be silly," said Darrell. "You wouldn't have drowned, really. I know that now. And anyway I only slapped Gwendoline hard! That was nothing." (Enid Blyton, 1946:32)

Being ignored by Darrell, she becomes panic if Darrell hates her. A panic disorder is characterized by recurrent attacks of overwhelming anxiety that usually occur suddenly and unexpectedly (Weiten, 2007:558). Then, she cannot refuse Gwendoline's insistent false friendship. Mary-Lou is too weak to do anything and at Gwendoline always bullies her silently. Mary-Lou doesn't know being Gwendoline's friend is horrible.

She also gets insect phobia disorder and she exhibits sweating and heart palpitations, and becomes pale. Since she is in Malory Towers, her phobia is more chronic, and without realising this, Mam'zelle Dupont becomes so angry at her silliness.

Then, Sally and Darrell have a plan to encourage her to confront her fears. Darrell pretends to get cramp on the pool and asks Mary-Lou to give her a life-belt but there is no life-belt because it is gone to be mended. Mary-Lou directly jumps into the water and swims to save Darrell. Mary-Lou becomes brave enough when she faces an urgent situation. Everyone praises her except Gwendoline. She is delighted since she can help Darrell. The good effect is that Mary-Lou can confront her fears. She is even braver when Darrell is slandered by the girls and she wants to help her. Although she is afraid of darkness, but for Darrell's sake, she does brave things. She nearly screams but she knows she can handle it. She finds Gwendoline's shoes at last.

Mary-Lou used to be trembling, but by thinking positively that she has a good cause for

Darrell, she feels a growing awareness that good is happening to her and will increase her confidence. (cf. Helga, 2000:7). Finally, Mary-Lou becomes Darrell's and Sally's close friend and she becomes more confident.

Alicia Johns

Alicia Johns is a new girl from the North Tower. She is a talkative and straight forward girl. Alicia has a sharp tongue. She likes to tease and speak with the harsh words. She just does and says what is in her mind. She probably doesn't know that her words may have already hurt someone. Alicia knows well about Malory Towers as her mother used to study there too. Matron of the North Tower considers Alicia a naughty girl and expects her to be better than her mother. Alicia has no time for graces, pretences, sighs, moans or affectations. She is as downright as Darrell, but not so kind. She is scornful and biting, so that girl like Gwendoline hates her. However, Darrell likes Alicia immensely. She wants to be her close friend. Unfortunately, Alicia already has a close friend, Betty Hills. Alicia is so popular among the girls. Everyone wants to be with her and listen to her speaking enthusiastically. Alicia knows how to get the girls' interest with her story, not by self focus like Gwendoline always does, but by simply tells about her life, her family, and her three brothers at home.

Children who are sent to a boarding school may exhibit disruptive and rebellious behavior in an attempt to get attention. In case of Alicia, she likes playing trick toward the teacher in the classroom. She just wants to liven the situation. Then, Alicia tells her plan to Betty and Darrell that she wants to pretend to be deaf in French class when Mam'zelle Dupont is teaching. The girls are enjoying Alicia's game. But Miss Potts knows the trick and then asks Alicia to see her after the French class. The good effect is that Alicia realizes that she stops interrupting the class for it brings punishment from the teacher. She needs to improve her behavior.

CONCLUSION

Living in Malory Towers evokes the good and bad effect to the students. Some students feel it enjoyable and others cannot stand to live far away from their parents. It gives various effects to the five characters in Malory Towers. Darrell gets anxious and Darrell's sleep is disturbed after she shoves her friend. Gwendoline, a spoiled girl, gets depressed because she cannot adjust herself in dormitory. Sally gets attachment issue because she thinks that her mother doesn't love her anymore. That is why she sends her to a boarding school. Mary-Lou gets anxious and her phobic disorder is more chronic when she is teased by the girls in the dormitory and the last, Alicia gets disruptive behavior in classroom because she likes to play a trick toward the teacher.

There are different ways how each character faces and solves their problems. Darrell, who quickly settles into Malory Towers life, often loses her temper and cannot control her emotion and learn to be more patient. Gwendoline realizes that she must study hard in order to get a good result. She knows that she cannot tell a lie to her parents about her achievement in academic report. Sally realizes at last that having a baby sister is exciting, she knows her parents still care to her. Mary-Lou finds her courage and tries to be more confident when she faces the frightening things. Alicia tries not to be harsh to everyone and more concern with others.

It can be concluded that dormitory life has advantages and disadvantages. Living in a dormitory without parenting guidance may evoke children get anxious, depressed, homesickness, disruptive behavior, separation anxiety and attachment issue. In addition, dormitory life can make some students able to change and improve their behavior for being a good person. Parents are supposed to discuss first with their children when they want to send them to a boarding school.

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